

[The Twelve Plays of Christmas and Other Holidays]

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PROLOGUE

SARAH TONIN walks out on the stage, a gorgeous drag queen in a santa hat, holding a few books.

SARAH TONIN

Happy Holidays to all my guys, gals, and non-binary pals. Welcome to story-time! That is why you're here isn't it? To hear a story? Well, good. I'm your host Sarah Tonin. Now does anyone know what Serotonin does? Anyone?

Waits for a reply

It makes you happy! That's right. That's MY job, to cheer you up! Now hopefully this story will have you smiling ear to ear. Let's have a look.

Opens a book

"Marley was dead to begin with."

...

Oh, no no no. That's not right.

Throws book down, opens another

"Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents', said Jo." Oh no, not this one either.

Throws that book down too

"Every Who down in Whoville liked Christmas a lot but the Grinch who lived north of Whoville did not." Oh my goodness gracious. All these are a bit of a downer, aren't they? Wait, here it is! I found it!

Sarah Tonin holds up the program to Our Play!

Now our story tonight centers on the women of the Martin-Abrams family: a Daughter - Leigh - a Mother - Busy - and a Grandmother - Ms. Bunny - all under one roof together. But this holiday things just aren't quite the same. See, a few months ago this family had to bid farewell to their beloved Father figure. Now Mother, Busy, is so deep in grief, she can't even get herself to hang one string of tinsel, can't spin a single dreidel, girl can't even light a pine-scented candle.

With her daughter coming home, you'd think that would improve things. But, her daughter, Leigh, has a secret. And it's a secret she's not eager to reveal. What can we do to get this family back together? To flood them with Serotonin? I think I have a magical idea. Let's take a look.

SARAH TONIN disappears.

In individual spots.

LEIGH is in her car.

BUNNY is on the couch.

BUSY is at the bank.

Leigh is on the phone.

LEIGH

Hey. It's me.

BUNNY

IT'S THE MOST
WONDERFUL TIME
OF THE YEAR

(blows raspberries w/their tongue)

LEIGH

I just got to the house. It's completely bare, the only house in the neighborhood without a decoration. Not even the inflatable Menorah. Dad always put the Menorah out on the lawn, Day 1, in front of the dining room window. That's where it belongs. And the inflatable Santa should be in front of the garage. Dad loved those stupid blow up lawn ornaments.

BUSY

Just a quick Deposit today, thanks.

(Question not asked by the bank teller we don't see: Any big holiday plans?)
Plans? No, not really- just taking the holidays one day at a time.

LEIGH

Anyway, I wish you were here. I know it's only been like 5 hours, but I miss you.

BUNNY

As long as the weather outside continues to be frightful...
(she sips a drink. It is not cocoa, that's for sure.)

LEIGH

I'm not trying to be like Clark Griswold, but what has been going on down here?

BUSY

If I could just get my receipt...

(question asked by bank teller we don't see: any travel plans?)

BUNNY

Oh, good. It's snowing again.

LEIGH

Oh, good. It's snowing again.

BUSY

No, no travel plans. They're not coming here, either.... I mean, some cousins got together on a cruise- they're probably already hitting the buffets. But- I couldn't- not this year, after the year we've had. I want a quiet evening- I wanted to be at home. *(Beat)* Are you almost done?

BUNNY

Didn't it just snow?

LEIGH

I can't bring myself to go in there. For a second, I thought I pulled up to the wrong house. This is too different, I don't think I can do this on my own. It's like I turned off 465 and entered the Twilight Zone!

BUSY

No, I'm afraid I don't know this song, no- I'm sure I've heard it before. Not everyone celebrates Christmas, you know. Not everyone wants to, you ever think of that- *(Peers at name tag of bank employee we don't see)* Cindy? Ok, sure, call your manager over. Yes, Sir, there is something wrong. Maybe throw in a little Top 40 to your Holy Holiday Playlist for the rest of us. For our sanity!

BUNNY

I'm giving myself a present, from myself, to myself and I am not going to wait around to open it.

LEIGH

I know, I know, I know, my grandma is here, but Grandma Bunny can be...

BUNNY

Here you are, Bunny. Why, thank you Bunny, you shouldn't have. Oh, just what I wanted: a long Winter's Nap. And Netflix. Nap and Netflix, just like the kids say.

LEIGH

I guess... being our first Christmas without Dad, I guess I expected.... Something more? Is that selfish? Am I being selfish?

BUSY

You're right (*reading the Manager's name tag*) Jacob, I'm sure I'll feel differently once Christmas morning rolls around. Receipt? Fine, thank you, have a good day. And don't you dare say "Merry Christmas," Jacob, I swear to God.

LEIGH

I wanted things to be... I wish they could be... Why can't we just be...

BUNNY

What, no, "Happy Chanukah," Hallmark? Pffft. "A Prince for Christmas"? Keep dreamin, Honey!

LEIGH

Normal.

Stage goes dark except for LEIGH.

I wish my Dad were here. To meet you.//

// The call is dropped.

...Perfect.

The lights open up on the interior of the Martin-Abrams home. It's well-kept but... sparse. The whoooooole place feels empty, no matter what they put into it. Just a feeling I guess.

BUNNY is napping on the couch, TV murmuring quietly.

LEIGH steps into the space. She is carrying a wrapped present, which she sets on a side table, or on the floor. She takes in the room's empty feeling... it's a new thing.

LEIGH

Grandma Bunny?! I'm home!

BUNNY

(Startling Awake)

Oh! Leigh! You're here! I was just having the most - delightful dream about Paul Hollywood.

LEIGH chuckles and BUNNY gives her a big hug. The kind only a grandma can give.

LEIGH

Grandma, why aren't any of the decorations up?

BUNNY

They got shy.

LEIGH

Grandma.

BUNNY

LeighLoo.

...

It's been tough. But your mother's a tough woman.

LEIGH

Ain't that the truth. But-

BUNNY

How's Ryan?

The sound of a car pulling in.

LEIGH

Oh God.

BUNNY

That bad?

LEIGH

No. No! Things with Ryan are -

(LEIGH lets out a wistful sigh. As she does so... the door from the garage opens and Busy enters the house (she's still offstage.)

Ryan is great. Honestly, the past few months have been amazing for my love life... but... don't say anything to Mom, okay?

BUNNY

You haven't told Busy yet?

LEIGH

I - I mean you know how she gets about these thi-

BUNNY

You always do this, LeighLoo. This is just like that time you forged Elizabeth's signature to go on that school field trip and didn't say anything until you came home with a sunburn.

LEIGH

What? I was like ten? How is this anything like that?

BUSY (O.S.)

Leigh, honey, is that you?

LEIGH

Please, grandma just... don't say anything until I do, okay?

BUSY

(Entering)

Don't say anything about what?

LEIGH

Oh... Nothing, Mom. Just your.... present! Yes! Your present. I told Grandma Bunny and didn't want her to spoil the surprise.

BUNNY

Some gift.

LEIGH

It... sure is.

BUSY

Keeping Leigh's secrets as usual, Mom?

BUNNY

Oh you know me, Elizabeth.

A doorbell rings.

BUSY

Saved by the bell, Leigh.

LEIGH laughs nervously.

Oh and Honey. I'm glad you're home.

LEIGH

Me too, Mom.

BUSY answers the door.

Two GLAMAZON delivery persons: both wearing elf hats.

Sarah Tonin is in "Disguise" as a GLAMAZON agent.

The three of them roll a gigantic package into the house. It's covered in an innocuous sheet.

GLAMAZON SARAH

The Holiday spirit be with you.

GLAMAZON ELVES (unison)

And also with you.

GLAMAZON SARAH

Now, where would you like it? Over by the tree? Oh dear, seems the Holiday Spirit tornado'd through this little neighborhood but forgot to hit your house with some Holiday glam. We can take care of that, can't we, my little HO HO HOs?

GLAMAZON ELVES

Whooo woooo!

GLAMAZON SARAH

All aboard the tinsel express!

ELVES carry in an artificial fir tree. Bare.

They place the tree, already w/stand attached.

SARAH TONIN throws some Tinsel about to a magical SFX.

BUSY

Stop that, no pick that up please- Excuse me, but what is this all about?

GLAMAZON ELF 1

We are the Glamazon happy helpers.

GLAMAZON ELF 2

Straight from the North Pole!

GLAMAZON SARAH

Please sign here.

LEIGH

The return address says, "Brunswick, New Jersey."

BUSY

I didn't order anything from... Glamazon, was it? No, this won't do, I need this- THING out of here.

BUNNY

Looks like "someone" has a secret admirer. Open it, Busy, maybe there's a sexy Santa inside. Did I tell you about Paul Hollywood?

LEIGH

Grandma Bunny!

BUSY

Mother, behave.

BUNNY

Live a little, will ya? Someone went to a lot of trouble, the least you could do is open the darn thing.

BUSY

Fine. Who am I to ask for a little consideration for what I want or don't want in my home?

BUNNY

That's the Christmakah Spirit.

BUSY removes the sheet revealing an over-sized advent calendar. It only has twelve doors and is covered with various Winter Holiday-related iconography, from a vast array of winter holidays.

ALL 3 GLAMAZONS

Ooooooo. Ahhhhhh.

LEIGH

I don't get it.

BUNNY

What's it do?

GLAMAZON SARAH

I am so glad you asked. Scroll!

GLAMAZON ELF 2

SCROLL!

GLAMAZON ELF 1

SCROLL!

A scroll is revealed by ELF 2 and passed along to ELF 1, and then Sarah Tonin.

Sarah Tonin unfurls the absurdly long scroll.

GLAMAZON SARAH

Ahem.

("Dashing through the snow")

WHAT WE HAVE RIGHT HERE
ARE ALL YOUR HOPES AND FEARS
ENCAPSULATED IN
A DOZEN FESTIVE BINS - HAHAHA -

IF YOU WISH TO MAKE
YOUR FAMILY WHOLE AGAIN
STOP THE MADNESS
DROP YOUR SADNESS
LET EACH OTHER IN

NUMERICALLY,
YOU'LL OPEN UP EACH DOOR
THEN INSIDE, A MEMORY
YOU'LL NEED TO EXPLORE - HEY!

IN 12 HOURS TIME
YOU COULD FIND
THE CLOSURE WHICH YOU SEEK

(big finish, half time)

IF YOU FAIL
THE CONSEQUENCES
WILL ALL GET VE-RY REAL

BUNNY, BUSY, and LEIGH

Huh?

GLAMAZON ELF 2

Sign here please.

BUSY

I'm not signing for anything I didn't order.

LEIGH

Advent Calendars have 25 doors. The Menorah has 9 candles, the Kinara has 7 candles.
What has 12?

BUNNY

The Twelve Days of Christmas?

ALL 3 GLAMAZONS

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS-

BUSY

-Oh no, not gonna happen in my house, no Lords a leaping or Maids a milking or other white anglo nonsense.

BUNNY

Weren't you paying attention? 12 doors, 12 hours... we only have 12 hours to open every door.

BUSY

I don't understand this time limit thing. Why not just open all of the doors at once?

ALL 3 GLAMAZONS

Bahahahaha!

GLAMAZON SARAH

Cute thought, but no.

LEIGH

Oooo, so it's like a Holiday Escape room!

GLAMAZON SARAH

Sure, let's go with that.

BUSY

But what is "making the family whole again?"

GLAMAZON ELF 1

What do you think?

BUSY

Well our family is only missing one member, but how would that be possible?

GLAMAZON 1

Who cares? It's magic!

GLAMAZON ELF 2

So do you accept the terms and conditions or what?

LEIGH

Sure sure, whatever, thank you.

LEIGH signs the contract

BUSY

Leigh, I said no!

LEIGH

When the 12 hours are up, I promise, I'll drag it down to the curb and that will be the end of it. Pleeeeease! We should have some fun. Dad would want fun.

SARAH TONIN knowingly taps a finger to her nose and starts to exit with the GLAMAZONS.

BUNNY

Hold on just a moment! Can't leave without your tip.

(Beat)

Happy whatever-floats-your-boat.

She takes out her wallet and hands them each a \$20 dollar bill. ELF 2 and GLAMAZON SARAH begin to leave.

GLAMAZON ELF 1

(To LEIGH)

Is your Grandma single?

BUSY

OUT!

The GLAMAZON crew Exit.

BUSY

Mom, are you sure you weren't late night QVC shopping after your Ambien again?

BUNNY

That only happened three times.

Leigh reaches for the first door.

BUSY

I want this abominable advent calendar out of here, now.

BUNNY

What about what I want?

LEIGH

Okay, Grandma, do you want to do it?

BUNNY

I don't see the harm in just a little Holiday fun.

LEIGH

Great. Mom, you're over-ruled.

LEIGH opens the first door.

DOOR 1 - All of the Things

MUSIC CUE: ominous Holiday Bells chiming in a Minor Key

BUNNY

Well that can't be good.

LEIGH

Wait, there's something in there.

BUNNY

Please be a Sexy Santa, please be a Sexy Santa.

*LEIGH removes a piece of paper with a to do list.
It sparks a memory in all 3 Women.*

LEIGH

Is this?

BUSY

Owen's Holiday To-Do List.

BUNNY

Look at the way he color coded the decorations: Inflatables, lighting, cutouts. He was one of the good ones, Elizabeth.

BUSY

He would've had this whole place festive and sparkling by now. He'd be so disappointed in me.

BUNNY

Then let's do him proud. Let's make our own list, just like Owen used to.

Too much for BUSY to handle, she sings about it.

BUSY
WHY MUST THE HOLIDAYS BE AGONIZING

LEIGH
YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME, MOM
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN CRYING

BUSY
YOUR FATHER WAS BETTER
AT THIS STUFF THAN ME...

BUNNY
Honey. You still have me. And Leigh.

BUSY
Owen always did this stuff - I don't know how to have a Holiday without him.

LEIGH
Let us help you, Mom.

BUNNY
Yes, let's make a list! Start small. Maybe "bring ornament boxes up from the basement" is step one.

BUNNY starts to exit but is stopped in her tracks by an elf handing her a box of ornaments. Cuz, magic.

LEIGH
That was quick.

GLAMAZON 2
Glamazon Prime. What can I say?

LEIGH
I know which ornament I'm putting up first!

*LEIGH opens the box as GLAMAZON 2 exits, her ornament is there.
LEIGH reveals her special macaroni menorah ornament.*

LEIGH

Wow, what are the odds this would be right on top of the very first box?

BUNNY

We'll be done in no time. Let's bedeck the tree then we can pick a few things to go outside.

LEIGH

The inflatable Menorah should go out first.

BUSY

Wait, are we doing the tree or are we doing the yard?

LEIGH

Just making a list, Mom.

BUSY

You two want to make a list? Alright, let's make a list.

BUNNY/LEIGH

Really?

BUSY

Yes, a list of all of the things we will NOT be doing this year.

NO BAKING COOKIES
NO SKATING, NO SLEDDING
PUT UP A BILLBOARD,
ILL GIVE YOU THE HEADING:
"CHRISTMAKKAH'S CANCELED,"
YALL DO WHAT YOU PLEASE.
THIS YEAR I'M BOYCOTTING
ALL OF THE THINGS.

LEIGH

You can't boycott Christmakkah.

BUSY:

Watch me.

TAKE BACK THE PRESENTS,

NO SHAMMASH, NO STUFFING
SANTA'S NOT WELCOME
HIS REINDEER GET NOTHING

LEIGH
THIS IS A SIDE OF YOU I'VE NEVER SEEN

BUNNY
CAN'T YOU REMEMBER
WHAT HOLIDAYS MEAN?

LEIGH/BUNNY
LIGHTING CANDLES,
SINGING CAROLS,
STOCKINGS HUNG
WITH CARE...

*The song/singing trails off and softly continues as a gentle underscore of
"O Holy Night" that ends with BUSY'S line "going to lie down"*

BUSY
Anyone else's head feel a little funny?

LEIGH
Mom? You ok? You look a little-

BUNNY
-don't say tired-

LEIGH
-well done?

BUSY
I'm fine. I said I'm fine. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to snap. I think I'll have a quick lie
down before dinner.

BUSY give Leigh a tender squeeze.

It's good to have you home.

BUSY exits

LEIGH

Any specific time you want me to wake you up? Mom?

*LEIGH calls RYAN.
No answer, gets voicemail.
Again.*

LEIGH (continues)

Ryan. Call me back on your next break. If you can get one. I miss you. You didn't send a giant calendar type thing with little surprises stuffed inside delivered by a Drag Queen Santa and her Elves, did you? It's getting strange over here. I think we just.. I think we just sang about it... Call me when you can.

End of scene

DOOR 2 - We're Doing Christmas a Little Differently This Year

BUNNY reaches for the next door.

LEIGH

Shouldn't we be waiting for Mom?

BUNNY

We're in a time crunch, LeighLoo. The faster we finish the faster you can tell your mother about -.

BUNNY opens the door. She removes a set of Holiday Greeting Cards

Oh look, a pretty little Christmas card! I wonder who it's from?

*They both read the cards, and the inscriptions
inside "come to life" in the spoken word style.
"I've decided" lines said in Unison*

SINGLE PARENT (unison)

I've decided a "Staycation" is where it's at this year.

CRUISING COUSIN (unison)

I've decided a Family Cruise is where it's at this year.

SINGLE PARENT

I know it breaks with tradition, but when was the last time I spent the holidays at home, just me and the kids?

CRUISING COUSIN

Ahoy Busy Bee! Greetings from the vessel Valhalla, sailing the globe, baby! (*Celebratory noises*)

SINGLE PARENT

Come on over, anytime during the kids' Winter Break, we'll have some fun!

CRUISING COUSIN

I bought this card in a shop here on the ship, writing to you now, and I'll drop it in the onboard mail when it's finished. All while in the middle of an Ocean! How crazy is that?!

SINGLE PARENT

We would have loved to spend the day with you all, but it just wasn't in the cards for us this year, I'm sorry.

CRUISING COUSIN

3 swimming pools, a rock wall, and Karaoke? We can go out for a night on the town without having to leave the ship.

SINGLE PARENT

We can do all of the things we never get to do when traveling for the holidays.

CRUISING COUSIN

Two words: Bottomless Mimosas.

SINGLE PARENT

We've already baked cookies, made a watch list of holiday movies, played in the snow- on that note, if y'all feel like coming down for a quick visit, a-sledding we will go!

CRUISING COUSIN

Hashtag: best idea ever.

Hashtag: I'm on vacation baby! Real Talk: it would be more fun if my favorite Cousin were here. How are you holding up, Busy Bee?

Hashtag: Wish you and your family were here! And extra love to little Leigh. I hope that Ryan isn't taking up too much of our LeighLoo's time. Wink Wink!

SINGLE PARENT

XOXO and Ho Ho Ho! We love you. Love, Uncle Martin, CeCe, CoCo, and Reginald the dog. WOOF!

CRUISING COUSIN

See you in the new year! - Your favorite cousin, Beatrice.

Back to LEIGH and BUNNY

LEIGH

Oh dear Lord, why would Cousin Beatrice write that? Is she trying to stir the pot?

BUNNY

I wish *you'd* stir the pot. Take a taste, add more Hot Sauce. Your mother may surprise you. Come on. Introduce them.

LEIGH

Can't you just lie for me? You know how she can get.

BUSY enters.

BUSY

How "who" can get?

BUNNY

Oh, cousin Beatrice.

BUSY

Are those this year's cards?

BUNNY

Yes.

LEIGH

No.

BUSY gives them a look

BUNNY

Ok. You caught us. We were just about to finish decorating the tree when we remembered the time limit. The second door had all of our Christmas cards!

BUSY

Well, what did Beatrice's say?

LEIGH

That's funny, I don't recall seeing one from Bea.

BUSY

Are you sure? She told me she was going to send me one from the ship. International stamps and everything.

BUNNY

Must've gotten lost in the Bermuda Triangle.

BUSY

Just as well. Beatrice means well, but you know how she can get...

BUNNY

How's that, dear?

BUSY

Always stirring the pot.

Door 3 - The Worst Christmas Cookies Ever Made

LEIGH

Are you good to go, Mom? We already did the second door without you, so are you helping or what?

BUSY

Don't get your tinsel in a twist, I'm going to help. You'd just think they'd give us a break between each door. Some time to catch our breath.

LEIGH

I don't think the 12 hour magical healing process accounted for naps.

LEIGH reaches into door #3 and pulls out a recipe card.

BUNNY

What's this?

BUSY looks.

BUSY

It's a recipe. Passed down from Owen's great-grandmother. His favorite Christmas Cookies, Jubilee Wafers! Man that takes me back.

LEIGH

You mean those gross brown cookies with the candied fruit?

BUSY

They weren't gross, they were his favorite!

The Oven dings. The GLAMAZON ELVES run on and put aprons on all of the women. Some 50s music plays. Their posture is now perfect and they speak with the Standard American dialect.

BUSY

Smell that lovely sweet smell.

LEIGH coughs as BUSY puts on some oven mitts and gets them out of the oven.

Try one, I promise you'll like them.

BUNNY takes a little bite of the cookie.

BUNNY

Oh my Goodness.

BUSY

Aren't they just delightful?

BUNNY

Is this... raw flour?

BUSY

Why yes... we flour the sheets so the cookies don't stick. And then it gets on the cookies and you can taste it.

LEIGH

You can definitely taste it. What... what... are you absolutely certain this is the right recipe.

BUSY

It's been followed to the letter.

LEIGH

Really?

BUSY

I... have to add the glaze.

BUSY starts adding the glaze to the cookies. LEIGH pulls BUNNY aside.

LEIGH

Thank you for keeping my secret, Grandma Barbara, you know how she's been since becoming the president of the Garden Club. Always trying to stick her nose in other people's petunias, if you catch my drift.

BUNNY

Just don't ask me to do it again. Let's leave the dirt in the garden, hmmm?

LEIGH

It's not my fault that Love is blooming. I just can't help thinking about it.

BUNNY

Yet you won't tell your own Mother?

BUSY

They're almost ready!

LEIGH

She's not like you. She'd get jealous.

BUNNY

The least you can do is to give her a chance.

BUSY

What was that? Give who a chance?

LEIGH

...These cookies. Maybe I misjudged them. Let's give them a try. I'm sure they're way yummiier than Grandma Barbara thinks!

They all bite into them. Their faces turn from smiles to grimaces

BUSY

(Forcing a smile through the bad taste)

MMMM.... Exactly how I remember them.

BUNNY

Busy... I can't lie to you anymore.

These cookies are the worst cookies I have ever eaten. These are the worst cookies anyone has ever eaten. They are an insult to the very concept of "Cookie."

BUSY

They were my husband's favorite!

BUNNY

They are quite possibly the worst thing I have ever had in my mouth, and I once drank from your father's ashcan during the neighbor's barbecue.

BUSY

Mother!

BUNNY

Are you sure you didn't... alter the recipe?

LEIGH

I think they actually sucked the flavor out of my mouth.

BUSY

I thought they would taste like your childhood.

LEIGH

They do.

BUSY

And just what do you mean by that?

BUNNY

Leigh.

BUSY

We have to eat these cookies. They were a tradition. A way to remember your Father. That's what you wanted.

BUNNY

Now dear, it's not like either of you are going to forget him. Cookie or not.

BUSY

What are you saying?

LEIGH

She's saying some traditions are best left on the cutting room floor.

...

I need to brush my teeth.

LEIGH exits. BUSY removes her apron as she crumples to the floor. BUNNY removes her apron too. The magic dissipates.

BUNNY

Busy Bee, honey, the cookie is an insult to cookies everywhere, but there is no need to get emotional about it.

BUSY

It's not about the cookie!

BUNNY gets down on her level and puts her arm around her

When he was here - Without him, It's like I've lost my whole family. Where is the love we had?

BUNNY

Leigh was just saying she was feeling so much love.

BUSY

She was?

BUNNY

Yes, she said she just couldn't stop thinking about...love.

BUSY

Is she seeing someone?

BUNNY

Oh, I don't -

BUSY

It must be that Ryan boy! I've heard her mention him casually in the last... what was it? Six months? Seven? Just before Owen... Oh I'm sure it is!

BUNNY

Well I didn't-

BUSY

Oh, this is such good news. Maybe they'll even have a wedding by next year. Then a baby-

BUNNY

Let's not get carried away.

BUSY

You've lifted my spirits, Mom. Of course, I should have known. Love will prevail. Love always prevails!

BUNNY

Yes, it does.

LEIGH comes back from the bathroom and BUSY runs to hug her. LEIGH doesn't hug her back.

BUSY

LeighLoo my darling! I can't believe you've been keeping this secret from me for so long!

LEIGH

What are you talking about?

BUSY

I'm talking about Ryan, honey.

LEIGH

I don't know who that is.

BUSY

Why didn't you tell me the mysterious Ryan was your boyfriend?

LEIGH

Can we just get through today and finish this family healing thing and move on with our lives? We have like... nine more doors to get through. Clock's ticking. Please.

BUSY

No. I'm not opening the next one until you talk to me.

LEIGH

Right because who cares about the time limit?

BUSY

Don't make this about me.

LEIGH

It is about you! You're... holding us hostage. I'm not even keeping anything from you!

BUSY

I am not holding you hostage, Leigh. You're doing this to yourself. You're the one stopping your father from coming back!

LEIGH

What? What the Hell, Mom?

BUSY

I mean what else could healing the family be, Leigh, just think about it for half a second.

LEIGH

You can't be-

BUSY

Don't. Just don't. I'm not going to fight with you. You did one door without me, what's another? I'm going to lie down, and wait for your father to prove you wrong.

BUSY exits with a smile.
LEIGH turns to BUNNY.

LEIGH

This. This is why I hate coming home. It's like Mom lives on another planet. Did you hear her?

BUNNY

It sounds crazy but... it is magic...

LEIGH

Jesus Christ not you too. Let's just... open the next door okay? Get it over with.

BUNNY

I think I'm going to take a cue from your mother and... sit this one out.

LEIGH

Grandma! -

*It's too late. BUNNY has exited. LEIGH goes to the calendar and opens door #4. It's a coat. One of Owen's old jackets.
A beat.*

Okay magic... Do your thing.

Another beat. Nothing.

Aaaaaand nothing's happening. Great. Guess it's nap time for everybody. Who needs to save a family in turmoil when you could just pop a melatonin and drown out the terminally delightful hellscape of the entire month of December?

Leigh sits down on the couch and wraps the jacket around her.

It still smells like Dad. Brrr - why is it so cold in here?

SARAH TONIN appears in a spotlight with her storybook.

SARAH TONIN

With four doors now open, they search for a sign
Hold onto your wigs, I've got one more rhyme.

While LeighLoo was lounging and full of despair
Mother Busy was looking for someone not there.

Door 4 - The Room With the Coats

Busy, who has been hanging in the hallway, listening, feels the chill. She's about to open the door to her bedroom when -

COLLEGE FRIEND (O.S.)

Elizabeth! Just toss the coats on the pile and come back to the party.

BUSY

Huh?

COLLEGE FRIEND (O.S.)

Oh! Hold on! Desmond just walked in. Dezzy baby, toss me your coat. Elizabeth's gonna take it.

COLLEGE FRIEND enters with a coat.

Can you put this one on the pile too?

BUSY

Oh. Sure. Just... in here?

COLLEGE FRIEND

Are you okay, Elizabeth?

BUSY

Yeah just... kind of out of it.

COLLEGE FRIEND

Would you stop feeling sorry for yourself? It's bad for your complexion.

COLLEGE FRIEND dumps the coat, and a handful of others into BUSY'S arms, then exits.

BUSY opens the door to reveal a massive pile of coats. Monstrously big. She tosses the coats and a voice comes out.

OWEN

Aw yeah... that's the stuff.

BUSY

Who's there?

OWEN

Elizabeth Abrams? That you?

BUSY lifts some coats to reveal OWEN buried inside.

BUSY

Owen! What are you doing here? How is this possible?

OWEN

Oh well I had to take a horse-drawn sleigh from my ma's place and let me be clear. I loathe a sleigh. And all this after milking the pigs and walking the chickens. How're you liking school? You're a Smithie now, right?

BUSY

I... You're just lying here. In the coats?

OWEN

Yeah. It's great.

BUSY

But... why? I mean are you?-

OWEN

Well it's just with everything that's been going on these last few years. The War on Drugs, Afghanistan, Iran-Contra, Billy Joel, The AIDS epidemic, Acid Washed Jeans - I just looked at this pile of coats and it seemed so warm and inviting.

BUSY

You just.... Got in.

OWEN

Best decision of my life.

BUSY

There's a party going on out there.

OWEN

Feel free to join it.

BUSY

You're not coming?

OWEN

Why should I? I'm happy here. Don't worry, I'll take good care of these coats.

BUSY

This isn't... real. Is it?

OWEN

You're pretty bizarre, you know that?

BUSY

We're all pretty bizarre. Some of us are just better at hiding it; that's all. Come out to the party.

OWEN

No! People are going to... talk about things.

BUSY

Well... probably.

OWEN

We could go out there, and face... all of it... Or we could be here. Where it's nice and cozy. Don't you want to stay here until it all blows over?

Pause.

Six percent of Americans don't believe we really landed on the moon.

Pause.

BUSY

Move over.

BUSY climbs into the pile of coats.

SARAH TONIN appears in her spotlight as the coats disappear.

SARAH TONIN

These girls are too comfy with waiting and hiding
It's time for an entrance with cheer and good tidings.

SARAH tosses the story aside
LEIGH is still on the couch, doom scrolling on her phone.

LEIGH

God. This... sucks.
(*To the advent calendar*)
Some help you are!

She wraps a blanket around herself and turns the TV on.

TV

We're reaching out to all our lovely viewers to say: we know exactly how you're feeling right now. It's Christmas Eve, and you're with the people you love the most- YOUR FAMILY.

LEIGH

You don't know my pain!

She turns the TV off. She reaches next to the couch and produces a whole box of Eggnog. She gulps it. Her head rests on the couch.
SARAH TONIN, appears. She sits on the edge of the couch, filing her nails

SARAH

I am bored out of my mind.

LEIGH

It's you!

SARAH

Yes it's me. Here I am, trying to spread a little fun and goodwill. Basically set up a no-fail-familial-healing system, and ya'll go and give up on me.

LEIGH

It's not my fault, it's theirs!

SARAH

I may just be an anthropomorphized chemical compound, but even I know that's hoey.

LEIGH

Well then what am I supposed to do?

SARAH

I thought you'd never ask...

Sarah throws the nail file down. A piano plays a few notes. Sarah stands up to perform.

SARAH

I KNEW YOUR FAMILY WAS GOING THROUGH HELL
SO I HAD TO ANTHROPOMORPHIZE MYSELF

YES, YOU'RE NOT CRAZY (WELL NOT TOO BAD)
IT'S JUST CHRISTMAS AND YOU'RE FEELING SAD

BUT WHO AM I? LET ME EXPLAIN-
I'M THE LAST DROP OF SEROTONIN IN YOUR BRAIN!

LEIGH

Serotonin?

SARAH

That's me. Just a class 5 neurotransmitter. The once that involves your mood, your memory, your pain, your sex, your appetite, your sleep function! You know, all the good stuff.

LEIGH

Oh my.

SARAH

No kidding.

(singing)

YOU'RE DOWN IN THE DUMPS AND WHO CAN BLAME YOU
IT'S THE HOLIDAYS AND LOOK AT ALL YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH.

IT'S MY JOB TO MAKE YOUR MOOD GET BETTER
CAUSE GIRL IT'S WORSE THAN THAT UGLY SWEATER.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE THESE BLUES CHANGE COLOR?
I'M GUESSING IT HAS TO DO WITH YOUR MOTHER?

LEIGH

How'd you know?

SARAH

I'm magical.

LEIGH

Oh, yeah.

SARAH

(singing)

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS OPEN THAT DOOR
YOU'RE SO CLOSE, THERE'S NOT THAT MANY MORE.

SO LET'S RECOVER FROM ANCESTRAL TRAUMA
OTHERWISE YOU'LL NEVER CONNECT WITH YOUR MAMA

LEIGH

That's kind of dark.

SARAH

Humor and tragedy go hand in hand.

(singing)

SO DON'T TURN TO DRINK, DON'T TURN TO TV
LET'S GO AND GET SOME MORE FRIENDS FOR ME!

MORE POSITIVE, LOVING, HEALTHY, HAPPIER, MOOD ALTERING CHEMICALS
OF SEROTONIN!
IN YOUR BRAIN!

SARAH does a little dance. At one point she gets LEIGH up and swings her around.

DAUGHTER

So, how do I get more serotonin in my brain?

SARAH

I don't know! Have you tried Ice Skating?

LEIGH and SARAH open Door #5 together and reveal a pair of ice skates.

*It starts to snow... hard.
When the snow clears...*

Door 5 - Ice Skating

An empty stage, LEIGH enters wearing winter clothes, jacket, scarf, hat. She recognizes her clothing, then quickly recognizes she is ice skating. And she is not very good at ice skating. Like, at all. She is more like, ice walking, and trying to cling to the edge whenever she can. She almost trips.

LEIGH

Damn it, what the hell is going on?! Sarah! Am I Ice skating? (*she is*) - I can't ice skate!

*She trips and falls.
SARAH TONIN emerges from a small group of skaters (including ELLE and CHAD) and skates up to LEIGH.*

SARAH

Oh come on girl. What, do you need someone to hold your hand?

She reaches out to give LEIGH a hand. LEIGH attempts to get up on her own, but when that doesn't seem like it's going to happen, she accepts it.

LEIGH

What. The hell. Was that - (*she sees ELLE*) Is that -

SARAH

(Looking at CHAD)

Chad. Chad Bröski. Your boy next door. Grew up with him all the way from pre-k to senior year. Momma Busy planning the wedding since you were both 6.

LEIGH

And Elle...

SARAH

Ooo competition, I like where this is going.

LEIGH

What?! There is no competition - I mean Elle was my best friend.

SARAH

Ok let me get real with you Leigh, you are oozing insecurity.

LEIGH

That's not -

SARAH

Yeah you are practically a puddle of self-doubt. I can smell the absolute lack of self-worth from here.

LEIGH

Excuse me!

SARAH

Listen to me Leigh, this is your chance to get the man this time. Stomp out that what's her face -

LEIGH

Elle.

SARAH

Show her who's boss, and take home that 6ft, rugged, and handsome trophy!

LEIGH

No! Sarah this is ridiculous, I'm not sixteen anymore, and besides it wasn't even about -

SARAH

Hush girl! I get it! You're nervous because you fumbled like the totally awkward dork that you were...*are*. This is your second chance! And this time you have a secret weapon...

Dramatic-ish pause. No response from LEIGH. SARAH looks to LEIGH, then exasperatedly.

ME!

LEIGH

You're not listening! This isn't even about -

SARAH

(Shushing)

Not, now, baby girl, mama's working.

SARAH claps her hands, and something between drag show and fairy godmother magical music plays. Maybe both. It's a little chaotic. BUNNY skates onto the ice, and SARAH goes to meet her as she hands her a pair of nerdy glasses.

LEIGH

Grandma?! What are you doing here?

BUNNY

Oh Leigh - How could I nap through a transformation montage?! They're my favorite!

SARAH

(As she places the glasses on LEIGH).

Less talking, more fetching!

BUNNY

(Skating off stage)

Yes ma'am!

SARAH takes off LEIGH's hat and instructs her to toss her hair around, through demonstration. BUNNY comes back with a lipstick, which SARAH takes and haphazardly applies to LEIGH's lips. As BUNNY leaves again, SARAH takes off LEIGH's coat to reveal a cute short red dress, and SARAH tosses the coat off stage. BUNNY returns with a cowboy hat which is placed on LEIGH's head.

SARAH

Hmmm. Is it bit much? Let's save that for act 2.

LEIGH

Act 2? What?

BUNNY skates off with the cowboy hat. SARAH TONIN takes in LEIGH.

SARAH

Something's not right...Ah!

SARAH skates up to LEIGH and tenderly removes the glasses that she put there in the first place. She takes a few steps back.

SARAH

There, you're a completely different woman.

BUNNY pulls out a tissue and sobs proudly into it, as if LEIGH was going to prom.

LEIGH

ENOUGH!

The music stops.

SARAH

What?! You don't like it? Believe me, Chad will *love* it.

LEIGH

This isn't about Chad! It was *never* about Chad!

With that it's as if LEIGH has pushed everyone away. ELLE is the only person who remains, and she approaches LEIGH.

ELLE

Leigh?

LEIGH has mentally and emotionally been transported to highschool, and instantly acts like the socially awkward scared girl that she was.

LEIGH

Oh Elle...uh hi...I mean uh, happy birthday!

ELLE

I'm so glad you came! I haven't seen you like all semester.

LEIGH

Uh, yeah I've been...busy.

ELLE

Busy with what?

LEIGH looks down, anywhere but at ELLE.

I'm starting to think you don't like me.

LEIGH

No! I really like you- -

ELLE

Then how come we stopped hanging out? We used to be so inseparable. Don't you remember when we were little. Elle & Leigh, *ELL-LEE*. Our parents thought we would be best friends forever.

ELLE skates closer to grab LEIGH'S hand, but LEIGH pulls back, contemplating. Small beat. ELLE is just... waiting. LEIGH starts to reach out when-

CHAD

Heyyyyy babe!

CHAD jauntily skates across the stage to ELLE's side. Quick kiss

ELLE

Hey babe.

CHAD

Hey babe.

ELLE

AHHH we both said it that time!

CHAD

We're so cute, babe.

Another quick kiss - oh no, that's a long kiss. Too long. LEIGH looks like she might tear up, or maybe it's panic, either way she heads off stage to leave, but stops by the edge.

LEIGH

(to the Advent Calendar.)

OK! I'm done living my highschool drama trauma! Is this what you wanted??? Hello?!

There is something different about ELLE and CHAD. CHAD skates over to LEIGH. In these next few lines, CHAD and ELLE speak to one another with little to no regard to LEIGH, sometimes overlapping her.)

CHAD

Hey babe, who's the weird girl?

LEIGH

What?

ELLE

Oh her, she's just some old neighbor.

LEIGH

This didn't happen...

CHAD

I've never seen you hang out with her.

ELLE

That's because I don't.

LEIGH

That's not true.

ELLE

(Slowly, and intimidatingly, skates towards LEIGH)

She's just a sad, pathetic girl who couldn't even be honest with herself about /her feelings-

LEIGH

/Shut up!

ELLE

And thought, somehow, that her fantasy of her best friend falling in love with her could possibly ever come true.

LEIGH

I said shut up!

ELLE flinches back. CHAD skates forward between ELLE and LEIGH.

CHAD

Hey, you stay away from my girl, you hear?

LEIGH

(Realizing she got overheated)

What - oh, no.

CHAD

I said stay away, Freak!

CHAD pushes LEIGH lightly, but just enough for her to fall over on the ice. ELLE comes over to CHAD's side.

ELLE

Don't waste your time on her, she's just a sad girl obsessed with an even sadder highschool crush.

LEIGH

Ok, that's enough!

LEIGH tries to get up, indignantly, but maybe only gets onto her knees and decides that's good enough.

LEIGH

I've moved on! In FACT, I'm with someone who is lovely, and good to me, Ryan is great for me.

ELLE

Aren't you a lesbian?

LEIGH

I'm Bisexual.

CHAD

Oh, I dated a bi chick before -

LEIGH

Please stop talking.

ELLE

Come on Chad, let's just go.

CHAD

You wanna go makeout?

ELLE

OMG, Yas!

CHAD and ELLE laugh maniacally as they frantically skate around LEIGH who starts to tear up. Another skater joins in. It's SARAH TONIN. She stops in front of LEIGH. She has an umbrella.

SARAH

Oh hun, pick yourself up - that's how you lose a finger.

Sounds of thunder in the distance, SARAH looks up. The skaters flee.

(To the audience)

The forecast is not looking good for young Leigh
Will someone come help her? I dunno, you tell me!

LEIGH

Who are you talking to?!

SARAH shrugs, opens her umbrella and exits. Sounds of wind and hail as LEIGH is blown away by the storm, screaming, and SARAH pulls on the giant pile of coats.

BUSY'S head pokes out from under it.

BUSY

Leigh?

OWEN

(Still under the coats) Who's that?

BUSY

I think I heard our daughter.

Another scream from LEIGH, a sobbing scream.

OWEN

(Slightly poking his head out)

I don't hear anything.

BUSY

Owen, that's our baby girl! Something is wrong, I have to go.

BUSY starts to push some of the coats off of her, but it's difficult under the weight of so many coats. Then the coats start to latch onto her, they are holding her down.

OWEN

Isn't this what you wanted? To be here with me. To stay with me. You can stay here just a little longer with me, under the coats.

BUSY stops her struggling, she starts to give into OWEN and the coats. Until she hears LEIGH again.

LEIGH (O.S.)

Mom!

BUSY

(Throwing a few coats off of her) Leigh!

OWEN

Elizabeth, come back to -

BUSY

No! Our daughter needs us - and I've always been there for her.

BUSY fights against the coats, and it's a struggle, but she gets out of the bed. She stops just short of running out the door, and looks back to OWEN.

BUSY

Owen, come on, we need to go!

BUSY pulls at OWEN'S arm, and pulls him out from the coats and off the bed. She drags him through the door.

BLACKOUT.

Door #6 - Take a Chill Pill

It's dark. BUSY finds a light switch.

When the lights come back, BUSY is just holding the coat OWEN was wearing. She looks at it, then to the door. The wind is blowing.

BUSY

I'll be back for you Owen, I promise. I'm not leaving you either.

BUSY puts on the coat and skates toward LEIGH, who has just come into view.

BUSY

Leigh! Leigh!!!

LEIGH

Mom!?

BUSY reaches down and pulls up Leigh. When they connect, they "fall" back into the real world. They are back in their living room. LEIGH sits on the floor, BUSY has her arm around her.

BUSY

I'm so sorry about before but I was...well I saw.... And then I heard your scream and came to find you in that... was that an ice rink?

LEIGH

Yeah.

BUSY

I haven't seen you ice skating since high school! What was that boy's name again? Oh yes! Chad Bröski. Awful name but you would have such cute kids.

(Small beat.)

Leigh, is something wrong?

LEIGH

Yes! This advent calendar is weird and awful, and we need to get it over with. You said you don't want to help without me talking about Ryan? Okay. I would like to talk about Ryan.

BUSY

(Feigning surprise quite a bit.)

OH - is it getting serious?

LEIGH

Mom, can you please let me just-

BUSY

Oh LeighLoo, I am so excited for you!

LEIGH

Well-

BUSY

I know it might seem too soon to think about this, but I'm here to help plan for a wedding anytime. Finally, a wedding!

(BUSY hugs LEIGH tight.)

I just want to know why you were hiding him from me for so long. I just can't wait to meet him now!

LEIGH

Her.

BUSY breaks away from the hug.

BUSY

What?

LEIGH

Meet her. You can't wait to meet her.

Realization. Beat.

BUSY

Oh. So Ryan's a -

LEIGH

A woman. Yes.

BUSY

Oh, well that's alright.

Small beat as BUSY gets up, ignores the conversation, and heads towards the Advent Calendar.

You sure?
LEIGH

Mhmm.
BUSY

Because you don't sound like it is.
LEIGH

Don't be silly. I've always said it would be fine.
BUSY

Fine?! Where did the excitement go?! God, I knew you were going to do this. When I came out to you in college we agreed. We agreed that we would work through it together.
LEIGH

Leigh, honey, I told you that I love you no matter who you are - and whoever you love. Your father and I both told you that-
BUSY

And Dad did research and didn't assume pronouns and came to drag shows and-
LEIGH

Oh please. Imagine me in a drag bar.
BUSY

Stop deflecting. That's what I do.
LEIGH

I'm not deflecting, I'm on a time crunch to finish the calendar.
BUSY

What if, the whole point of the calendar is for us to talk about things - to talk about me and Ryan! Like me and Dad did.
LEIGH

A breath.

BUSY

Owen knew about Ryan?

LEIGH

Yeah. I told him after our first date... when we were at the drag bar.

BUSY

Leigh, this isn't about you and your, *girlfriend*. This is about us and about your father. I saw him, Leigh, in the room with the coats. I was right about--

LEIGH

Dad's not coming back, Mom! Dad is dead. He died.

BUSY

You don't think I know that? I saw the car, Leigh. I identified his body at the hospital.

LEIGH

Then how could you think -

BUSY

This advent calendar is magical. We have seen it. Don't you want to be a family again?

LEIGH

Ryan is my family.

Beat. This is the first time LEIGH has admitted that to herself. This is the first time BUSY has been confronted with the idea that she could lose LEIGH. BUNNY walks in.

BUNNY

What are you girls shouting about?

BUSY

Your granddaughter thinks that her new girlfriend is more family than Owen was.

BUNNY

(In badly-faked surprise)

What? Girlfriend? Leigh-

LEIGH

I didn't say that, Grandma. I said that Dad is dead. Am I wrong?

BUNNY

I'm... proud of you for being honest, sweetie.

BUSY

There is a difference between honesty and cruelty.

BUNNY

Exactly. And that's why I didn't use Ryan's pronouns when I told your mom about her!

BUSY

Mom!

LEIGH

Grandma!

BUNNY

What? I only told her it sounded like things were getting serious.

LEIGH

You did tell her!

BUSY

You didn't tell me enough!

LEIGH

So it is a problem for you!

BUSY

My problem is that you lie to me about who you are and-

LEIGH

I told you I was queer years ago! You didn't do the work! And Grandma!

BUNNY

I just wanted you both to be happy!

BUSY

And how did that work for you!?

LEIGH

And how did that work for you!?

The fight is about to erupt into actual violence when SARAH TONIN appears.

SARAH

Ladies, ladies, please.

BUSY

The Glamazon Delivery Woman?! Are you the one doing all of this?

SARAH

Who? Me? I'm just a lowly little anthropomorphized serotonin molecule with magical powers....and I'm pretty sure family doesn't talk to each other this way. I think you all need to cool down. Your gift from door #6 is a Sarah-Tonin-Certified-Chill-Pill.

SARAH throws open the door and an arctic wind washes over them.

BUNNY

I'm frozen.

SARAH

And you'll all stay that way until you calm down and talk to each other like actual humans... or fifteen minutes, whichever comes sooner. Now shut up, I've got to find my light.

SARAH steps into her spotlight.

SARAH

(Opens book)

Let it go, Let it go!

Oh crap, wrong story again.

Here we are.

Dang, this is even getting me down, and I'm imaginary.

What can I do to make these women see eye to eye?

They, like all human beings, are more alike than they are different.

Not like me who is literally without a single flaw.

All my normal tricks aren't working with these 3. I need to think outside the box.

I think you all better take a bathroom break while I figure out what to do next.

In the meantime, don't worry, you won't miss a thing. I keep them frozen till' you come back.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO

Door 7 - A Murderer of Joy

Lights up on the three women in the living room, still frozen in place. A few seconds, and then a magical festive sounding alarm plays, and they all unfreeze.

LEIGH

Oh thank God!

BUNNY

How is everybody feeling? Like we're ready to speak kindly to me- to each other?

BUSY

Well we waited the whole fifteen minutes instead so I say we finish what we-

Suddenly the doorbell rings. LEIGH and BUSY look at each other, then back at the door. The doorbell rings again.

BUSY

Who could that be...

LEIGH

(Checking her phone)

At the stroke of midnight.

BUSY and LEIGH look at each other.

BUSY

Sarah Tonin.

LEIGH

Sarah Tonin.

The doorbell rings again.

BUNNY

Well jeez girls, if no one is going to get it.

BUNNY heads straight to the door, faster than LEIGH and BUSY can get out -

BUSY

Mom, no!

LEIGH

Grandma don't!

BUNNY

As she is opening the door

What?

BUNNY opens the door and three carolers burst through the door. One is clearly SARAH TONIN in church choir robes, but fabulous sunglasses to shield her eyes from the lights of heaven. And big hair.

The carolers sing a silly, yet haunting rendition of “Carol of the Bells”, as they try to inch further and further into the house.

3 CAROLERS

PLEASE LET US IN
PLEASE LET US IN
WE’RE HERE TO SING
WE’RE HERE TO SING

PLEASE LET US IN
WE’RE HERE TO SING
NOWHERE TO RUN
WHILE THE BELLS RING

BUSY

Alright, that’s enough. Out, out of my house!!

BUSY and LEIGH start ushering the carolers out together.

BUNNY

Yeah, come back later!

LEIGH

Grandma?!

BUNNY

What? I love carolers.

*BUNNY hums and sings to herself.
BUSY and LEIGH literally push the carolers through the door, and slam it shut. Once they are on the other side the singing stops, like magic.*

BUSY

I've had it with her. Why won't she leave us alone?!

LEIGH

Because she's literally the last molecule of serotonin in my brain, Mom. If you get rid of her then you are a murderer of joy. Literally.

BUSY looks hurt. BUNNY pantomimes a clown murder. You heard us. LEIGH, exasperated, continues.

Mom - don't you think we should stop and talk?

BUSY

About what?

LEIGH

I'd really like to talk to you about -

BUSY

Leigh, we can talk all about, *that*, after we finish *this*. We only have a few more hours, and we're only halfway done!

BUNNY

I guess that means we aren't breaking for any more naps.

BUSY

No, we're not. Alright door number 7, show me what you've got.

BUSY opens the door and pulls out a pair of car keys. She looks at it for a second, then to the other women.

BUSY

These are...Owen's old car keys?

BLACK OUT

Door 7 - The Never-Ending Light Show... from Hell

Spotlight on SARAH TONIN, downstage corner. She is now in a black suit. The other two CAROLERS are not too far behind her, just barely lit

like shadows in the distance. They continue to carol, but their “Fa la la’s” are to the tune of the “Twilight Zone” theme. Fa la la la, Fa la la la, Fa la la la...they fade away as SARAH TONIN begins to speak.

SARAH TONIN

Imagine if you will, that there is a flashier dimension beyond that which is known to suburbanites. It is as bright as one thousand stars, and as neverending as intermission restroom lines. It lives in the middle ground between Thanksgiving and New Years, between festive and furious, and it lies between the summit of one’s pride, and the pit of another’s demise.

This is... The Way Too Bright Zone.

The carolers provide a final dramatic sting, before lights come up on BUSY, OWEN, BUNNY, and LEIGH sitting in the formation of a car.

SARAH TONIN

We join the Martin-Abrams family on a festive December night. But this isn’t just any December night, and this isn’t just any festivity. No, this is the night the Martin-Abrams family drove through the light show... from *hell!*

The carolers provide another dramatic sting, as the lights fade on them and SARAH. Lights get brighter on the Martin-Abrams family, as classic Christmas tunes begin to play.

LEIGH

What is this - wait, Mom are you driving?!

BUNNY

Watch the road!

LEIGH and BUNNY in the back seat freak out, but BUSY remains calm. OWEN does not seem to react.

BUSY

Mom, Leigh, we’re fine. We’re moving at about 2 miles an hour, and I’ve got a car right in front of me, and one right behind me. We aren’t going anywhere fast.

LEIGH

Wait a minute, bumper to bumper traffic...

BUNNY

(Looking out the car window.)

Blinding lights for as far as the eye can see...

LEIGH

The same 3 Christmas Songs on the radio on repeat...is this -

In unison, LEIGH & BUNNY in shock and horror, BUSY & OWEN straight faced.

ALL

The Light Show from Hell!

*Distant dramatic sting from **CAROLERS**. All laugh.*

LEIGH

I can't believe this! What a terrible memory!

BUNNY

This was the only time we drove through the Kringle Light *Extravaganza!*
(Jazz hands.)

LEIGH

It was advertised as like 30 minutes, but it was like three hoooouuurrrrrsss!
(Sings to the tune of "The Never Ending Story")

THE NEVER ENDING LIGHT SHOW!

OWEN

(chimes in with the "oh whoa whoa"s)
FA LA LA, FA LA LA, FA LA LA.

BUSY is the only one who notices. She smiles.

BUSY

It was not three hours.

OWEN

But it certainly wasn't 30 minutes.

OWEN & BUSY laugh, apparently LEIGH and BUNNY don't hear him.

LEIGH

And everyone kept going on about how pretty it was. "You just have to see it!" And it's like the same three reindeer lights, and a bunch of flickering snow flakes.

OWEN

There were a couple of nice ones -

Car stops short again, honking in the distance, all in the car react.

BUSY

But nothing worth bumper to bumper traffic. I barely got to see any of them because I had to keep my eyes forward.

BUNNY

You've seen one Christmas light, you've seen them all.

LEIGH

Why else was this so bad?

BUSY

(Chuckling.)

Why else!? This isn't bad enough?

LEIGH

No it was way worse. What was it...oh right the radio!

Reaches up into the front seat to mess with the radio, almost bumping into OWEN.

OWEN

Woah there!

BUSY

Yeah, watch it Leigh!

LEIGH

Sorry - just let me...

LEIGH messes with a dial and cue another Christmas song, and then another, and another, and finally she leaves it on one song.

LEIGH

(Each word between the change of each song.)

Every. Single. Station!

BUNNY

That's no different than the Christmas season anyway. You just can't escape Christmas.

LEIGH

It was worse somehow.

OWEN

It was worse wasn't it...how was it worse?

Sudden realization dawns on BUSY's face.

BUSY

Grandma Bunny had to go to the bathroom!

BUNNY

Oh that's right!

LEIGH

Oh TMI Grandma!

BUNNY

What? Sometimes ya gotta go.

BUSY

Not a porta potty in sight.

All laugh. Beat.

BUSY

Gosh. Why do we have such fond memories of this - this...

LEIGH

Hellish nightmare?

BUSY

Yes, that.

LEIGH

I don't know, I think it was stuff Dad was doing?

BUSY

(Looking to OWEN)

Stuff you were doing?

LEIGH

(Confused.)

Uh no, Dad. Like remember how he looked out at the lights, and the first reindeer he saw, he said -

LEIGH

Wow a reindeer!

OWEN

Wow a reindeer!

BUSY and BUNNY laugh, but BUSY laughs at OWEN.

LEIGH

Except there was a reindeer like every 10 feet, so each time he would go -

LEIGH

Wow a reindeer!

OWEN

Wow a reindeer!

LEIGH

And I had to yell at him to stop, but he'd keep going,

LEIGH

Leigh, look! A reindeer!

OWEN

Leigh, look! A reindeer!

BUSY

(Laughing.)

You were being ridiculous.

OWEN

I had to do something!

LEIGH looks at BUNNY confused, she gives a slight shrug.

BUSY

(To OWEN)

Or how about when after we stopped at the gas station, while Grandma Bunny was finally in the restroom, you stopped inside and got us all slushies.

LEIGH

Um, no, that was Dad.

BUSY

(Realizing she is the only one who sees and hears OWEN.)
But he...right, you're right.

LEIGH

Yeah.

(Small pause.)

And he handed me mine and said, "Thanks Leigh, Mommy really needed this."

BUSY

Did he really say that?

LEIGH

I think.

OWEN

I did.

OWEN places a hand on BUSY's leg. She tears up.

BUNNY

You know, maybe we're supposed to let this memory live in the past.

BUSY

What?

BUNNY

It's something special that happened while we were all here. *All* of us. We can appreciate that, and now move on, and make new memories.

LEIGH

I like that Grandma.

LEIGH leans her head on BUNNY's shoulder. BUSY looks back to OWEN, afraid he might leave if she doesn't keep looking back to check he's there.

BUNNY

And how about we make those memories with new family members. What does Ryan think about Christmas lights from hell?

LEIGH

(Laughing)

Honestly - I think she'd love it just as much. What do you think mom? Wanna try the Kringle Light Extravaganza again?

BUSY doesn't respond.

LEIGH

(Annoyed)

Mom -

BUSY

You don't see your Dad do you?

LEIGH

What?

BUSY

What about you Mom?

BUNNY

Honey, what are you talking about?

BUSY

Owen he's...he's in the car, sitting next to me.

Silence as LEIGH and BUNNY look at each other.

BUSY

I've been seeing him and hearing him and -

LEIGH

Mom...

BUSY

You brushed me off before, but I am serious about this. I believe that healing our family is about... bringing back the missing piece? It's Owen!! That's why I can see him!

BUNNY

Busy, we need to start letting Owen go. *You* need to start letting Owen go. It's for the best, trust me.

BUSY

This is different than when dad passed. We can still help Owen, Sarah said so! And I'm tired of you giving up on him. Giving up on us!

LEIGH

You're the one who's given up on us! I need you to hear me and see me for once, instead of doing this thing you always do!

BUSY

What do you mean I always do?!

BUNNY

Oi vey...

Dramatic sting from the CAROLERS as the scene fades to black, and a spotlight comes up on SARAH TONIN in the corner.

SARAH TONIN

An advent calendar, designed with 12 doors to help these three women through a new kind of holiday season. Little do they know, it only works when they choose to walk their path together, and not leave each other behind. Will they break the curse and face the new dawn, or will they be stuck to argue with one another for eternity in - the Way Too Bright Zone.

Final dramatic sting from the CAROLERS as the entire stage fades to black.

The lights flicker back on and the women are standing once again. The car and the light show and OWEN all disappeared.

LEIGH

This. You erase me! Always! You don't know me, Mom, and you won't try to.

BUSY

Won't try? Please. All I do is try. Erase you? You lie to me. All the time. There's nothing to erase because I don't know what's true-

SARAH TONIN

Ladies, ladies, please! Weren't you listening? Can't you cut with the bickering and make with the holiday cheer already?

LEIGH
No!

BUSY
No!

SARAH TONIN
Well that answers that question. Bunny, lend a hand?

BUNNY
You got it.

BUNNY opens Door #8. A tumbleweed rolls across the stage.

Door 8 - You Got it Wrong... Partner

A loud noise, maybe a western song or a sound of a neigh from a horse

BUSY
Oh my gosh, what was that?

LEIGH
I don't know, but we're not there anymore. Where are we? Why am I holding a make-up brush?

BUSY
It's obviously this door's clue. Bunny? Are you here?

The Christmas ELVES and BUNNY roll out a TV. They are all wearing cowboy hats.

BUNNY
I've got something here you're gonna want to see. And I'm afraid it ain't gonna be pretty.

BUSY approaches the TV

TV VOICE
It's a high noon showdown between LEIGH, the quickest comeback in the West, and BUSY, known across the state lines as a guilt-tripping goddess.

BUSY
Oh, a goddess! Well I'll take that.

TV VOICE
Let us look at a past memory, and see who wins.

The TV shows a scene playing from a Christmas Past. We see a video playing a younger version of both BUSY & LEIGH.

BUSY

This doesn't seem so bad. Don't you remember this?

LEIGH

How could I forget?

BUSY

Wasn't this a special moment?

LEIGH

I guess you could say that.

In the video Busy and Leigh are sitting together on a couch. Busy hands Leigh a present.

BUSY (In Video)

I got you something.

LEIGH (In Video)

Mom, it's not time to exchange gifts yet.

BUSY (In Video)

I know, but I thought this could be something special between just you and me.

LEIGH smiles.

LEIGH (in Video)

Okay.

TV VOICE

Shots fired!

BUSY

Oh I can't wait to see this!

LEIGH

Uh-huh.

Busy in the video hands her a gift. Leigh in the video opens it, with a little excitement. It's Make-up.

LEIGH (In Video)

Oh, is this...make-up?

BUSY (In Video)

(She says it like this means something)

Not just any make-up, this is Highland Park make-up.

LEIGH (in video)

...so?

TV VOICE

She's ready to fight back.

BUSY (in video)

This is our family brand. Your grandmother wore this type of foundation. I wore this type of foundation. Your aunt expanded and also used their eyeshadow. Maybe a little too much of it if you ask me. Anyway, I figured it was time for you to start wearing it too.

BUSY

It really is a high quality make-up line.

LEIGH

Sure.

LEIGH (in video)

Oh. Okay, uhm. Thanks.

BUSY (in video)

I've noticed you've had a bit of low self esteem lately.

LEIGH (in video)

You have?

BUSY (in video)

It's my job, as your Mother, to notice these things.

LEIGH (in video)

I really haven't felt all that great lately. It's just like everyone knows how to be a person, and I don't-

BUSY (in video)

And that's why I got you this special make-up. Looking my best always makes me feel better.

TV VOICE

Target hit!

LEIGH

So were you saying I didn't look good?

BUSY

That's not what I was saying.

LEIGH

That's what it sounded like.

TV VOICE

Shots returned!

LEIGH (in video)

Okay, well thanks Mom.

BUSY (in video)

You're welcome.

BUSY in video gives Leigh in video a kiss and walks away. Leigh in the video approaches a mirror and looks at her skin closely in the mirror. She starts to tear up. The TV is rolled away.

BUSY

Oh.

LEIGH

Yeah.

Busy and Leigh stand apart from each other. The elves place cowboy hats on their heads. Bunny stands in the middle. When they talk, they point their fingers, almost like they are imaginary pistols.

BUSY

I didn't know you- I didn't realize-

LEIGH

That's because you weren't paying attention. You never listen!

BUNNY

Remember to fight fair, ladies.

BUSY

But everything's different now.

LEIGH

Is it?

BUSY

Of course! We don't even have that couch anymore.. I don't fit in that top! Your dad's dead. Nothing is the same.

LEIGH

You are not listening to me: that's the same. That's what matters. I never wore that make-up. I was never the kind of girl you wanted me to be. The kind of kid you wanted.

BUSY

How can you say that? All I ever do is love you. Take care of you.

LEIGH

You didn't take care of me. You controlled me! You wanted me to be you!

TV VOICE

Boom!

They both fall to the ground.

Giddy-up little doggies. Game Over.

They take off their hats and sit next to each other.

BUSY

I see that I wasn't entirely fair to you. But I just want you to live an easy life, a happy life.

BUNNY takes both of their hands.

BUNNY

BusyBee, LeighLoo, no happy life is easy.

BUSY

I've lived through some things, Leigh. I want to stop you from-

LEIGH

No, mom. That's enough. Sometimes it would be better if you didn't stop me. Let me fail.

BUSY

And see you hurt? You can't ask that of me.

LEIGH

I am. You honestly believe that Dad is going to... come back from the dead. You don't get to pretend to be concerned about my well being when you're literally acting like a crazy person.

BUSY

How can you say that?

LEIGH

I'm not just going to say it. I'm going to show you.

LEIGH opens Door #9

Door #9 - The Great Holiday Time Loop Baking Show

Door 9 is opened to reveal the same recipe card from earlier.

LEIGH

It's the same recipe card from earlier.

BUNNY

I hate reruns.

SARAH

No Bunny, this is something new entirely!

BUSY

Now I think there's been a mistake.

SARAH

There have been many mistakes, Busy. Especially where these cookies are concerned.

BUNNY

But we've already dealt with the damn cookies. Please! Please don't make me eat those again!!!!

SARAH

When a tradition is outdated, that tradition needs to be changed! Don't you agree?

LEIGH

Yes!

BUSY

No!

BUSY

I don't know.

LEIGH

I don't know.

SARAH

Which is why I signed you up to be on the next delicious episode of *The Great Holiday Time Loop Baking Show*.

BUSY

What?

DIRECTOR

(Appearing from nowhere)

Going live in thirty seconds, people!

LEIGH

Who are you supposed to be?

DIRECTOR

Places, people, places!

BUNNY

Thank you, places.

SARAH

We have an outdated recipe, bad at best. How can we spice that baby up? Make it new, fresh, edible?

BUNNY

(To BUSY)

Best to just close your eyes and go with it dear.

Three trays filled with ingredients are placed in front of them.

DIRECTOR

Going live in 5-

4-

3-

2-

...

SARAH TONIN

Welcome, one and all, to another holy jolly good golly episode of The Great Holiday Time Loop Baking show, The phantasmagorical cooking competition where families come together only to be torn apart, all in the name of entertainment.

DIRECTOR

The Great Holiday Time Loop Baking Show was filmed in front of a live studio audience.

SARAH TONIN

I'm your Host, Sarah Tonin, with today's unlucky contestants, the Martin-Abrahms family! Are we ready for an intergenerational baking challenge? Let's give them a round of applause.

(Applause)

These three have been through the ringer tonight, and it's only going to get worse for them. Unless they can CHANGE and speak their truth.

(Applause)

Ladies, are you up to the challenge? I want you to dish it out, swallow that pride and serve up a big helping of The Truth.

APPLAUSE sign flips over to reveal OOOOOOOOOO

These woman have a final opportunity to change the recipe for Jubilee Wafers. What will they do? Timers on. Ready, set, bake! Studio audience, meet our judges. Judges, our audience.

RAMSEY

Come, Mary, we shall whittle away at their confidence during their interviews.

MARY

Quite right.

BUNNY

What are we doing?

LEIGH

I'm adding chocolate.

BUSY

No, it calls for dried fruit.

LEIGH

The point is we're supposed to change it, remember.

BUNNY

Couldn't we just make banana bread? It's hard to mess up banana bread.

SARAH TONIN

Time for the Q&A section where we bombard our contestants with questions so deeply invasive and personal that you may ask yourself, "What's this got to do with baking?" Starting with you, Ms. Bunny, your question is-

BUNNY

No thank you.

BUSY

Oh no, we all had to face ridiculous consequences tonight, it's your turn.

BUNNY

As the aged matriarch, don't I get a free pass?

BUSY

Don't you always get a free pass?

SARAH TONIN

We need an answer, HunnyBunny.

BUNNY

Sarah, I'd like to plead the fifth.

SARAH TONIN

Oooo, deflecting with humor, too bad. Now you must finish the cookies without using any of the ingredients on your recipe card. Back to baking everyone, chop chop!

LEIGH

I think we have to change what we already have.

BUNNY

I'm making banana bread.

BUSY

Well maybe I don't care if the cookies taste bad. You eat what's given to you.

LEIGH

Even when it sucks?

BUNNY

Or you could just make banana bread.

BUSY

And abandon your family?

LEIGH

What's banana bread got to do with family?

BUSY

This is a family recipe.

SARAH TONIN

No, sorry, so close, but that wasn't the response we were hoping for.

RAMSEY

As punishment for projecting, we are going to take away your mixing bowl.

MARY

You now have to mix your ingredients inside of this newspaper. Tough break, love.

LEIGH

Well it won't hurt to add a little chocolate, that's all I'm saying. Maybe some rainbow sprinkles.

BUSY

Sprinkles?

SARAH

Ladies, I'm going to have to ask you to focus on your own tables, and not judge the tables of others.

LEIGH

See, you're breaking the rules.

BUSY

I don't think anyone would call ME the rule breaker of this family.

LEIGH

What's that supposed to mean?

SARAH

Boundaries ladies.

BUSY

You've never been happy with what you were given. It was never enough. Never good enough. Some of us just had to make due with what we had. But oh no, Leigh wants special treatment. Leigh wants everyone to change just for her. Leigh wants to add chocolate to the cookie!

LEIGH

You think just because you had to choke down the same gross crap year after year that I should too.

BUSY

Well why not? This same gross crap might be gross but it's safe! What if you choose to add chocolate to the cookie and you're allergic to it! What if you *choose* to have a chocolate cake but the bakery won't serve you because they don't believe in chocolate cake? Why would you choose to make life harder?!

SARAH

I'm getting that this isn't about baked goods.

LEIGH

Because it's not a choice, Mom! I can't help it that I like chocolate cookies and sugar cookies - and snickerdoodles too for that matter.

BUSY

Snickerdoodles?! What does that even mean?! You can't have all of the cookies, Leigh. The world doesn't work like that.

LEIGH

Not yet! And it's just a metaphor, jeez. I can't have all of the cookies unless the world changes. But you don't want it to change. You want everything to be the same.

BUSY

What's wrong with that?

BUNNY

The good news is, I think I'm winning this baking show.

LEIGH

Because if we didn't fit into your perfect little cookie cutter image of what we should be, we were wrong. Well maybe you were wrong. Maybe the whole cookie cutter image was wrong. And you forced us into a mold we didn't want to fit. The only one who understood me was Dad. I wish that I *could* believe that he was coming back. I wish it was him who was here, and not you!

BUNNY, BUSY, and LEIGH all gasp. The timer goes off.

SARAH TONIN

Who's ready for some cookies?!

RAMSEY and MARY come forward in their best food critic/food show judge energy.

RAMSEY

Were these intended for Human consumption?

MARY

What a pity.

JUDGES shuffle to the next box.
RAMSEY stares at BUSY, uncomfortable intimidation

MARY

Oh. Dear.

RAMSEY

You can't succeed in baking a simple family recipe that has been hand written down countless times and passed from generation to generation? Do you even love your family?

MARY

All I can ask is; Ladies, what happened?

BUSY

It's not the cookies that are rotten, maybe it's the lot of you, you ever think of that?

TEXT alert from LEIGH'S phone. Then another.

BUNNY

What's that sound? A baking timer?

Phone rings

LEIGH

No, quick, help me find my phone.

SARAH TONIN

The game is still goin, no more running away.

LEIGH

Hello? Ryan?

Phone still ringing.

BUSY

Must be mine. Maybe someone who's actually glad I'm alive.

LEIGH

Crap.

All game show elements are removed.

BUSY

Blocked caller?

A recorded message plays, a Christmas gram.

BUSY hangs up, irritated.

I've had just enough with these interruptions. *(To the Calendar)* What more do you want from us?

Door 10 - You Can't Escape Christmas

Door 10 bursts open and a bell rolls out just as the front door explodes with carolers!

3 CAROLERS

(Back to Carol of the bells)

YOU LOVED THIS SONG
ONCE UPON A TIME
DING DONG DING DONG/
YES IT ALL RHYMES

BUSY

/I wonder if I hate these carolers as much as my daughter hates me.

LEIGH

I don't hate you, Mom. I just miss Dad.

They manage to force the door closed, together.

It immediately pops back open.

CAROLERS

Fa la la la
Fa la la la
/Fa la la la
Fa la la la

/BUNNY rushes over to help.

They close the door and deadbolt it.

BUSY

You miss him more than you're grateful that I'm alive, you made that pretty clear.

(The Carolers appear in an open window. Busy shuts it)

/It's like the night of the living carols out there.

CAROLERS

/Fa la la la

Fa la la la

/Fa la la la

Fa la la la

LEIGH

/It's just the holidays, Mom. I didn't mean it. This time of year makes me tense.

BUSY

Is it because you have to spend it with me?

BUNNY

Busy...

BUSY

I'm serious, Leigh...

LEIGH'S phone rings. The women look at it, and LEIGH approaches it. She answers and we hear breathing on the phone.

LEIGH

Hello? Who is this?

BUNNY

I'm cutting the power.

BUSY

Mom - stop! -

It's too late.

CAROLERS

(Distantly)

Fa la la la

Fa la la la

/Fa la la la

Fa la la la

BUSY

/But we closed all the entrances, where are the carolers!

VOICE (O.S.)

The carols are coming from inside the house!

The women scream!

The carolers appear with flashlights under their chin

BUSY

(to BUNNY)

You just had to tell them to come back later?!

CAROLER 1

Black Friday.

CAROLER 2

Same day shipping.

CAROLER 3

Consumerism.

ALL CAROLERS

All tied up with pretty ribbons-

CAROLER 1

Buy their love this Holiday season!

The flashlights go out and the carolers disappear.

The TV crackles to life... filled with static.

LEIGH

Didn't you cut the power?

BUNNY

Turns out I just turned off the lights...

The lights come back on... then start flickering. Spooky lighting fills the room.

BUNNY

Hmmm...

The CAROLERS surround them. Is one of them... crawling out of the TV?!

CAROLERS

HEAR ALL THE BELLS
THIS FEELS LIKE HELL
INVADE YOUR HOME
WHILE YOU ATONE
GIVE INTO HEALING, OR YOU'LL BE REELING, FOR YEARS TO COME, YOU'LL
NEVER BE DONE. YOU CAN NOT ESCAPE THE PATH OF GRIEVING, SCARY SCARY
SCARY SCARY FEELINGS

*The women scream as the caroling gets louder. A caroler lunges at them.
LEIGH throws open the door as BUSY and BUNNY run into the kitchen,
BUNNY grabbing a broom and swatting the carolers back out the door.*

LEIGH forces the door closed yet again.

LEIGH

I've got this door. Can you go shut the others? They had to get in somehow.

BUSY

Leigh... you didn't answer my question... about spending the holidays with me.

LEIGH

Can you just... let me lead for a second? They came from the garage, maybe we left it open. Can you check?

BUSY

Okay... okay.

*BUNNY takes BUSY by the arm and they go off together.
SARAH TONIN appears.*

SARAH TONIN

You're really good at keeping doors shut, aren't you?

LEIGH

JEEZ Sarah - a warning maybe? Especially now!

LEIGH loosens up, and a CAROLER arm reaches through a gap in the door. LEIGH screams and shuts it again.

AH - I just wish this holiday was over already!

SARAH TONIN

Oh little Leighloo, the holidays are everywhere, no matter where you go. Even if you get through this year's season, you're going to have to do it again next year. And the year after that, and the year -

LEIGH

I get it! I just knew my mom would make a big deal. She says she loves me, but I don't trust her to love Ryan, too.

SARAH TONIN

Now that isn't fair. You just dropped a huge bombshell on her, at one of the most tense holiday seasons, during the hardest year of your mother's life. And not only that, but you hid it from her until this nosy queen went and shook everything up.

LEIGH

You've seen what she's like.

SARAH TONIN

I've seen what you're like, too, kiddo. She's demonstrated that she wants to make a safe space for you... give her a chance. Be honest with her. She may not understand right away, but... better late than never?
Love takes practice.

LEIGH

I don't know about that...

SARAH TONIN

Well... I do. And I'm from *your* brain. If you can't trust me... who can you trust?

BUNNY (O.S.)

And stay out!

SARAH TONIN

And that's my cue to get the next door ready.

LEIGH

Wait. Is Mom right? About what the calendar does?

SARAH TONIN

I already told you. It heals your family.

LEIGH

But what does that mean?

SARAH TONIN

That's all I got for you, kiddo. I've still got some magic to do. You know what they say, if you want it done right, you gotta do it yourself. And Sarah Tonin doesn't half ass anything.

And in a poof of festive magic, SARAH TONIN is gone. The caroling stops, the lights return to normal, LEIGH no longer feels the pounding on the other side of the door, and eases off.

Door #11 - A Step into Gratitude

BUSY walks onto stage, completely fed up.

BUSY

Sarah? Magic Elves? I'm ready for a way out. I know you meant well but I think home invasion is taking things a step too far!

LEIGH

Mom, listen I think this isn't going to stop until we talk about Ryan *and* Dad. I was just with Sarah and -

The next door hums interrupting LEIGH. The women look to it.

BUSY

Sarah, I told you I'm done with this. I wasn't built for metaphysical travel.

She reluctantly opens the door. It's a train ticket

Oh. A train ticket. Well I don't mind trains-

The sound of trains. The lights fade as she is transported to a train station. LEIGH disappears, and SARAH emerges, with a train conductor's hat.

LEIGH (O.S.)

Mom? Mom?!

SARAH

Which way you go is up to you.

BUSY

What do you mean?

SARAH

Stop 1.

The train comes to a halt. BUSY steps outside. LEIGH is crying, writing a letter.

BUSY

Leigh, Leigh it's me honey. What's wrong?

SARAH

She cannot see you or hear you.

LEIGH takes a pill and pours a glass of scotch. LEIGH looks at the letter and crumples it up.

LEIGH

Why even write a letter? No one even cares.

BUSY

Oh sweetheart, that's not true. I care about you so much. So much.

The sound of a train

SARAH

Next stop.

BUSY

Wait, wait, she needs me.

LEIGH walks away. The train sounds rise and fall.

SARAH

Stop 2.

We see BUNNY smoking a cigarette, wearing black

BUSY

Smoking? She doesn't smoke.

LEIGH

Grandma, are you ready?

BUNNY quickly puts out her cigarette

BUNNY

Uh-huh.

BUNNY goes up to LEIGH

How are you doing, sweetie?

LEIGH

I'm...okay.

BUNNY

No one is okay when they lose their Mother.

BUSY

Me? Wait, me?

LEIGH

Yeah, I'm sad, of course I am. But you know, her and I never really saw eye-to-eye. I wish we had gotten the chance to be adults together. To be close. Like a real Mother and Daughter. For her to see me as an adult. Dad never got the chance... I just wanted her to try.

BUNNY

She never really recovered from the loss of Owen, did she?

LEIGH

She never returned to the land of the living after he died.

BUNNY puts her hand on LEIGH's shoulder

BUNNY

Remember the happy memories, love.

LEIGH

I will.

BUSY

Wait, I'm right here! I'm right here!

SARAH

Train is moving!

Train noises

BUSY

What are you doing to me! I said I wanted to stop! Please. I'm done.

SARAH

Final stop.

Train comes screeching to a stop. They are back at the house.

BUSY

Wait, I'm home?

A video? Of them all sitting happily at a table together, the whole family laughing and carrying on. They are clearly enjoying each other's company

Hey, that looks nice.

She touches the screen, seeing herself.

And there I am. But where's Owen?

SARAH

Owen's dead, Busy. You claimed the body yourself.

BUSY

But... But I've been seeing him all night.

SARAH

As part of the past. And now you've seen a future.

BUSY

(Referring to the happy family on the TV screen)

How can I get to that? Which one of these things I've seen is true?

SARAH

Whichever one you want to be Busy. Will you turn away from life? Will you abandon your daughter for fear of losing a piece of your husband? Or will you accept the mess? Will you walk through, step by step, towards joy?

BUSY

You know I love my family.

SARAH

Then the answer is simple.

BUSY stares at the video.

SARAH

Well? Didn't you hear me?

SARAH pulls out some type of microphone, and "This is the last stop on this train." announcement from the NYC Metro plays.

BUSY

Oh, right.

BUSY steps "off" the train and into her home.

BUSY

Sarah - thank you.

SARAH tips her hat, and heads off stage. BUSY walks through her home, lightly touching some of the furniture, as she heads to the Advent Calendar. LEIGH walks in.

LEIGH

Mom! There you are. Where were you? Grandma Bunny and I couldn't find you. Listen, I need to apologize.

BUSY

No Leigh, I need to apologize. But first, we need to finish this. After all, (*Checking a phone or watch*) we have one door left and less than one hour remaining.

LEIGH

Right, but are you sure you want to do this? I mean don't get me wrong I'm ready to get Sarah out of our house, but, well...this might mean all of the magic stops. Including seeing Dad.

BUSY

(taking in Leigh)

I see your father every time I look at you. I-I think that's why... I'm sorry. I don't have the words.

LEIGH

There will be plenty of time to find the words later.

Door #12 - Who Murdered Christmakkah?!

BUSY smiles as she opens the final door. She pulls out a classic Christmas tree ornament.

LEIGH

It's an ornament.

Both of the women look around, expecting something magical to happen, but nothing does.

BUSY

Well, what do you think it means?

LEIGH

Oh maybe we have to decorate the Christmas tree Sarah and the Glamazons brought us!

BUSY

Right! To move on and celebrate the holiday with the family I have. Let's do that!

BUSY and LEIGH run to the tree and start decorating with the box of decorations brought in from the elves in the previous scene. They decorate like mad, until-

LEIGH

Wait, where is it?

BUSY

Where's what?

LEIGH

The ornament. My favorite ornament!

BUSY

That's my favorite one too! Your first Christmas ornament. The one you made with your father. The macaroni menorah.

LEIGH

(Digging through the box of ornaments)

I can't find it!

BUSY

Maybe it's in another box in the basement?

LEIGH

No, I definitely had it when Grandma Bunny brought out the decorations earlier. The first door.

BUSY

Well then it has to be around here somewhere. Come on, let's find it!

The two women search around the living room, behind the tree, under the sofa, etc. Until BUNNY walks in holding something.

BUNNY

Girls, I have some bad news...

BUSY and LEIGH look over as BUNNY reveals broken macaroni menorah ornament pieces. They gasp in horror.

LEIGH

How did that happen?

BUSY

Who could have done this?

SARAH (O.S.)

Yes - who done it?!

Dramatic lighting as SARAH walks onto stage, perhaps with a Sherlock Holmes cap and pipe, or other clothing befitting a brilliant detective.

BUSY

Oh you're still here - I was hoping we would be done!

SARAH

Oh my dear Elizabeth, how could I leave when there is a mystery to be solved. If I left now, you lot would never know who murdered Christmakkah!

BUNNY

Murdered Christmakkah?

LEIGH

You know who broke the ornament?

SARAH

I do!

BUSY

How?!

LEIGH

Who?!

BUNNY

What???

SARAH

My darlings, I will answer all of your questions, but to do so I will have to walk us through the night - step by step.

This scene should be done quickly and with great energy from SARAH. Almost as if at times she cares little if the women are actually able to follow along.

SARAH

(Dragging BUNNY towards the couch)

At the beginning of our night Granda Bunny was asleep here on the couch.

SARAH pushes BUNNY onto the couch, and glares at her.

BUNNY

Oh, uh, HONK, shuuuu, HONK, shuuu...

SARAH

(Dragging LEIGH to the front door.)

Then baby Leigh walks in, *(Shouting)* "Wake up Grandma!!"

BUNNY

AHH!

LEIGH

I didn't do that!

SARAH

Then the two of you shared in on a little secret, yes, yes, mmmm, secret secrets.

BUNNY

What?

SARAH

And just as you were getting to the juiciest part - Momma Busy walks in!

BUSY

No need to push me around, I can do it myself.

SARAH

And she noticed immediately that you were both keeping something from her, didn't you Busy! But then, the doorbell!

The doorbell actually rings. The women all look at it, and slowly approach. SARAH runs behind the set and is on the other side of the door before they open it.

BUSY

JEEZ!

LEIGH

How did you?!

SARAH

The Holiday Spirit be with you! (*In little elf voice*) And also with you!

BUSY

Yes yes, when did the ornament break?

SARAH

I'm getting there, I'm getting there! Then we brought in the Advent Calendar. (*Mimes pushing in the Calendar.*) And it had 12 doors. Door number 1, and Door number 2, and Door number 3, and Door number 4, and Door number 5, and -

THE WOMEN

Get on with it!

SARAH

Well! To make a long story short -

BUNNY

Too late.

SARAH

You went through each of the doors one at a time - BUT, there was one door you went through separately.

Realization.

BUSY

The coats!

LEIGH

The ice rink!

BUNNY

Huh?

SARAH

Precisely! And if we remember, Busy came out of her door to come save Leigh at the ice rink.

BUSY

Yes, I did.

SARAH

And during that time, where were you Grandma Bunny, hm?

BUNNY

Making myself another eggnog of course.

LEIGH

Checks out.

SARAH

Yes, and so it was easy for Busy to slip into the living room -

BUSY

Wait a second, mother would have seen me!

SARAH

And that's exactly why you stopped by the light switch first and -

SARAH mimes shutting down a giant light switch. The stage lights go out. Screams from the women, BUNNY screams like a cat. SARAH turns the lights back on.

SARAH

Oh come now, it's just a little bit of dark. And don't act so frightened Busy, because it was in that darkness you smashed the ornament, quickly hid it in the other room, and returned to the living room to turn on the lights and save Leigh, all before Grandma Bunny could say -

BUNNY

What are you girls shouting about?!

BUSY

Why that's ridiculous, you have no proof!

SARAH

Ladies, the other half of the smashed ornament is missing. Whoever has it is the murderer. Turn out your pockets!

The women search their pockets, and a shocked BUSY pulls out the remains of the broken ornament. BUNNY and LEIGH gasp in horror.

LEIGH

Mom?!

SARAH

And there you have it! Who else would be such a grinch and break the one remaining piece of holiday joy this family had left? If she can't have the holidays like she used to, then no one can!

BUSY

What, no there must be some mistake, I didn't...I didn't do it!

SARAH

Busy, we've got you red handed - it's your fault that the holiday is ruined. You killed Christmakkah. Now, if you'll just come with me.

SARAH pulls out a pair of fuzzy handcuffs and walks towards BUSY.

LEIGH

Wait a second - Mom would never smash the ornament. She's just been trying to protect us this whole time. She's gone through so much change in her life without Dad, it's only natural she should want things to go back to normal. How could I expect her to be ok with another change so suddenly. I should have been more patient and understanding.

(To BUSY)

I know that you didn't mean to hurt me, and I'm sorry I hurt you back.

BUSY

Oh, Leigh!

SARAH holds up her hand and the other women freeze. She walks towards the audience and speaks to them.

SARAH

She's right. But that's just one way it could have gone - it could have also happened like this!

SARAH rushes back to the women who unfreeze and look at her.

SARAH

So Busy didn't break the ornament and murder Christmas. But then who did? Well to answer that, we'll have to go back to when the carolers struck!

SARAH opens the front door, and a CAROLER emerges from the door singing, and the women start screaming.

CAROLER

I, am, your Christmas caroler!

SARAH slaps the CAROLER. The CAROLER looks hurt, and the women stare in shock.

SARAH

What, I had to stop her caroling!

SARAH shuts the door on the CAROLER.

SARAH

While Busy and Bunny were pushing out the carolers in the kitchen, Leigh ran to light switch, and then -

SARAH mimes shutting the lights. BUNNY screams her catlike scream again.

LEIGH

Not again!

BUSY

Turn on the lights!

SARAH turns on the lights.

LEIGH

God, I hate it when she does that!

BUNNY screams her catlike scream.

SARAH

There in the darkness Leigh smashed the ornament, hid it in all the commotion, and returned to the lights before anyone could catch her.

BUSY

Wait, why would she smash her own ornament?

SARAH

To create confusion!

BUNNY

It worked.

SARAH

This way later in the night she could frame you, Busy!

BUSY gasps.

SARAH

Just like how she could blame you for ruining the holidays. And how is that any different from all the lies and secrets she's kept from you? She always refused to open up to you, and this time she would end things for good. No more spending the holidays with poor old mom!

BUSY

That doesn't sound like Leigh at all. She was upset with me today, and she had every right to be, but she would never purposefully set me up like that. Leigh has spent all night trying to be honest with me, and that must have been so hard for her. I created such a hostile environment her whole life by setting up these expectations, of course she was too scared to be vulnerable with me, especially with her father gone. I could never blame her for that.

LEIGH

Oh, Mom!

SARAH holds up her hand again, and the other women freeze. She walks towards the audience and speaks to them.

SARAH

Well that could have been the ending - but what about this?

SARAH rejoins the women who unfreeze.

SARAH

Fine, fine. Let me try this again. Let's see...Ah ha! Right when the two of you were at the peak of your argument, Grandma -

BUNNY

Alright, I confess! I did it, I killed him!

LEIGH

Him?!

BUSY

Killed?!

BUNNY

It was the 70's, my ex-ex husband. I caught him at home with our french maid..they were...they were...spinning the dreidel together!!!

SARAH pulls out cue cards, and looks through them, trying to find the plot.

BUNNY

I hated him - so much, that, icicles, on the side of my face - freeze, freezing, cold, shivering, freeze -

SARAH holds up her hand again, and the other women freeze. She walks towards the audience and speaks to them.

SARAH

Ok, that *really* didn't happen. Why don't we try this one more time.

SARAH rejoins the women who unfreeze.

BUSY

Ok Sarah enough! What really happened?

BUNNY

Right, who's the murder!?

LEIGH

Grandma, there's no murderer!

SARAH

Leigh's right - but you are *all* to blame! You've all played a part in how you got here. I've been telling you that all night, and until you are able to see it, there's no way you're going to heal. Busy, you've refused to listen to Leigh just as much as she's put up

barriers. And Leigh, you've refused to give your mom grace just as much as she's refused to move on. And Bunny, when you're caught in the middle, pleasing both sides and deflecting with humor doesn't serve anybody. Your daughter needs you, and your granddaughter needs you all to come together. You hear me?!

The women nod, smile or hold hands with one another. SARAH goes to put away her pipe or her hat.

SARAH

That's another mystery solved by the great, *Sarah Tonin*.

LEIGH

But wait there's still one thing I don't understand.

BUNNY

One thing?

LEIGH

Who really broke the ornament?

SARAH

No one - it was an accident. It fell off the counter when the box was moved into the kitchen. Sometimes something awful happens, important things break, or fall apart, and it's no one's fault. There's no one to blame. *Got it?*

Again the women nod. BUSY and LEIGH look at each other.

BUSY

I'm so sorry Leigh, for everything.

LEIGH

Mom - didn't you hear? It's no one's fault!

BUSY

No, I should have listened to you. I should have been excited for you to find someone you love, someone who truly makes you happy. I'm so sorry I made it so hard for you to tell me that.

LEIGH

And I'm so sorry I made it so hard for you to trust me. I promise no more secrets. I'm going to be here for you from now on.

I love you.

BUSY

I love you too mom.

LEIGH

The two hug. BUNNY watches, and sniffles. And just then the Advent Calendar breaks into pieces and flies out of the room.

An Ending

The women are together, in their home. They look around. Is this over?

Are we done?

BUSY

Did we win?

BUNNY

We made it! We actually finished the advent calendar.

LEIGH

We did...

BUSY

No Dad.

LEIGH

I think it's for the best. I think...

BUSY

They said there would be healing. Well, how do we feel?

BUNNY

I kind of feel lighter.

BUSY

I kind of feel like crap.

LEIGH

Voice of SARAH blares down like the voice of God

SARAH (O.S)

Ladies, healing is a process. Sometimes it feels good, sometimes it feels hard. But the important thing is, you're not ignoring it anymore. And you're going through it together. But don't worry, my little baby jingle-bells, I leave you with a parting gift.

The lights shine on a blank card on the ground. BUNNY picks it up.

BUSY

What's this?

LEIGH

A recipe card.

BUNNY

It's blank.

BUSY

It has Owen's letterhead on it. It's from his recipe cards, but there's nothing written.

LEIGH

More cooking, oy vey!

SARAH (O.S)

The past cannot be re-written, but the future-

BUSY gasps

BUSY

We have the chance to write our future. To make it look the way we want to look.

LEIGH

How do we want it to look? How do we want it to taste? A new tradition!

BUSY

There should be something sweet. Because our family should be sweet

BUNNY

And a few nuts in here for sure.

BUSY

But that's life, isn't it, it's a metaphor for life, some hard nuts, some soft fruits, but it nourishes us.

SARAH (O.S)

Bingo.

Sarah walks on stage. All the women run to hug her.

SARAH

You all didn't really think I was going to leave you alone, did you?

BUNNY

We understand what you mean now. We still have work to do, but we promise not to leave each other to deal with it alone.

LEIGH

And Mom, I'll try to share with you more. To trust you. I'm sorry I didn't before.

BUSY

And Leigh, why don't you give Ryan a call. I don't want them to have to wait until next season. She should come now. She is welcome here.

SARAH

Now, at the stroke of midnight - er - 5 am, I turn back into a chemical compound in your brain. Sadly, this is my last five minutes in human form, so let's make it count.

The Glamazon Elves return as other molecules of Sarah Tonin. They hum and sing as LEIGH, BUSY, and BUNNY sit around the couch, and call Ryan on Facetime.

LEIGH

Hey sleepyhead. Sorry, I know it's stupid early, but... my Mom really wants to meet you and... I want you to meet her.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO BLACK AS:

EPILOGUE

*Voiceovers collected from voice memos from members of the community (chance to reach out via social media for a call-out to be a part of a new holiday show. Anyone can record a voice memo containing any well wishes to loved ones, hopes for the holiday season, shout outs to Santa, any and all holiday greetings/salutations/cheers, etc. If folks don't want to speak it themselves, they may submit a short line or two for the actors to read in this final Epilogue.)