Wheels of Love:
Turning Souls to the Saviour

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband, Brian W. Magaw and my family. They bore the brunt of everything else while I shut my world out for these past two years. Thank you for your encouragement and support.
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Abstract

This paper is written to explore the success of The Hallmark Movie Pattern. The famous female-lead romantic-comedy genre shines through their network when set against the backdrop of the Christmas season. Though many critics chastise the network for its cheesy repetitive storylines, the Hallmark Channel continues to hold the majority of the viewers every Christmas season. The franchise has, however, alienated some of their viewership by introducing the gay/lesbian agenda into some of their storylines, opening the door for Christian filmmakers to move into high demand. New Christian film streaming services such as PureFlix can now offer films that exceed The Hallmark pattern of success, while still maintaining Christian and traditional family values. An in-depth examination of how Amy L. Magaw’s screenplay, Wheels of Love, meets the qualifications of this pattern further shows how the film could be successful on either viewing platform—the Hallmark Channel or PureFlix.
Section I. – The Artist Statement

A. *Wheels of Love—Introduction*

My creative manuscript is a screenplay titled *Wheels of Love*. The screenplay is an adaptation of my own novel of the same name. The book and film share the story of Mandie McCormick, lead singer for her Southern Gospel Singing family, the McCormick’s. Mandie and her family travel the Southeast on their Prevost Semi-decker tour bus ministering to everyone through the gift of Christ-honoring song. Mandie struggles with her desire to continue serving God through this fabulous ministry and her desire to have a husband and a family.

B. *Why Write a Screenplay—The Drive*

I was raised on the 1980’s wave of home video. From my dad’s first Betamax and VHS players, my family developed a weekly routine of pizza from Georgio’s, our local Greek pizzeria, and a family movie rental from AudioVision, our town’s first movie rental store. Around 1985, we rented the original 1975 edition of *Escape to Witch Mountain*, and its 1978 sequel, *Return from Witch Mountain*. I was ten years old and boy-crazy. I just fell in love with the character of Tony, then played by Ike Eisenmann.

At the end of the sequel, I felt compelled to write a third installation of the story, which I did in my dad’s home office on his electric typewriter. I used one legal-sized sheet of copy paper per chapter. I kept my work to myself as long as possible (about two days) and then I shared my work with my granddaddy, who was an avid reader of comic books. I knew he would appreciate this adolescent work of science-fiction and teen romance. I wish I still had those papers. Everyone needs a good laugh now and then, but even more than that, we need good memories. My granddaddy is now in an Alzheimer’s facility in South Carolina.
I began writing church Christmas plays, and I attempted to adapt my pocket classic comic book version of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* into play format for our eighth grade English I class, but that was a flop. I never stopped trying to write plays though. As a requirement for one of my undergraduate fiction classes, I was required to write a short, one act play titled, “Waiting.” I wrote about a bride only about thirty minutes away from marrying a man she did not love. Of course, her true love rescues her through the nursery window, and they rush down to the Baptist preacher who’s waiting for them down the street and they both live happily ever after. I was very pleased with this work, and I decided to test the waters.

While teaching a public speaking class in a private Christian high school, I slipped “Waiting” into the choices for the class-required spring drama. I printed the scripts without my name and slipped them into the possible choices. The class voted unanimously to perform my play. Only then did I reveal that I had written it. That gave the students extra drive. Words cannot describe how I felt seeing my work come to life on the stage. It’s a satisfaction and blessing like nothing else that I’ve ever known. Even though I turned my effort to writing novels, when I saw that Liberty University offered Creative Screenwriting in my degree program, I was elated! I fell in love with screenwriting and my childhood dreams were reignited. Being able to adapt my own novel into a screenplay, a possible movie, was another dream come true.

**C. The Wheels of Inspiration—The Inspiration**

This crazy ride of romantic comedy and spiritual journey that is *Wheels of Love* started as I was driving through town one day around 2009. I was listening to our hometown Christian radio station, WSSC “We Shall Serve Christ” AM 1340 and now 98.7 FM, when I heard one of my favorite songs come on, “Trophy of Grace” by the McKameys. I was singing at the top of my
lungs, when the thought “popped” into my mind, “I wonder how that grandson of theirs will be able to meet a good Christian girl while traveling on the road. How could he trust that she was the right one for him and really get to know her?” and then it hit me—that would be an awesome book.

I pulled over to the parking lot of the Freed School of Dance. I grabbed a napkin and wrote down these questions which I later transcribed into my book journal. I thought about friends of mine, a family who also traveled the Southeast singing with their evangelist dad. Their son married a young woman he met on the road. She turned out to be an illusion—she was not a Christian—and their marriage ended in divorce. I realized the danger in dating this way. One never really gets to know their spouse until they are already married and live together. Cohabitation lets you see and learn all sides of your life partner. With my own love for music and performing, I knew there was a story here.

There was a time that my own daddy thought about our family doing this same thing—traveling to churches to provide musical ministry—but he didn’t feel like it was God’s will for our family. I was able to live a “normal” life at home dating traditionally and getting into my own mischief. I could hardly imagine how difficult it would be for a young adult to experience dating while living on a bus tour more than living at home. I felt personal ties to this story, and of course, I placed myself in the role of the female protagonist. I imagined how I would react, what I would say, living in her shoes. I began to see scenes in my mind, out of sequence, but this is part of my usual process of writing a book. Almost as soon as I got in the door at my house, I threw myself in front of my laptop and began writing down the scene that was playing out in my mind. My “wheels of inspiration” were already turning.
D. Packing for the Trip—The Process

Even though scenes were emerging in my mind, I knew there was much that I didn’t know about living the life of a Southern Gospel singer. I hit the internet and began researching tour buses. There were several makes and models. I found a floorplan on a charter bus website that I could see a family of four, plus a bus driver, living in.

Now that this part of the setting was selected, I began to think about all the interesting places that I’ve been, and places that I’d like to see. I used Google Maps to map out a route that would take the family in a loop on their bus tour. As with all the novels in my *Hearts of the Carolina* series, my stories are set in fictional towns in North and South Carolina, but I do throw in real places for authenticity. While the McCormick family lives in the fictional town of Campbell’s Grove, North Carolina, their first stop when they get back on the road, is the Weldon Auditorium in Manning, South Carolina, my neighboring town. I moved them on to Jekyll Island, Georgia, with the many wonderful things to do there. Then, I really had to research. I used Google Maps to explore and create the loop while learning about the many attractions in towns along the route. The McCormick’s visit the Louisville Slugger Museum, ride an antebellum river boat, they enjoy a winter wonderland of Christmas lights, enjoy bluegrass music festivals, and much more. I have many places to visit now on my bucket list.

I still needed an inside look at life on the bus and traveling the countryside. My sister suggested that I reach out to a Southern Gospel performer. She shared a CD case with me—Jeff and Sheri Easter’s “Expecting Good Things.” The Easter family prints their phone number on the back of the cases, and she suggested I call them. I called and I left a message explaining my task. I figured I’d never hear from them. Until Mrs. Sheri Easter called while I was teaching a
phonics class. I turned class over to my sister who was there helping that day and I talked with Mrs. Easter for forty-five minutes about life on the road. It was amazing. We were able to help each other, as Mrs. Easter was in the process of choosing a self-publishing company for her memoir on her fight with breast cancer.

I kept writing, creating Mandie with much of myself—my flaws, my desires for singing and songwriting, my knack of trying to take control of every situation, and for being oblivious to the gifts that God has given me right under my nose—and the story came together. My favorite part of the process is when God gives me a plot twist ending. I had no idea I would end up with the wedding aboard the cruise ship. It “popped” into my head without warning. But once it came, it flooded! That has also just happened with my third novel, Coming Home. The ending clicks. I just recently put the last five chapters of that novel through a workshop, and I love hearing, “I did NOT see that coming” from my groupmates. But I cannot take credit for it. It’s all God. That’s the best way.

As far as adaptation from novel into screenplay is concerned, I was privileged to take WRIT 613, Creative Screenwriting, with Dr. Durrell Nelson and Dr. Andrew Smith as Teaching Assistant. Under their tutelage, the curriculum set forth by Liberty University, and The Screenwriter’s Bible, I was able to divide, trim, and adapt my novel into three acts, and successfully complete Act One of my screenplay.

In continuation of this work, I enrolled in WRIT 653, Creative Screenwriting Workshop, only to find that I was the only student! Under Dr. Nelson’s advice and guidance, I was able to complete my entire screenplay. It was an amazing experience. I’ve learned so much. I’ve learned that rewrites are a part of this journey, and that truly, a piece may never be “completely”
finished, as the process is filled with people who will have a different vision than you—a shared goal, but perhaps a different route for getting there.

**E. The Destination—The Vision for the Work**

I would love to see my screenplay be made into a movie. I know that I would struggle with taking my hands off the project and trusting someone else with my creation. There is that character flaw of being controlling shining through again. I put my heart and soul into my stories, and it would be hard to relinquish control of the project to someone else.

If I could bring myself to give up control of the screenplay, it would be awesome to see it on the screen. *Wheels of Love* is the second book my of Christian Romance Series titled *Hearts of the Carolinas*. I would love to see that series become financially successful. That would be amazing. However, I am more concerned about my work bringing readers to Christ and being a help to readers daily striving to live the Christian life. I want my readers to be able to take something away from the stories that will help them in their walk with Christ. There are lessons to be learned from Mandie, Derek, and even Shane that will help Christians in their walk, and Lord-willing, lead sinners to Jesus.

**F. The Map—The Literary Context**

The plot of *Wheels of Love* fits the literary archetypal model of the Epic Hero’s Journey based on the studies of Carl Jung through both characters of Mandie and Derek. Both characters meet each of the five stages of the hero’s journey (Hillsborough Community College). Mandie’s archetypal journey is the search for love while Derek’s archetypal journey is the quest for identity. Love is part of his reward.

Mandie is on a journey to find a husband. Stage One of her Journey, The Departure, begins with sorrow, as she sees couples all around her, and she is lonely. She prays and
determines that she will find love. Stage Two of her Journey, The Initiation, occurs when she begins her relationship with Mitch, a “monstrous” man in disguise. She gains a new perspective of what she perceives as love, while still being naïve. Stage Three, The Road of Trials, occurs when Derek drives the family on their bus tour. Mandie fights the urge to fall for Derek and is purposely mean to him to discourage his affections. She lives in denial. Stage Four, The Innermost Cave, occurs when Mitch is exposed for the monster he is and Mandie has lost all hope of finding love and a husband. She becomes physically ill and is completely vulnerable. She takes this time to learn her lesson and make her internal changes. And finally in Stage Five, the Return and Reintegration into Society, Mandie realizes that God has supplied her desires and her needs with Derek, and she gets her happily ever after.

Derek sets out on his Journey (Stage One) searching for God’s perfect will for his life. Derek enters Stage Two (Initiation) when he enters the world of the McCormick’s. He becomes mesmerized by Mandie’s talents and creativity. He sees her flaws, but he loves her anyway. Derek’s Stage Three (Road of Trials) occurs when he deals with Mandie’s constant rejection. He even tries to date someone else, but he cannot find release from Mandie’s spell. He loves her with the same love he had for Allison, his former girlfriend who died in a car accident. Derek enters Stage Four (The Innermost Cave) when he rescues Mandie from drowning. He thinks he is cursed to serve God alone for the rest of his life. He sacrifices his happiness for the cause of Christ. Derek’s Stage Five (Return and Reintegration into Society) occurs when Shane helps him see the error of his ways, and he realizes that Mandie does love him, and that God has rewarded him with the desires of his heart, since Derek has put God first in his life.
G. The Reason for the Trip—The Significance

This topic, adapting Christian Fiction to film, is of the utmost importance and significance to me. I feel there has been a famine of wholesome, family, and expressly Christian film on the market for years. This is starting to change as society is moving to an almost exclusively stream-based viewing model. Companies such as PureFlix, Dove Channel, Up Faith and Family, Parables, Christian Cinema (fanawards.com), and FaithStream (Faithstream.tv) are making family-friendly and spiritually uplifting films available to families through subscription services. As this world grows darker and more sinful by the hour, the demand for more Christian films and family-friendly films is rising. I remember having to purchase Feature Films for Families for my children for fifteen dollars each. It was expensive for families on a budget. I currently subscribe to PureFlix, and I’ve not been disappointed.

As a Christian scholar, it is important to recognize a need in the Christian community. It is a blessing to be able to meet that need through the gifts that God has given me. It has been an honor to study on how to make that contribution better for the honor and glory of God. This is the essence of ministry.
Section II. The Critical Essay

A. Goodyear versus Continental—Introduction

Every successful business has a tried-and-true pattern that has been attributed to its success. The film industry is no different. Successful movie makers know what works and what does not work--most of the time. A prime example of this in the world today is with the Disney Corporation. These patterns are evident, as discussed by Aricelia Arcadia in her Honors Theses on Disney’s Moana and Mulan. Arcadia points out that Disney recycles, “...themes, characters, animation, plot points, and more...as formulas...to ensure financial success” (Arcadia iv).

Families have sworn by Disney for years, heralding them as the authority on family entertainment. However, they are beginning to cave on those values to cater to the liberal left’s demands. This should be no surprise, as money is the driving force behind their industry. In fact, “since the 1980s, most children’s film internationally have been produced not under the auspices of the nation-state, but by an oligopoly of multimedia conglomerates concerned with profit rather than pedagogy” (Brown 86). When children’s movies are released today, companies already have tons of merchandise ready and waiting to ship and sell--tee shirts, hats, action figures, plastic bandages, toys for kids’ meals at fast food restaurants, and the list could go on and on.

The financially motivated appeal to children doesn’t stop with the toys and other merchandise, but now the message from Disney has changed. The content of many Disney movies and television shows portrays children as superior to adults and they glorify children’s lack of respect for parental authority (Gunlock). The substance has been eliminated. They have simply adapted their formula to meet the demands of the liberal left “in an attempt to satisfy audiences, Disney began producing films from cultures outside of Europe that star feminist-approved female leads” (Arcadia iv). Most of these roles glorify the female lead and minimize
the male role. Many of these movies now contain supporting characters who are “questionably gay”, and/or lines with references to homosexuality. Disney is stepping away from family values daily.

Even with their liberal agenda, Disney continues to rake in the dollars by repeating its formula over and over against a different culture/backdrop, and people keep coming back for more. This same occurrence happens with the Hallmark Channel. Hallmark movies are routinely chided for their “cheesiness” and repetitive storylines, yet women, and yes even men, find themselves enthralled in their Christmas movies. Disney movies are often nominated for awards, but one will more than likely never see a Hallmark Channel Christmas movie nominated for an Academy Award, yet “Hallmark Movie Season” takes over households all over the nation during the Christmas season and has been doing so for the past fifteen years. Why does this happen? They follow a pattern. Matt Norcross of The American Spectator has a theory:

First, Hallmark Channel is the rare national TV network nowadays that caters to a general family audience rather than just children, and that appeals to many social conservatives and those who long to go back to a time when television was meant for escapism. The second reason they have succeeded is the people who put the shows that air on there. They’re simply better than the opposition. The programming has higher quality, pretty much a throwback to TV shows of the past. (Norcross)

These reasons are not wrong, but there are many critics who would disagree on the “quality” in an artistic sense; and financially, “addressing the ‘family audience’ is a matter or commercial pragmatism...offending as few people as possible stand[s] the best chance of returning a profit”
(Brown). But what truly sets Hallmark on fire is that they follow the same female-lead quest pattern.

The female protagonist will, or course, have character flaws, and will be faced with some conflict or challenge. She will complete her journey, learning her lesson and fixing her flaws, get everything she wants, including the man who has been introduced to help her on her way, and live happily ever after. This should actually be the Feminist’s delight! The woman is running the show and winning the prize. But why do people flock to this same storyline over and over? This literary epic journey is presented with relatable characters. The viewer will identify with some trait in the character. They see themselves in the roles on the screen. They become invested in the movie, and they want to see themselves get their own happy ending. The viewer may not get this in real life, but there is that desire to watch the movie for escapism. The movies are clean--no sex and very little skin. And until recently, Hallmark Christmas movies have adhered to family values. That will be discussed in more detail later, but the focus and the crux of Hallmark’s success is the Female-lead’s Epic Journey.

**B. Finding the Tread—The Pattern**

Symbolism can be found everywhere. Symbols, or archetypes, can be expressed in an image, a plot pattern, a character type, or even an idea. Carl Jung was a psychologist who first applied his archetypal theories to literature. He developed many types of Heroic Archetypes. The typical “Hallmark Heroine” falls into the categories of “hero as a lover,” motivated by true love to complete her quest, and the “proto-feminist hero” the woman who saves the day (Hillsboro Community College). The Hallmark Movie can be thrown into the broad genre of Romantic Comedies, affectionately called “Rom-Coms,” with the major difference of carrying
more conservative themes, less sex, and less skin. The patterns are roughly the same. They all pose the same question:

That is, can a woman earn her own way, be respected for her mind and still be attractive to the opposite sex? Can she have a sense of humor and a sense of fun as an independent woman (particularly given the stereotype of feminists as having no sense of humor)? Can she be feminine and a feminist? (Naranch)

The Romantic Comedy and the Hallmark Movie prove over and over that today’s woman can have it all. Hallmark movies will present characters that are relatable. They must ensnare the viewer. “They must be believable since they act as a conduit through which emotion can pass to us. We need to sympathize with them and feel what they feel” (Trottier 121). Many times, the characters are small-town women thrown into some conflict, it could be an everyday conflict, or it could be something a little more sensational, but usually these conflicts are set against the backdrop of Christmas, but not exclusively.

The magical backdrop of Christmas is actually another characteristic of the Romantic Comedy model that Hallmark adopts in its movies. “There are similar trigger-situations across the plots: holidays, imminent marriages, road trips. There is the inevitable level of emotional and intellectual reciprocity between men and women on screen” (Martin 19). But equally important to this formula is the balancing need to laugh. Life can be heavy and painful at times, and laughter can be just as healing as love. They walk hand in hand. “Comedy thrives on readily identifiable, personal situations and fears. Love situations and other personal situations are easy for us to identify with and are ripe for comedy” (Trottier 126). Love turns the wisest of people into fools temporarily, and the audience can surely benefit from the spectacle.
One movie situation that usually generates a barrel of laughs is the “Road Trip” model. More often than not, “Road Trip Romances” throw two characters of opposite lifestyles and personalities together into close quarters on the backdrop of exotic locations, or dangerous situations, and the chemistry will explode. The first notable “Rom-Com” that received recognition in 1934 was the film *It Happened One Night* directed by Frank Capra, starring Claudette Colbert and Clark Cable. “A renegade reporter and a crazy young heiress meet on a bus heading for New York and end up stuck with each other when the bus leaves them behind at one of the stops” (IMDB). This film pairs two characters from opposite sides of life in a precarious situation, while literally on a road trip. They are on the run, as “Ellie’s father sends his men out on the road to find her, [and] she and Peter spend a succession of days and nights moving and dodging their way closer to their destination, only to discover, it turns out, that neither of them really want the trip to end” (Archer 16). This is the pattern in its entirety: a wealthy woman, a struggling reporter, a road trip, dire circumstances--it is a perfect recipe for love.

While contemplating the state of the romantic comedy today, Adrian Martin poses the question, did Capra realize what he had? And then answers, “Chances are [he] was as keyed then to the ephemeral Zeitgeist of culture, and the changing formulas of what was working at the box office” (Martin 19). Martin acknowledges that there is a formula. This formula, or pattern, has stood the test of time and continues to entertain audiences for today. The “heroine of pluck and intelligence who, after a variety of fairly predictable misadventures and misunderstandings, is united with her soulmate at the end” (Cohen 79). The pattern stands the test of time, giving viewers warm and fuzzy feelings and sometimes misty eyes. This perfect pattern is offered from
Hallmark with clean scenes, no graphic images or crude humor, and has until just recently, supported family values.

**C. The Treads of Romance—The Pattern Shown in Wheels of Love**

In my screenplay, *Wheels of Love*, adapted from my novel of the same name, I created the character of Mandie McCormick, the lead singer of her family’s southern gospel quartet. Mandie fits the archetypes of Transcendent Hero and Hero as a lover and her quest is the search for love and identity (Hillsboro Community College). Mandie is lonely, and she is searching for her place in God’s plan. She performs on stage with her family, ministering to others as they travel the Southeast on their tour bus. She loves the life that she lives, but she has a hole in her heart that only a husband can fill. In the opening scene, Mandie sees her mom and dad hug and kiss after the concert, and she gets a little tiffy.

MANDIE. (The curtain closes. Mandie's smile is gone. She wipes the sweat from her brow and turns off the cordless microphone. Mandie whips around to see Brian and Margie hug and kiss, and then leave to sign autographs. She snaps around and begins to pack up the microphones. Her movements are curt, and her expression has turned to borderline anger. GRANDPA SANDERS enters to take down speakers).

GRANDPA. Mandie, whatcha’doing?

MANDIE. Grandpa, I don’t feel like signing autographs.

GRANDPA. You know that wouldn't be right. It's all a part of our ministry. Come on. (1)

In the next scene, Mandie encounters fans who inadvertently break her heart.

WIFE. Hi, Mandie! It's so cool to meet you!

MANDIE. Thanks, but I'm just a regular person.
HUSBAND. My wife and I had our first date at your concert here last year.

WIFE. And now we're on our honeymoon!

MANDIE. (Mandie's jaw drops--she's speechless. Margie jumps in.)

MARGIE. Congratulations! We're honored to have you with us tonight!

HUSBAND. We wanted to start our marriage the way our relationship started--with God at the center.

MANDIE. (Mandie snaps out of it and signs their CD.) Well, thanks for coming! Take care. (Mandie stands up curtly and pushes her chair in.)

MANDIE. (to Margie) I need to go. I can’t-- (Mandie walks away, distraught.) (2-3)

In the next scene, Mandie is enraged, but she calms and seeks guidance.

MANDIE. (Mandie mopes to her sleeping area. She finds a small brown bear with a red bowtie and a red heart card that reads, "Happy Valentine's Day! Love Mom & Dad". She slaps the bear off the bed, falls down on the bed face-first and sobs for a moment. When she comes to herself, she picks up the bear from the floor. She lays back on her bed admiring the bear.)

MANDIE. Lord, please show me what to do. (3)

In this last line, one can clearly see that Mandie is searching for her place in the world--her identity. One can also see that she is searching for love, as her triggers in Scenes 1 and 2 are her mom and dad showing affection to one another, and the honeymooning couple. Mandie vocalizes her plight to her Grandpa George and dad, Brian, in Scene 8 when she offers to come off the road to take care of Grandpa, and maybe have a normal life:

MANDIE. But what if...You and Mama won't be here forever, and well, I need someone to share my life with.
BRIAN. You are one talented, special, young woman and God has someone tailor-made
for you. And I'm not giving you up to anybody who doesn't fit that bill. (9)

Mandie more than meets the qualifications of a transcendental/romantic hero. She wants it all—a
husband and a career/ministry. She begins the film as very egotistical but overcomes many of her
caracter flaws on her journey to love.

Writing a novel, and a screenplay, is a personal artistic endeavor. Linda Seger writes in
her book *Making a Good Script Great*, “You become an artist by putting yourself into your
work” (Seger xv). Writers often find themselves transposing their own character traits onto their
characters. Mandie McCormick is no exception, as she shares many character flaws with the
writer. She is rude, prideful, egotistical, a control freak, and a little high and mighty at times, as
seen in Scenes 20 and 21, after she has spent a moment chewing out Derek for running into her
in the auditorium parking lot.

MARGIE. What is your problem? You owe him an apology. It was just an accident.

MANDIE. (Mandie and Margie walk through the bus doors and to her bunk.) I'm not
holdin' back. It's bad enough that he'll be with us twenty-four/seven! It's obvious he
has his sights set on me. I ain't leading--

MARGIE. Has he done anything, other than be polite, to make you think that he's even
interested in you?

MANDIE. Not really--

MARGIE. You sure must think a lot of yourself.

MANDIE. I just know how you work, Mama! I can already see your wheels a-turning!

MARGIE. What wheels?
MANDIE. Your Wheels of Conspiracy! You've got us married with two kids in your mind.

MARGIE. The world doesn't revolve around you. Make it right. (19-20)

Mandie is rude to Derek in “efforts” to ensure that he does not fall in love with her. She is trying to control the situation, and she is rude and egotistical in the process.

On the flipside of Mandie are all her talents. She is a beautiful singer, musician, and songwriter. According to Shane in Scene 26, she has written two songs on The McCormick’s last album (25). Mandie also has a classic taste in fashion. In Scene 24, “Mandie enters the hotel lobby dressed in a white eyelet sundress with spaghetti straps and a contrasting white satin sash at the waist. She carries a white bolero shrug in her hands” (24). Sol Stein teaches in his book *Stein On Writing*, “Characterization through unusual clothing or the manner of wearing clothing is another often neglected possibility” (Stein 65). Even though there is not much mention of other outfits that Mandie wears, we can also discern more of her character in her reaction to Derek’s wardrobe (revealed in Scene 13) which consists of his faithful Stetson cowboy hat and Dingo work boots:

MANDIE. Oh, no. Oh, no you don’t.

MARGIE. He's handsome, from a good church--

MANDIE. Absolutely not! He's a hick! Did you see that big ole hat and boots? (16)

Mandie detests the very sight of Derek’s cowboy look and shows us that she has a taste for someone more sophisticated.

By the end of the film, Mandie has grown so much in overcoming her own giant ego, that she is willing to admit defeat to see the love of her life live in happiness. In Scene 95, Mandie is confessing her love for Derek to her brother, Shane, while asking for his help:
SHANE. All I know is he's the brother I never had, and I won't see him hurt again,
Mandie, I won't.
MANDIE. don't deserve him, but I do love him. So, I gotta know about Stephanie. Are
they serious? Does he really love her? If so, I'll back off.
SHANE. You’d give him up to another woman?
MANDIE. It would kill me, but...yes, if that's what he really wants. (89-90)

At this point, Derek’s happiness is all that matters to Mandie. She is willing to sacrifice her own
happiness to give Derek what (she thinks) he wants. At the beginning of the story, that would not
have happened. Mandie has fulfilled her quest to find love, and she has experienced personal
growth, becoming a romantic and transcendental heroine, and fulfilling the requirements of the
epic journey portion of the romantic comedy.

Another characteristic of the romantic comedy model that *Wheels of Love* satisfies is that
of the road trip backdrop. The bus tour takes the McCormick family all over the country,
exposing them to different locations and attractions. Even though Campbell’s Grove is a fictional
town in North Carolina, I added real locations into the story to create a more authentic
experience for the reader/viewer. The family begins their bus tour with their first stop in
Manning, South Carolina (18), which is eight miles from my house. From there they travel to
Jekyll Island, Georgia (22). The family arrives at Dollywood, in Sevierville, Tennessee (33) for
the Southern Gospel Harvest Festival, which is a real event that Dollywood holds annually.
Other mentioned stops on the tour are The Louisville Slugger Museum in Louisville, Kentucky
(41), Wheeling, West Virginia’s Winter Festival of Lights (43), Augusta, Georgia, (56),
Quitman, Mississippi (70), Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico (72), the Greek Theater, Los
Angeles, California (73), Big Bear Lake, California (78), and Jacksonville, Florida (93) to set sail on the Singing at Sea Cruise, which is a real event.

All these locations and attractions set the scene for Mandie and Derek to fall in love through spending quality time together. Amusement parks such as Dollywood are magical backdrops for dating couples, as are Christmas light displays. As hard as Mandie fights it, she can’t help herself. Living on the tour bus forces Mandie and Derek to get to know the real people behind the facades that the public sees. They share home-made lunches as seen in the sandwich Scene 32 (29-31), Derek helps her set up the iPad that Mitch sends her in Scene 51 (39-40), and all three of them, Mandie, Derek, and Shane, do their laundry together in the montage Scene 52 (41) where Derek attempts to hide his boxers from Mandie while Shane laughs himself silly. The road trip element of the romantic comedy plays a huge part in helping Mandie and Derek both fall in love with each other. This brings Mandie’s plight to a close, as she has realized the feminist-dream: she can have it all—love, a family and a career/ministry.

**D. What Gets the Wheels Moving—The Mission**

The Hallmark Channel has effectively produced “cheesy, but heart-warming” (Del Rosario) movies that keep fans coming back for more because they follow the romantic comedy, female heroine, epic-journey pattern that doesn’t know how to fail, all while keeping the viewing family-friendly. For years, Hallmark also experienced success because “The Hallmark Channel aired shows...that appeal to Christians by not insulting them” (Norcross) until 2019. As with most downward spirals, the Hallmark Channel started bending to the Liberal Left by dipping their big toes in the water, airing a commercial that featured a lesbian couple. “Thousands of conservatives petitioned against the ad, and Hallmark pulled it. However, after pressure from the opposite side, Hallmark reinstated the ad and apologized for the removal” (ChurchPop). There
was even more backlash from their loyal base who had been viewers for years. The Hallmark Channel basically threw their fan-base out the window in efforts to appease a wicked agenda when they proceeded to feature a film in August 2020 showing a lesbian wedding. Even though the protagonist couple was heterosexual, this leap drummed up even more response from their loyal fan base. Hallmark responded to the nearly 60,000 signature-petition by Tweeting, “We are proud of our movie *Wedding Every Weekend*. Our priority at Hallmark Channel is to develop a broad mix of content, characters, and stories in order to create a Hallmark Experience where everyone feels welcome” (ChurchPop). Viewers were quick to respond to the Tweet. One viewer Tweeted, “By [letting] your current audience [feel] unwelcome” and “No. You’re lying because not everyone feels welcome anymore. It’s no longer a family network” (ChurchPop). This abandoning of family values, created more of a demand, and opportunity, than ever before for the Christian Filmmaker.

The goal of every Christian’s endeavor should be to glorify Christ. The Bible says, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (King James Bible, I Corinthians 10:31). Those writers and filmmakers who have been blessed with the talent of crafting a story should use that gift for the Lord. *Wheels of Love* is written to help the believer, and Lord willing, to draw souls to Christ as well. While the story deals with believers who are serving God through the ministry of Southern Gospel Music, there are others who may read the book or screenplay, and maybe watch the movie one day, and the Holy Spirit could use it to draw those souls to the Son. Such are the hearts of the Kendrick Brothers, Alex and Stephen, who recognize that, “although films based on Christianity may be booming at the box office, American culture is seemingly becoming more and more irreverent to God” (Ortega-Law). These men of God have stepped up and created a new day in the Christian film industry.
Alex and Stephen Kendrick have made six feature-length films geared and marketed to a Christian audience: *Flywheel* (2003), *Facing the Giants* (2006), *Fireproof* (2008), *Courageous* (2011), *War Room* (2015), (Denher) and *Overcomer* (2019) (imdb.com). As is the case when anyone steps out on faith and does something for the Lord, there has been mounting criticism, everything from critics crying about the lack of artistry to the lack of appeal or outreach to the unsaved. Despite the naysayers, *War Room* is actually the seventh-highest grossing Christian film of all-time, according to Box Office Mojo, grossing almost $67.8 million in the U.S. (Ortega-Law). The Kendricks started out at Sherwood Baptist Church with a small budget of only $20,000, creating the movie *Flywheel*. It was only released on DVD in 2007 after the success of *Facing the Giants*. According to one critic, “What it lacks in polish it makes up for in substance and spirit” (Denher). Their success cannot be attributed to the rom-com pattern, but to the realistic and relatable characters presented in each of their stories. In *Flywheel*, God captures the heart of a struggling, used car salesman. In *Facing the Giants*, God moves in the life of a Christian School Teacher/Coach. In *Fireproof*, God heals a broken marriage. One critic said of *Fireproof*, “I think that is why so many Christians responded to this film: seeing some of this play out on the screen can hit pretty close to home” (Denher). In *Courageous*, viewers see the tragedy of parents losing a child, and the importance of being a father present in the life of a child. In *War Room*, a widow teaches a career mom the importance and the power of prayer. In *Overcomer*, a coach helps a troubled teen. The characters are life-like and realistic, no matter what the critics say.

When criticized on the lack of “artistic rendering” by Christopher Hutton in his article, “‘War Room’ Is Just as Cheesy as All Kendrick Brothers Films,” Alex Kendrick acknowledges that they are still learning. “We hate the cheese factor and we have dealt with that in our own
films, and we are learning how to have...less of that, but that’s a challenge” (Ortega-Law).

Hutton goes on to say in his opinion, that the work of the Kendrick’s brothers has “cemented the notion that Christian media should be used to save and teach. While this might seem like an effective way to spread Christian ideas, it only empowers a select group of Christians who mostly seem interested in promoting context they already agree with” (Hutton). What Mr. Hutton is overlooking the power and will of the Holy Spirit of God who chooses what He wants to use to minister to the hearts of the saved and unsaved alike. The Bible reminds Christians:

> For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

(I Corinthians 1:18-21)

God chooses, through the person of the Holy Spirit how that preaching is presented, whether it be in a church pew, in a Gospel song that contains the Word of God being proclaimed in a delightful, toe-tapping, joyous way, or in a heart-gripping drama on the silver screen that reaches out and convicts a lost-soul, or convicts a back-slidden Christian, drawing them back to Himself. It is God’s business what ministry He chooses to use in getting His story, His preaching, out to a lost and dying world.
E. The Pit Stop—The Conclusion

In conclusion, my screenplay adaptation of Wheels of Love has the potential to be very successful on the screen. It follows the tried-and-true pattern of a clean, romantic comedy that has been proven successful by the Hallmark Channel for years. It also deals with Christian topics that would edify and encourage the believer, while at the same time reminding both the believer and the “pre-believer” about the sacrifice of Jesus in Scene 86 (77). There will always be those critics who would say that it only caters to a certain, small audience, but those critics cannot put a limit on how God could use this film. They may call it “cheesy,” but in the words of Stephen Kendrick, “we say ‘No!’ That’s real life; we’re introducing you to something you’ve never experienced in your own personal life” (Ortega-Law). Maybe the world is not used to seeing God answer prayer; they are not used to experiencing victory and joy. Wheels of Love presents the heart of a young woman who wants to have it all, and she finds that she can when she turns her “all” over to Jesus. This is what it is all about—sharing Jesus with the world. This has the propensity for being successful, as it offers Christian topics and ethics through a romantic, road-trip comedy, and a fresh perspective on life and love. In the words of The American Spectator’s Matt Norcross, “Sex might sell, but real love--love of family, faith, and country--sells too.”
Section III. The Creative Manuscript

Wheels of Love

by

Amy L. Magaw

Based on her novel

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INT. THEATER - ON-STAGE - NIGHT

FADE IN:

Stage is set with Valentine's Day Decorations.

Southern Gospel Singer MANDIE MCCORMICK, 20, a young, curvy gal, with eyes closed, belts out a high note as the crowd goes wild. She smiles as she continues her performance. In the audience, she sees couples smiling and laughing. Her smile fades for a moment, and then she realizes it, and puts her smile back on again.

Mandie's mom, MARGIE, 40, plays the bass; her dad, BRIAN, 42, plays acoustic, and her brother, SHANE, 17, plays mandolin. They sing harmonic backup with Mandie. Mandie holds out the song's final note. The crowd erupts in applause.

MANDIE
Thank you so much! Y'all have been a wonderful audience tonight! God bless!

The curtain closes. Mandie's smile is gone. She wipes the sweat from her brow and turns off the cordless microphone. Mandie whips around to see Brian and Margie hug and kiss, then leave to sign autographs. She snaps around and begins to pack up the microphones. Her movements are curt, and her expression has turned to borderline anger. GRANDPA SANDERS enters to take down speakers.

GRANDPA
Mandie, whatcha doing?

MANDIE
Grandpa, I don't feel like signing autographs tonight.

GRANDPA
You know that wouldn't be right. It's all a part of our ministry. Come on.

Grandpa ushers Mandie off stage toward the lobby. Shane runs past them, heading in the same direction.

SHANE
Move your big butt outta my way, Mandie! My public awaits!

MANDIE
Shut up, Shane!
GRANDPA
Shsh! People might hear y'all! Now, little girl, you gotta put that smile on and get out there.

MANDIE
I'll try. I think I'm just tired.

GRANDPA
Uh huh. Tired. I gotcha.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

The family signs autographs at the heart-decorated tables in the lobby that are overflowing with Valentine's decor. Fans wait in line to meet them. A HUSBAND AND WIFE reach Mandie.

MANDIE
Hello! How are y'all tonight?

WIFE
Hi, Mandie! It's so cool to meet you!

MANDIE
Thanks, but I'm just a regular person.

HUSBAND
My wife and I had our first date at your concert here last year.

WIFE
And now we're on our honeymoon!

Mandie's jaw drops--she's speechless. Margie jumps in.

MARGIE
Congratulations! We're honored to have you with us tonight!

HUSBAND
We wanted to start our marriage the way our relationship started--with God at the center.

Mandie snaps out of it and signs their CD.

MANDIE
Well, thanks for coming! Take care.

Mandie stands up curtly and pushes her chair in.
MANDIE
(to Margie)
I need to go. I can't--

Mandie walks away, distraught.

MARGIE
(to Brian)
Start praying harder.

INT. TOUR BUS - MANDIE'S BUNK - NIGHT

Mandie mopes to her sleeping area. She finds a small brown bear with a red bowtie and a red heart card that reads, "Happy Valentine's Day! Love Mom & Dad". She slaps the bear off the bed, falls down on the bed face-first and sobs for a moment. When she comes to herself, she picks up the bear from the floor. She lays back on her bed admiring the bear.

MANDIE
(to the bear)
I'm sorry. (closes her eyes) Lord, please show me what to do.

INT. TOUR BUS - UPPER LOUNGE - DAY

SUPER: "SIX MONTHS LATER"

Shane stares out the window. Mandie plays her keyboard.

SHANE
Zip...Zip...Zip

MANDIE
Shut-up, Shane! You are so annoying!

SHANE
What's wrong with you?

MANDIE
Have you ever thought about coming off the road?

SHANE
No. Why?

MANDIE
I dunno. I'm just wondering what life is like back home is all. I love doing this, but here lately I'm just--
SHANE
Quit complaining.

MANDIE
It's just that I'm like a novelty to the guys I meet.

SHANE
So? It works for me! I love meeting honeys on the road.

MANDIE
That ain't working for me. So maybe I should come home to find--

SHANE
Psh! Whatever. You women just want it all, don't ya? Career--

MANDIE
No, this is different. This is ministry. And God wants me here, I think. I'm just confused.

SHANE
Well that's nothing new.

Grandpa calls on the intercom from down below.

GRANDPA (O.S.)
Hey, Sweetheart?

MANDIE
Yes, sir?

GRANDPA (O.S.)
Can you please bring me the Tums?

MANDIE
Yes, sir. I'm on it!

Shane continues to "zip" and stare out the window.

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - DAY

Mandie hands the chalky Tums tablets to Grandpa.

MANDIE
Here ya go.
GRANDPA
Thanks, Sweetheart.

MANDIE
Are you okay?

GRANDPA
Oh, yeah. Just some indigestion.

MANDIE
Let me know if you need anything else.

GRANDPA
Will do, honey.

Mandie smooches his cheek, and scurries back to her keyboard.

INT. TOUR BUS - UPPER LOUNGE - DAY
Shane notices the bus is veering off the interstate.

SHANE
Whoa! What's...Grandpa!

Shane bounds down the stairs.

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - DAY
Grandpa is unconscious and slumped over in the seat. Shane grabs the steering wheel.

SHANE
Grandpa! Help, Dad! Help!

The bus runs over the grooves on the shoulder, alerting Brian and Margie; they rush in. Mandie follows. Brian grabs the steering wheel from Shane.

BRIAN
Get his foot off the gas!

Shane removes Grandpa's foot from the gas pedal and the bus coasts to a stop. Mandie watches the scene in a trance.

MARGIE
Gimme the phone! Mandie, wake up!

Mandie squints, tries to focus on her mother, and faints.
INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Grandpa opens his eyes. His family surrounds his bed. Mandie holds an ice pack on her head.

GRANDPA
My Lord!

MANDIE
What Grandpa! What is it?

GRANDPA
It's Heaven. I'm surrounded by angels!

MANDIE
Oh, Grandpa!

Mandie sits and holds the ice pack to her head again.

MARGIE
How are you feeling, Dad?

GRANDPA
Like I've had a heart attack--

A voice sounds behind them all. Enter DR. CALHOUN, 35ish.

DR. CALHOUN
That's because you did, sir. I'm Dr. Calhoun, Cardiologist.

BRIAN
Hello, Doctor.

DR. CALHOUN
Nice to meet you all. I wish I had better news for you, Mr. Sanders. Tell me, what do you do for a living?

GRANDPA
I drive the tour bus for my lovely family here, The McCormick's.

DR. CALHOUN
Sir, this was a wake-up call. You can't continue this lifestyle. You won't pass a DOT physical.

GRANDPA
I don't need a CDL to drive the bus.
BRIAN
But I think the doctor is saying that it's time for a little less stress.

GRANDPA
Truth is, I've been praying about this for a while now.

DR. CALHOUN
I'm going to keep you one more night for observation, then I'm discharging you, NOT to the bus, but to a--

GRANDPA
--don't you say nursing home! It's not time for that yet!

DR. CALHOUN
No sir, but a stationary home!

The doctor sees his way out. Everyone gathers around Grandpa's bed again. Brian and Margie hold Grandpa's hands.

BRIAN
Well...

MARGIE
You're leaving big shoes to fill, Dad.

GRANDPA
The Lord will provide.

SHANE
I'm hungry.

BRIAN
I could eat something, too.

MANDIE
Mama, go with them and grab me a burger and fries. I'm coming.

Mandie waits to speak until the family is gone.

MANDIE
So, do you need some help at home?

GRANDPA
Whaddya mean?
MANDIE
I can come home to help care for you.

GRANDPA
You know where the Lord wants you.

MANDIE
Do I? Here lately I've been--

GRANDPA
I know what you've been. You've been downright ornery. I seen ya that night at the Valentine's concert. You was fit to be tied.

MANDIE
Grandp--

GRANDPA
Hush. I seen ya. And I see ya now. I seen that look before on your Mama.

MANDIE
Is it wrong to want both? Love and a career in the ministry?

GRANDPA
It's never wrong to want God's will for your life.

MANDIE
How will I find it?

GRANDPA
Keep being faithful. The Good Book says, "Delight thyself in the LORD and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." What delights you?

MANDIE
You know what it is. Singing. Ever since you taught me how.

GRANDPA
Then keep on singing for the Lord. Let God take care of the rest.

MANDIE
Yes, sir.
GRANDPA
Now, go eat something for me. You gonna blow away if you don't.

Mandie turns to leave, but Brian enters the room.

BRIAN
You okay? Your food's getting cold.

GRANDPA
She's up here volunteering to come home and be my nursemaid.

MANDIE
Grandpa!

BRIAN
Oh, yeah. The boy thing.

MANDIE
What? Does everybody know my business?

Brian steps inside and closes the door.

BRIAN
Your Mama and I have been praying hard for you. It'll come.

MANDIE
But what if...You and Mama won't be here forever, and well, I need someone to share my life with.

Brian takes Mandie's hand.

BRIAN
You are one talented, special, young woman and God has someone tailor-made for you. And I'm not giving you up to anybody who doesn't fit that bill.

MANDIE
Daddy!

BRIAN
I ain't playing. He's gonna have to be God-sent, or he ain't getting you.

MANDIE
Love you, Daddy.
BRIAN
Love you, too, Knot-head.

GRANDPA
What am I? Roadkill? Ha! I almost was, wasn't I?

MANDIE
I love you, too, G-Daddy!

INT. JENSEN FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

SOPHIA JENSEN 55ish, wearing a blue-checkered apron, stirs a pot of spaghetti sauce on the stove.

DEREK JENSEN's boots clop up the back porch. He enters the kitchen. He drops Army paperwork in the trash, then sits at the kitchen table, all serious. Sophia finishes and joins him.

SOPHIA
So?

DEREK
I got all the way up to the door, but the Lord wouldn't let me do it.

SOPHIA
Now, Son, you know that I'm fine here with Uncle Joe here on the farm.

DEREK
No, ma'am. That aint' it, I promise.

SOPHIA
I know it was hard leaving Tennessee after everything that happened, but--

DEREK
--I know, Ma. I just know that God has something else for me.

SOPHIA
Alright, we'll keep praying. Love you.

DEREK
Love you, too, Ma. I see that the grass needs cutting. I'm on it.

Derek leaves the way he came. Sophia watches from the door.

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SOPHIA
Lord, help my boy.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH - DAY

The six-foot lighthouse shines outside The Lighthouse of Campbell's Grove Community Church. Families enter the church.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH - DAY

Derek, Sophia, and UNCLE JOE SANDERS, 45, sit on their pew. The men are wearing business casual. Sophia wears a yellow, thin cotton sundress. The congregation is abuzz because the McCormick’s are home. They sit down on the pew behind BROTHER BERRY, 50ish, who wears a brown tweed sports coat with leatherette elbow patches. His arm leans over the pew.

BROTHER BERRY
Good morning, Joe!

UNCLE JOE
Good morning, Bro. Berry! I see the McCormick's are back.

BROTHER BERRY
Yeah, Grandpa George had a heart attack. He's alright, but he can't drive them anymore. He's moving home.

UNCLE JOE
Oh, boy.

BROTHER BERRY
They are looking for a driver ASAP.

Bro. Berry turns back around and Uncle Joe leans back as the service starts. Derek leans over to Uncle Joe.

DEREK
When he said the McCormick's, did he mean "The McCormick's"?

UNCLE JOE
(chuckles)
Yep. They're members here.

Derek turns his attention to PASTOR CREIGHTON as he reads the Scripture. Sophia leans over to Derek.

SOPHIA
I wonder--

Created using Celtx
DEREK
Don't say it, Ma.

SOPHIA
I'm just saying--

INT. JENSEN FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Derek is on the phone in mid-conversation. Sophia walks toward the kitchen, but stops around the corner.

DEREK
Yes, sir. I'll be there. Thank you.

Derek hangs up the phone.

DEREK
Ma, you can come out now.

Sophia creeps out from her hiding place.

DEREK
You know exactly who that was, don't you? You just hadda tell him.

SOPHIA
Now, Son, don't get mad, but facts are facts, and there's nothing wrong with people knowing the facts.

Derek shakes his head and laughs.

DEREK
Yes, ma'am. I'm going out there tomorrow morning. I'm pretty sure I'll be their new bus driver.

SOPHIA
You see? God still answers prayer! And He might be answering more than one. You know that Mandie is mighty pretty.

DEREK
Ma, don't start!

SOPHIA
Stranger things have happened, Son.

DEREK
I know. I know. One day at a time.
Derek hugs his mother.

SOPHIA
It's time to celebrate. Pizza?

DEREK
Pizza is always good!

INT. MCCORMICK HOMESTEAD - KITCHEN - DAY
The family sits around the breakfast table, all but Grandpa.

MANDIE
Pass the orange juice, please.

SHANE
(loudly)
Sure thing.

MARGIE
(to Shane)
Sh! Don't wake up Grandpa!
(to Brian)
What'll it be this morning, Hon?

BRIAN
Just a bowl of cereal and some coffee.
I gotta eat fast. He'll be here soon.

SHANE
Who will?

MARGIE
Our new bus driver.

MANDIE
You found someone, Daddy?

BRIAN
That new young man from church, Derek Jensen, Brother Sanders' nephew.

SHANE
YES! Finally! Someone I can relate to!

MANDIE
And now you can annoy him!

BRIAN
He's taking the bus for a spin. We go back on the road next week.
MANDIE
Home feels like a hotel and my bunk's like home. But, I'm not complaining!

SHANE
That's a change! What happened?

MANDIE
Got a text from an old friend.

MARGIE
Do tell! Who from?

MANDIE
Mitchell Collins, from Pastor Bledsoe's church in Augusta.

Shane rolls his eyes and slips away from the table.

MARGIE
He's the one who thought an awful lot of himself in his fancy duds.

MANDIE
Now, Mama, don't be like that. He's good looking, sweet and--

MARGIE
It wasn't just his clothes. It was the way he carried himself. Real proud.

MANDIE
Well, he was always very nice to me. He said he was sorry to hear about Grandpa, and he's driving down to our Jekyll Island concert to see me.

MARGIE
Oh, yeah? I hope I'm wrong. It's nice to see you happy for a change.

MANDIE
Thanks. Lemme help with the dishes.

Mandie jumps up and grabs plates, etc. She has pep in her step as she runs dishwater.

BRIAN
Thanks, dear. It was great!

Brian stands, folds his paper, kisses Margie, and leaves.
MANDIE
Don't worry, Mama. Take all the time you need. You deserve it.

Margie sips her coffee when the doorbell rings.

MANDIE
No, I'll get it.

Mandie dries her hands with the dish towel on her way to the door. She opens it to see Derek wearing a red tee, jeans, boots, and his white Stetson.

MANDIE
Yes, can I help you?

Star-struck Derek physically shakes his head to wake himself.

DEREK
Good morning, Miss Mandie. Is your daddy home?

MANDIE
Yeah, I think he's out back. He's expecting someone. I'll get him--

DEREK
Yes, he's expecting me! It's Derek Jensen, from church?

Mandie looks closer, under the Stetson.

MANDIE
Oh, yeah! I remember seeing you at church Sunday. Sorry, I didn't recognize you under that, um, hat.

DEREK
That's alright. I'll just go around back. Thank you, ma'am.

MANDIE
You're welcome.

Mandie shuts the door and turns to see Margie smiling BIG!

MANDIE
What?

Margie brings her coffee mug to her grinning lips.
MANDIE
Oh, no. Oh, no you don't.

MARGIE
He's handsome, from a good church--

MANDIE
Absolutely not! He's a hick! Did you see that big ole hat and boots?

MARGIE
But--

MANDIE
And don't you be trying to play match-make either! I know how you work!

MARGIE
No, dear. I wouldn't think of it.

EXT. MCCORMICK HOMESTEAD - FRONT PORCH - DAY

SUPER: "ONE WEEK LATER"

Derek, holding his green army duffle bag, rings the doorbell.

DEREK
Whew. Here we go.

A sleepy-eyed, bed-head Mandie answers in her Capri pajamas.

MANDIE
It's too early for this.

DEREK
Rise and shine, Miss Mandie. We gotta get on down to South Carolina!

MANDIE
Ugh.

Mandie hands Derek the keys from the hooks beside the door.

DEREK
Thank you, Miss Mandie. I'll go get the bus ready.

Derek tips his hat to her. Mandie rolls her eyes and slams the door. Derek walks around the corner to the bus.
EXT. MCCORMICK HOMESTEAD - BACKYARD - DAY

Brian joins Derek at the bus.

BRIAN
Good morning, Derek. Are you ready?

DEREK
Morning! Yes, Sir!

BRIAN
Shane will be out soon to help load the equipment. Make yourself at home.

DEREK
Yes, sir.

Derek enters his lower level sleeping lounge via the exterior door. He drops his bag on the futon. Shane calls to him from the yard. Derek steps back out of his "room."

SHANE
Yo, Newbie! Ready to load?

DEREK
Sure!

SHANE
You 'bout to get broke in, fella.

The guys walk to the back door to the garage to grab the cases. They run into Mandie, who is coming out the same door, dragging luggage. Shane almost knocks her down.

MANDIE
Watch out!

Shane blows by her without saying a word.

DEREK
Excuse me, Miss Mandie. Let me help you with those.

Derek follows beside her and he takes one of her bags.

MANDIE
I can take care of myself.

DEREK
Alrighty then. Here's your bag back.
Derek drops her bag in the dirt and he turns to Shane.

DEREK
   Let's do this.

The boys load all the equipment. Derek wipes the sweat from his brow with a white handkerchief, and they're off!

EXT. THEATER - PARKING LOT - DAY

Derek pulls into the lot of the Auditorium in Manning, SC.

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - DAY

BRIAN
   We'll take a break after we unload.

DEREK
   Yes, sir.

Derek and Shane get off the bus and unload the equipment while Mandie and Margie get off the bus lugging garment bags and makeup kits, headed into the backstage area.

BRIAN
   Derek, I need ya to nap during our rehearsal for tonight's drive.

DEREK
   Yes, sir. That won't be a problem!

INT. TOUR BUS - DEREK'S ROOM - DAY

Derek stumbles into his room. He pulls out the futon, and takes his shirt off. There's nowhere to hang his hat, so he sets it atop his boots. He gets under his quilt, jeans and all, and sets an alarm on his cell phone. He shuts his eyes.

Two hours passes instantly. Derek's cell phone alarm sounds. He sits straight up on the futon, rubbing his sore arms.

DEREK
   Oh no! I'm gonna be late.

Derek jumps up, throws on his t-shirt and boots, and busts...

EXT. THEATER - PARKING LOT OUTSIDE DEREK'S DOOR - DAY

...out his side door, where Mandie and Margie happen to be walking back to the bus. Derek runs slap into Mandie, almost knocking her down. He catches her, but loses his hat.
DEREK
Goodness, Miss Mandie! I'm sorry!

Derek picks up his hat and places it back on his head.

MANDIE
Why can't you watch where you're going? Can't see under that big hat!

DEREK
It seems this was all my fault. I'll pay better attention from now on.

Margie stands in shock at Mandie's behavior. Derek tips his hat to them and runs to the backstage doors.

MARGIE
What is your problem? You owe him an apology. It was just an accident.

Mandie and Margie walk through the bus doors and to her bunk.

INT. TOUR BUS - MANDIE'S BUNK - DAY

MANDIE
I'm not holdin' back. It's bad enough that he'll be with us twenty-four/seven! It's obvious he has his sights set on me. I ain't leading--

MARGIE
Has he done anything, other than be polite, to make you think that he's even interested in you?

MANDIE
Not really--

MARGIE
You sure must think a lot of yourself.

MANDIE
I just know how you work, Mama! I can already see your wheels a-turning!

MARGIE
What wheels?

MANDIE
Your Wheels of Conspiracy! You've got us married with two kids in your mind.
MARGIE
The world doesn't revolve around you. Make it right.

Margie walks right past Mandie and upstairs to her room. Mandie flops on her bunk, knocking her bear over. She sits him back up, and looks at him as if he's speaking to her.

MANDIE
I know. I know.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Derek and Shane join Mandie in the wings. She avoids Derek.

MANDIE
(to Shane)
You ready?

SHANE
I'm always already, Girl.

Shane takes the stage. Reluctantly, Mandie turns to Derek.

MANDIE
Look, I'm sorry about earlier. I was very rude to you. I was, well, I was just wrong, and I'm very sorry.

DEREK
I'm sure it was just your nerves. Don't worry about it. You're forgiven.

Mandie looks relieved and takes the stage behind Shane. Derek admires Mandie's talent/passion from the wings as she sings.

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - NIGHT

Derek drives alone through the night. He struggles to stay awake, slapping himself and drinking coffee. Shane runs up front and grabs a small step-stool and sits by Derek.

SHANE
Hey! No sleeping on the job!

DEREK
You are just in time, Bro.

SHANE
Yeah. I thought you'd like some company. So, I was wondering, how'd
you get into driving anyway?

DEREK
I wanted to start my own trucking business, you know, local and some cross-country runs--establish myself.

SHANE
What happened?

DEREK
Daddy passed away; no insurance, farm debt; and you can't buy a big rig if you don't have money. So, what did you give up to come on the road?

SHANE
I don't know, high school, I guess. Never had many friends there though.

DEREK
What?

SHANE
I know, right? You know what I really miss? Football games and the--

DEREK AND SHANE
(together)
--cheerleaders!

DEREK
Well, you can't hide from life, Brother, so here I am.

SHANE
Hm. I never had a brother. And Mandie, well...she just doesn't understand me!

DEREK
Speaking of Mandie...what's her deal?

SHANE
She's the cat's britches. But most guys just drool over her. I saw you at church that Sunday when we all met. You're no different.

DEREK
(nods in agreement and then...)
Wait, did you say drool?
Shane nods, grins, and laughs. He knows!

DEREK
I did not drool.

SHANE
Whatever, Droolie! You were saying?

DEREK
She's made it very clear that I'm not her favorite person. I just thought she'd be a little more friendly.

SHANE
Well, come tomorrow she'll be down-right intolerable.

DEREK
What's happening tomorrow?

SHANE
That jerk Mitchell Collins is meeting us to spend some time with Mandie.

DEREK
Is he one of her Droolies?

SHANE
Nah, he's just an idiot with more money than brains. And Mandie's just--

DEREK
She's beautiful and talented. She really puts her heart into her music.

SHANE
I see.

Derek turns onto the causeway past the two ghostly gatehouses that guard Jekyll Island. They continue on through the marsh.

DEREK
Whoa! Shane! What is this place?

SHANE
Used to be a private club for Rockefeller and his buddies. It's great, if we have any fun-time. Mr. Wonderful's here, remember?

Derek turns into the hotel parking lot, and finally turns the
bus off. Breathing a sigh of relief, he turns to Shane.

DEREK
I say, let's make Mitch our fun-time!

SHANE
(smiles devilishly)
Oh, yeah!

INT. HOTEL - BREAKFAST AREA - DAY

Shane and Derek step out the elevator into the breakfast area where they find MITCHELL COLLINS, age 24, sitting in a high back chair in the corner by the fire place reading USA Today.

SHANE
Oh, Lord. There he is.

Shane tries to control his laughter. Mitch wears an aqua tee, ivory sports coat, matching pants, loafers, and no socks.

SHANE
Dude, he's making this way too easy!
This ain't Miami Vice!

Mitch looks up from his paper and notices Shane. Mitch stands and extends his hand to Shane.

MITCH
Shane McCormick.

SHANE
Hey, Mitch. How are you?

Shane and Mitch shake hands.

MITCH
I'm doing well, and thanks for asking.

Mitch waits to be introduced. He clears his throat.

SHANE
Sorry. Mitch, this is Derek Jensen, our new Minister of Transportation. And this is Mitch Collins.

Mitch and Derek shake hands, and mid-shake, the elevator doors open. Mandie walks out. Derek and Mitch drop hands. She wears a white sundress, carries a white sweater, and she is turning heads. Derek is captivated, which repulses Shane.
SHANE
Derek?

Shane pulls out a handkerchief, and turning the tip end of it up, dabs the corner of Derek's mouth, wiping the fake drool. Derek slaps his hand away as Mandie approaches their group.

MANDIE
Good morning, gentlemen.

MITCH
It is now.

Mitch grabs her hand and kisses it. Shane and Derek cast disgusted looks at each other as Brian and Margie join them.

BRIAN
Morning, Mitch. It's good to see you.

MITCH
Always a pleasure, sir.

BRIAN
Okay, y'all! We need to leave here at 9:15. Let's roll! Well, eat then roll.

INT. RENTAL VAN - DAY

Brian drives over the extremely high Sidney Lanier Bridge. Margie and Shane notice that Derek looks a little green. Derek mumbles to himself, almost in a trance.

MARGIE
Derek, have you never seen the ocean?

DEREK
No, ma'am. I sure haven't.

MARGIE
Well, we'll make sure to get you to the beach before we leave then.

DEREK
Thank you, ma'am. That'd be real nice.

MITCH
Where did you say you're from, Eric?

DEREK
Tennessee. And it's Derek.
MITCH
Oh, right. So sorry.

INT. CHURCH ON ST. SIMON'S ISLAND - DAY

The PREACHER is in the middle of the sermon and Mandie looks furiously for something to write with/on. Mitch searches his coat pocket for a pen. Shane and Derek watch from behind.

SHANE
See 'em turning?

DEREK
What?

SHANE
The Wheels of Inspiration! Something in the sermon sparked a song.

DEREK
She writes songs too?

SHANE
Yeah. She wrote two on our last album.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Derek and Shane walk back to the hotel with Dairy Queen cups. They see Mandie and Mitch strolling toward the bus.

SHANE

Shane and Derek duck behind some bushes to listen.

MITCH
Do you have to do that right now?

MANDIE
Yes. I've gotta finish this song while it's fresh. God comes first. I can spend all day with you tomorrow.

MITCH
I know. You're making the right decision. That's what I love about ya.

Mitch opens his arms for a hug and Mandie steps right in.

MITCH
Now, don't you stay up too late. You

Created using Celtx
need your beauty sleep.

Mitch goes to the hotel and Mandie gets on the bus. Once Mitch is gone, Derek and Shane emerge from the bushes and sneak onto the bus quietly to scare Mandie, who fiddles at the keyboard. She hears a noise.

    MANDIE
    Who's there?

    DEREK
    It's just us.

    SHANE
    Man! You were supposed to sneak!

    DEREK
    So, where's old Mitchell Crockett?

Derek grins, while Shane busts out laughing.

    MANDIE
    Y'all quit! There was nothing wrong with his clothes. He's wonderful!

    SHANE
    He was so pitiful saying goodnight.

    DEREK
    I thought he was gonna cry real hard and get the Tubbs--I mean snubs!

    SHANE
    Haha! That was a good one.

    MANDIE
    Alright! That's it! Outta here! Now!

Derek turns Shane around and pushes him toward the stairs.

    DEREK
    We're going. You have work to do.

    MANDIE
    Thanks. Y'all, please promise to leave us alone. He leaves tomorrow night.

    DEREK
    I can't promise you that, but I can promise you one thing.
MANDIE
What's that?

DEREK
You don't need any beauty sleep.
Goodnight.

Mandie smiles and Derek floats downstairs.

EXT. JEKYLL ISLAND ROAD - DAY

Derek drives Shane in the Red Bug electric cart.

DEREK
Dude! You gotta pay better attention.
You're falling down on the job!

SHANE
I know! I can't believe we lost them
at the Sea Turtle Center.

DEREK
Yeah. He tried to get her alone at the
mini-golf too. I don't like it.

SHANE
I think I see them. Turn over there.

EXT. TABBY HOUSE RUINS - DAY

Derek parks and they look for Mandie and Mitch. Derek walks
up on them kissing in the ruins. He backs up silently.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Mandie, Mitch, Shane and Derek await the show in the wings.
Mitch pecks Mandie's cheek, just for Derek's sake.

MITCH
Knock 'em dead, Gorgeous.

SHANE
Ugh! Coodies!

Shane and Mandie take their places on stage and the show
starts. Mitch and Derek watch from the wings.

MITCH
(looking toward the stage)
You guys really think you're funny.
DEREK
We do? Whaddya mean?

MITCH
You know what I mean--you and Shane--trying to throw a wrench in my plans.

DEREK
Your plans?

MITCH
Yeah, MY plans. Well, I finally got her all to myself this afternoon.

Derek steps in front of Mitch, looks him square in the eyes.

DEREK
And when you roll outta here tonight, I will have her all to myself for the next three months.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Shane and Derek lean against the wall of the theater as Mandie and Mitch hug 'goodbye' beside Mitch's car. Mitch gets in his car, but not before locking eyes with Derek who tips his hat to Mitch. Mitch nods and drives away. It's on.

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY

Mandie and Margie make lunch for the family.

MARGIE
Your daddy wants ham and cheese. So, Shane says you been kissing on Mitch?

MANDIE
Oh, he does?

MARGIE
It's moving kinda fast, aint' it?

MANDIE
Mama! We've been talking for a while.

MARGIE
Okay then. Hand me the mayo.

Margie sighs and focuses on the sandwiches, thinking.
MARGIE
Well, if you're happy, then I'm happy.

MANDIE
Really, Mama?

MARGIE
Yeah. I'm still praying for you.

MANDIE
Thank you, Mama.

Margie picks up a sandwich wrapped in a napkin.

MARGIE
Sure. Now run this sandwich to Derek while I take the boys' food upstairs.

MANDIE
You just never quit, do you? He and Shane are in cahoots against me and you're gonna make it worse!

MARGIE
You really think so?

MANDIE
I can tell he's got his sights on me, too. Even Mitch knows. He said I've gotta stop him. It's for his own good!

MARGIE
Mandie?

MANDIE
Ma'am?

MARGIE
It's just a sandwich. He's gotta eat.

MANDIE
I reckon.

Mandie grabs the sandwich and a soda and stomps up front.

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - DAY

DEREK
Oh, hey Mandie!
MANDIE
Here's a sandwich and some drink.

DEREK
Ooh! That looks good. Thanks!

Mandie wags the sandwich impatiently.

DEREK
Just hang on. Lemme get situated here.

Derek changes hands on the wheel to grab the sandwich.

MANDIE
You can't handle eating a sandwich behind the wheel, Tex?

DEREK
Yes, missy, I can. I just have to take it slow. This driving ain't no joke.

MANDIE
Well, excuse me! I thought everything was a joke to you.

DEREK
No, it's not. Would you open that drink for me? Put it in the cupholder?

Mandie opens and places the drink as requested.

MANDIE
Is that all, sir?

DEREK
No. We got chips?

MANDIE
Ugh!

Mandie stomps back to the galley.

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY

Margie wags a small bag of Doritos, holds back her laughter.

MANDIE
You see what I have to deal with? He's just like Shane! Lord help us all!

Mandie snatches the bag of Doritos and stomps back up front.
INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - DAY

DEREK
Would you mind opening that for me?

MANDIE
Oh, not at all.

Mandie opens the bag and then squeezes it. She crushes every chip inside. She holds out the bag, very proud of herself.

DEREK
Oh, Mandie.

Mandie smirks.

DEREK
Now, I can just turn it up and eat those suckers straight outta the bag! Just how I like 'em! How'd you know?

MANDIE
Eat up, Tex!

DEREK
I'm from Tennessee, not Texas.

MANDIE
I know, Tex!

Mandie marches to the...

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY

...and starts a pot of coffee, puts up food, and starts dishes. She fumes and mumbles under her breath. She hears Derek sing in between bites. She walks back to him.

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - DAY

MANDIE
Hey. What's that?

DEREK
(swallows food)
What's what?

MANDIE
That song you're trying to sing?
DEREK
"Jesus Is the Sweetest Name I Know."
It's an older hymn. You wouldn't--

MANDIE
Hm. Okay.

Mandie wanders back distracted with the song.

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY
Mandie walks into Shane at the stairs.

SHANE
Watch out! I'm getting a snack.

Mandie walks back to...

INT. TOUR BUS - SHANE'S BUNK - DAY
Shane's bunk and grabs his guitar and walks back to the...

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY
...where she grabs Shane by the arm, and up the stairs.

MANDIE
No, you're not. You're coming with me.

SHANE
But Mandie! I wanted a Fudge Round!

INT. TRUCK STOP STORE - DAY
Derek, Shane, and Mandie shop. Mandie browses the Wedding Magazines while Derek purchases a smart phone.

SHANE
I thought you already had a phone.

DEREK
Yeah, but it's time for an upgrade.

Shane nudges Derek and nods to Mandie's direction.

SHANE
Dude, look at her. She's buying Wedding Magazines. This ain't good, Bro. We gotta do something.
DEREK
Hm. We'll see.

Derek plays with the cell phone, seeming to ignore Shane.

SHANE
I know how you feel about her!

Derek looks at Shane as he presses the playback button on the cell phone, replaying Shane's words.

SHANE (V.O.)
I know how you feel about her!

SHANE
Cool!

Shane snatches the phone from Derek's hand.

SHANE
Mmm. Lots of trouble right here!

Derek takes the phone back.

DEREK
That's why I have one, and you don't.

EXT. DOLLYWOOD GATES - DAY

Derek drives past the sign to their designated parking area.

BRIAN (V.O.)
Next stop - Showstreet Palace Theater!
We're on in two hours.

INT. THEATER WINGS - DAY

Brian, Margie, and Mandie are on stage while Shane and Derek wait in the wings. Shane peeks around one of the blue velvet curtains and motions for Derek to come over to him.

SHANE
Do you see what I see? Front row.

DEREK
Who? That row of girls on this side?

SHANE
No, her--The bubbling, blonde beauty in the middle! You see her?
Derek leans back and takes a hard look at Shane.

DEREK
Droolie, you'd better get it together.
You're about to go on stage! Come on,
Casanova, grab your bass! Go!

Derek drags Shane by the shoulders and pushes him on stage.

INT. THEATER - ON-STAGE - DAY

EMCEE (V.O.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, Dollywood and
the Showstreet Theater Present to
you...The McCormicks!

The family begins their opening number. Shane sits on a stool
and plays bass, making eyes at the girl on the front row and
she makes them right back. Shane throws in a couple of runs
on the bass, showing off. Then, he leans back on the stool
and crashes backwards. The audience laughs incessantly while
Derek runs on stage from the wings and helps him up.

DEREK
Are you okay?

Shane nods while he also laughs.

BRIAN
You know, the Bible says in Proverbs,
"Pride goeth before destruction, and"
how does that verse end there, Shane?

SHANE
"And a haughty spirit before a fall!"

Shane and the audience laugh at the the irony!

SHANE
Sorry, y'all! I just got carried away!

The audience cheers and claps for Shane to forgive him.

BRIAN
Let's take it from the chorus!

SAME - AT THE LAST SONG OF THE SET

The applause dies down for Brian to speak.
BRIAN
You've been a wonderful audience. For our last song, we've got something special. God bless y'all for coming.

A hush falls over the audience, as the stage goes dark, all but a spotlight on Mandie. Shane sits a bit behind Mandie, partly in the shadows with his acoustic guitar. Shane picks the instrument, rolling out broken chords as Mandie sings, "Jesus Is the Sweetest Name I Know."

Derek watches, captivated; blown away by the rendition. Nostalgia charms the audience, and several members sing along. Mandie finishes to a standing ovation until the curtain finally closes. The family exits the stage toward Derek. Brian and Margie stop Mandie to congratulate her. Shane is basically running off stage, but Derek stops him.

DEREK
(to Shane)
Great picking, Bro! I had never imagined that song played and sung like that before. It was really good.

SHANE
Oh, I had nothing to do with it. It was all her. I had to keep playing it until she was satisfied, the ole' heifer! But it turned out alright. Now, I've gotta go find my blonde!

Shane runs from the stage area; Brian and Margie follow him. Mandie tries to pass by Derek, but he grabs her arm.

DEREK
Hey, Mandie? Thanks for doing that for me. It was amazing!

Mandie grimaces, creating tension thick as peanut butter.

MANDIE
I didn't do it for you. It was a good song, is all. I didn't do it for you.

Mandie flees the scene before Derek can speak.

INT. AUNT GRANNY'S BUFFET - DAY

The family is seated for Brian to say grace; then Shane bolts to the buffet. GWEN RHODES, his blonde sneaks up behind him.
GWEN
Excuse me, Mr. McCormick?

Shane turns around slowly. He knows who it is.

SHANE
Oh, it's you!

GWEN
Are you okay? I'm so sorry for distracting you. I'm so embarrassed!

SHANE
No, it was my fault. If I hadn't been trying to show off I wouldn't have fallen. And please, call me Shane.

GWEN
(star-struck smiles)
Okay.

SHANE
And what shall I call you?

GWEN
Oh! Sorry. I'm Gwen Rhodes.

Shane grabs a plate for Gwen, and they get their food.

SHANE
Miss Gwen, will you join us for lunch?

Shane turns directing Gwen's attention to his family's table. Every head of Brian, Margie, Mandie, and Derek stares at them with jaws dropped at this Shane whom they've never met.

GWEN
Why don't we eat with my family? It's my birthday, you know, the big trip!

SHANE
(in his hokey British accent)
I'd be delighted.

Shane waves goodbye. The family can't believe it!

EXT. AUNT GRANNY'S BUFFET - DAY

Gwen and Shane meet the family outside after lunch.
SHANE
Family peeps, meet Miss Gwen Rhodes.

MARGIE
It is so nice to meet you, Gwen.

GWEN
Thank you. You too.

SHANE
Gwen's parents said she could tour the park with me this afternoon.

BRIAN
Well, why don't you young people go have some fun? We'll meet you back here around 6:00. Sound good?

Everyone agrees and they're off.

EXT. TENNESSEE TORANDO ROLLER COASTER LINE – DAY

Gwen and Shane go into one line, Derek to another line, and Mandie goes into yet another. Derek leans over to Mandie.

DEREK
Do you hate me so much, that you would face this terrifying thing all alone?

MANDIE
It's not so bad.

DEREK
Mandie, look at me.

Mandie looks up at Derek.

DEREK
I know what Mitch has been saying. He thinks I'm trying to steal ya away, but, you've made yourself plenty clear. So, let's call a truce. I won't pick about Mitch anymore, and maybe you won't be so mean to me. Shane's got his hands full and we'll both be miserable if we don't do something.

MANDIE
Well, I don't know--
DEREK
Come on. Let's be friends, just for today! You might even like it.

MANDIE
Well, if you'll stop be so hokey about it, I'll give it a shot!

DEREK
YEE HAW!!

Derek jumps and clears the bars into Mandie's line.

MANDIE
That's it! Get back there, right now!

DEREK
Oh, no ma'am. You said you were gonna be my friend.

MANDIE
And you said we were calling a truce! That means no more embarrassing, loud, hick-like hollering! Got it?

Derek holds his Stetson over his heart.

DEREK
Well, yes, Ma'am!

MONTAGE - THE YOUNG PEOPLE ENJOY THE RIDES AT DOLLYWOOD.

--They all ride the Tennessee Tornado Roller Coaster. Shane and Derek scream like girls.

--They all eat ice cream. Shane dabs some on Gwen's nose to flirt. Mandie wags her finger at Derek to say 'no way'.

--They all ride the Mystery Mine.

--They ride the Daredevil Falls and get soaked.

--Shane wins Gwen a giant teddy bear from the baseball pitching game. Mandie looks at Derek and longs for a prize too, but Derek doesn't play the game.

END MONTAGE

EXT. AUNT GRANNY'S BUFFET - DAY

The four young people join their parents, Brian and Mandie
and PASTOR CHARLES and MRS. RHNAE RHODES. Gwen and Shane hug and part ways. Shane watches Gwen walk away as Derek tears him away in the other direction--toward the bus.

SHANE
I sure made an idiot of myself today.

DEREK
Well, you had a good comeback.

MANDIE
For once, I think I have to agree with Derek. You were quite the gentleman.

SHANE
And don't you be expecting it. Sisters don't get that treatment.

MARGIE
Well, they should.

They all laugh. Margie, Brian, and Shane walk ahead.

DEREK
So, you agree with me on something?

MANDIE
Don't let it go to your head.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Mandie picks up a box from the front desk and brings it to...

INT. HOTEL - BREAKFAST AREA - DAY

...the breakfast area with the rest of the family and Derek.

MARGIE
Morning, angel. What's in the box?

MANDIE
It's an iPad from Mitch. Now, we can FaceTime on a better screen and it has an app to help me with my songwriting.

SHANE
Oh! Can I use it to FaceTime Gwen?

MANDIE
Oh, now you wanna be all nice?
DEREK
Can't you see he's tormented?

Derek and Mandie laugh and share a look of bonding.

MANDIE
Derek, you have an iPhone, right?

DEREK
Yeah.

MANDIE
Will you help me? I'm an Android girl!

Mandie and Derek move to another table out of ears' reach. Shane looks over at Derek and Mandie.

SHANE
Look at 'em. See them turning?

MARGIE
See what turning?

SHANE
The wheels.

MARGIE
What wheels?

BRIAN
The Wheels of Love.

SHANE
(to Brian)
How'd you know?

BRIAN
Same way you did, son. The way he looks at her, and picks at her all the time. Any man who'll fix some gadget to help his girl talk to another man is either lovesick, crazy, or both.

Mandie squeals in delight as the FaceTime with Mitch works. Derek moves into the picture and waves at Mitch!

BRIAN
And he's got it bad. The real shame is that her wheels ain't spinning back.
SHANE
Well, we have a lot of road to cover between now and Christmas.

MARGIE
And Christmas is full of miracles.

MONTAGE - BUS TOUR ROAD TRIP - CONCERTS, FUN, & FIGHTS

--EXT. BATTING CAGES, LOUISVILLE SLUGGER MUSEUM - DAY--
Mandie has trouble hitting. Derek helps her and she likes it.

--INT. MANDIE'S BUNK - NIGHT-- Mitch is mad on FaceTime. Mandie doesn't want to be mean to Derek. She grabs her bear.

--INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY-- Family sings on stage. Mandie solos. She is all smiles. This is her calling.

--EXT. RIVERBOAT-- Derek and Mandie walk, talk, and smile.

--INT. MANDIE'S BUNK - NIGHT-- Mandie fights with Mitch on FaceTime. Teddy bear sits in the background.

--INT. GYM STAGE-- Family sings on stage. Mandie is happy.

--INT. LAUNDROMAT-- Derek, Shane, and Mandie have fun while doing laundry. Derek tries to hide his boxers from Mandie as she picks at him about the cowboy print!

--INT. MANDIE'S BUNK - NIGHT-- FaceTime fight with Mitch. Mandie is unhappy. She pets the bear and then eats a cookie.

--EXT. CAMP MEETING SHELTER-- Thanksgiving Decorations mark the passing of time. The family sings in an outdoor shelter venue. Mandie is happy.

--SAME-- Mandie watches Gwen introduce Derek to her friend, STEPHANIE PATTERSON. They hit it off. Mandie sends a picture of them to Mitch, who sends back a smiling selfie. Mandie looks at Derek with Stephanie. Mandie doesn't smile.

END MONTAGE

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - NIGHT

Brian sits at the table on the phone, writing in a planner.

BRIAN
Thank you again for this opportunity, sir. You have a great night too.
BRIAN
(yells)
Everyone--family meeting, right now!

Everyone reports to the galley in a hurry.

SHANE
Dad, whatever I did, I'm really sorry.

BRIAN
It's not you this time, Shane! Okay. I have some terrific news, some bad news, and some good news. I'll just start at the beginning. We are now booked for the West Coast Gospel Jubilee at the Greek Theater in Los Angeles in January.

The group gasps and cheers at the news.

SHANE
So, what's the bad news?

BRIAN
We won't be able to spend New Year's at home. We'll have to be at Pastor Bledsoe's church in Augusta.

MANDIE
Oh, Daddy! That's wonderful news! Christmas and New Years with Mitch!

SHANE
No, I think that's still the bad news!

DEREK
I'm a little confused, sir. You said terrific, bad, and good. What's left?

BRIAN
Well, the good news was the Greek Theater. Here's the terrific news: We are now booked on the "Singing at Sea Cruise." After the West Coast tour, we launch from Port Canaveral, Florida.

The entire family cheers, but Derek runs to the bathroom.

BRIAN
What in the world?
MARGIE
Think he's coming down with something?

SHANE
Guys, remember back in Georgia, when we rode over that bridge? Derek didn't breathe until we got back on the ground. I thought it was heights, but now I'm thinkin'--

The family gets quiet as Derek approaches.

MARGIE
Derek, Honey, are you okay?

DEREK
Yes, ma'am. I'm good now.

BRIAN
Great, because it was a surprise for Christmas, but I was able to get your family tickets for the cruise as well.

DEREK
Thank you so much. They'll love that!

BRIAN
Good! We're outta here at eight for a "Christmas Kickoff" retreat at Oglebay Resort in Wheeling, West Virginia!

MARGIE
Ooh! Spa time!

The young people moan/grunt and they disperse.

EXT. WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS - WALKING PATH - NIGHT

Shane, Mandie, and Derek walk and look at Christmas lights. Shane's phone chimes. It's a FaceTime from Gwen.

SHANE
Hey, Baby!

Shane turns to Mandie and Derek.

SHANE
Gotta go, chumps. It's my lady!

Derek and Mandie stop walking to look at the lights.
DEREK
So, did Mitch have a good Thanksgiving?

MANDIE
Did Stephanie, or whatever her name is, from the camp meeting?

DEREK
I'm sure she did. I, uh, really haven't checked my messages lately.

MANDIE
Oh.

DEREK
I was gonna go up to the Planetarium, but it's so clear out here tonight.

MANDIE
Is that why it's so cold, too?

DEREK
Yeah. Back home it was much easier to see the stars--no lights to distract. Skies were dark blue, if the moon wasn't full, every star was bright.

MANDIE
I'll bet it was the most beautiful thing you'd ever seen, right?

Derek looks straight at Mandie.

DEREK
Nope. Not even close.

MANDIE
Why do you do that?

DEREK
Do what?

MANDIE
Why do you say things like that? You know that I'm with Mitch.

DEREK
I say those things because they're true and you need to hear them. You deserve to be with a man who loves you.
for who you really are, not as a prize
to be fought over, but don't worry. 
You won't hear them from me anymore.

Derek walks away leaving a somber Mandie alone. Her cell phone lights up. It's Mitch. She ignores the call.

EXT. MCCORMICK HOMESTEAD - DAY

The bus arrives at home. Uncle Joe waits for Derek in his Jeep. Shane and Derek chat and unload the equipment.

SHANE
Don't forget: Friday afternoon, bass lessons. We can't get behind over Christmas break.

DEREK
Yes, sir!

SHANE
Of course, my nights are Gwen's.

DEREK
Of course.

SHANE
She's the one.

DEREK
I should say, you're really young to be so sure, but life is short. And when you know, you just know, right?

SHANE
Right. I just wish--

DEREK
Yeah. She's barely said two words to me since Wheeling.

SHANE
I noticed. Not that I'm trying to mind your business, but I thought things were going good for y'all?

DEREK
Yeah, right! I complimented her, and it didn't go well. I don't get it. What does he have that I don't?
SHANE
I think it's what he DOESN'T have: a Stetson, boots, a belt buckle bigger than Texas.

DEREK
Well, that's who I am, and if she doesn't like it then-

SHANE
Then that's just it, isn't it?

DEREK
I guess so.

Margie and Brian exit the bus. Brian shakes Derek's hand.

BRIAN
Merry Christmas, Derek.

DEREK
You too, Sir, Mrs. Margie.

Derek tips his hat to Margie. Brian and Margie walk inside. Derek and Shane do the bro hug.

SHANE
I'll see you Friday. Be ready to work.

DEREK
Yes, sir.

Mandie almost falls out of the bus with her heavy bag. She walks past Derek quickly to avoid speaking.

DEREK
Do you need some help, Mandie?

MANDIE
No, thank you. I'm fine.

DEREK
Mandie?

She stops. Closes her eyes, braces herself, turns around.

MANDIE
Yes?

DEREK
I hope you get everything you want for
Christmas.

Derek heads to the Jeep with his duffle. He never looks back. Mandie continues slowly to her house, brushing back a tear.

INT. JENSEN FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Derek and Uncle Joe walk into the living room where Sophia waits for them on the couch.

UNCLE JOE
Look what I found.

SOPHIA
Welcome home!

Sophia jumps up and hugs Derek. He lingers.

SOPHIA
Son, I love you, but if you don't let go soon, I'm gonna pass out!

Derek lets go and falls onto the couch.

UNCLE JOE
What's wrong, Derek? Ain't they treating you right on the road?

DEREK
Oh, yes sir. They're the best! But that bus ain't nothing like home.

UNCLE JOE
Well, I'm turning in. Goodnight.

DEREK AND SOPHIA
Goodnight.

SOPHIA
So tell me all about her, um, it, I mean life on the road.

DEREK
Yeah. I knew you'd get around to that.

SOPHIA
I've never been one to play matchmaker, but I was praying that--

DEREK
Well, let's just say I wouldn't have
wanted to experience Mandie McCormick if you hadn't been praying for me!

SOPHIA
What?

DEREK
One minute she's this beautiful gifted woman and the next, she's a viper. Only, I don't buy it. After she strikes, she looks more like a wounded puppy. I haven't felt this way since--

SOPHIA
Allison?

Derek chokes up. Tears stream down his face.

DEREK
She, um...

SOPHIA
I'm sorry. I had no idea.

DEREK
She gets under my skin so bad, but then I just can't stay mad at her. And when her nostrils flare out, and I know she's had enough, all I can do is push her buttons again. I love it! I love her. I love watching her work, singing, songwriting, she's amazing.

SOPHIA
Just let it out.

DEREK
There's nothing more to say. She's with this rich clown and she thinks she's in love, but she's not. She puts up a whole façade when he's around. He doesn't even know her, not like I do.

SOPHIA
Whatcha gonna do?

DEREK
I tried moving on. I started talking to another girl, but I've gotta cut her loose. It's not fair to her.
SOPHIA
That's very wise.

DEREK
I once told Shane that you can't hide from life. So, I'm just gonna follow God. Can't go wrong doing that, can I?

SOPHIA
Right.

DEREK
So, I am asking God for a whole lot of contentment for Christmas.

SOPHIA
There's plenty of boxes under there.

They both laugh. Derek stares at the tree.

DEREK
Boxes...boxes! You're a genius.

SOPHIA
What?

DEREK
Oh, nothing. Speaking of gifts that won't fit in a box, Mr. Brian has you and Uncle Joe booked on the "Singing at Sea Cruise" with us.

Sophia stopped smiling. Her face turns dead serious.

SOPHIA
Son! Are you going?

DEREK
Yes, ma'am. I will be there.

INT. MCCORMICK HOMESTEAD - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Margie preps the turkey while Mandie rolls cookies. Margie puts the turkey in the oven then chops carrots.

MARGIE
So, when will Mitch be coming in?

MANDIE
Tomorrow night about 8:00.
MARGIE
Make sure the guest room is ready.

MANDIE
Yes, ma’am. (pauses) So, are you going to teach me how to make your special cornbread dressing? I might need to make my own next year.

MARGIE
Something you're not telling me?

MANDIE
I think I’m getting something very special this Christmas.

MARGIE
Why do you think that?

MANDIE
Things are falling into place. Mitch has a good job now, his own apartment.

Margie begins to chop the carrots robustly.

MARGIE
Aren’t you rushing things?

MANDIE
Mama, all the signs are there!

MARGIE
Has he talked to your daddy?

Margie pushes the carrots aside and levels cups of cornmeal.

MANDIE
This ain't the Middle Ages.

MARGIE
How would you feel if you married him and your daddy didn't approve?

MANDIE
I would hope Mitch would ask but--

Margie stops leveling and focuses on Mandie.

MARGIE
But you don't know if he's the type of man who would ask for your hand.
MANDIE
And this has nothing to do with Derek?

Margie picks up a dash of flour and flicks it in her face.

MARGIE
No, Mandie. It doesn't. Get over yourself. Roll more, talk less.

Mandie’s in shock. She doesn’t make a peep as she gets a towel for her face. The tension is as thick as the cookie batter. Margie pulls a casserole out the oven, silently.

MANDIE
I suppose you think Derek is the better man? I'm sure he'd ask Daddy.

MARGIE
Oh, yeah? Are you sure?

MANDIE
Yeah! He's so old-fashioned he'd do just that. And get down on one knee.

MARGIE
So, you're saying you know Derek better than Mitch?

Mandie is taken aback. She knows it's true.

MARGIE
Sobering, isn't it? I've seen your face after you've been ugly to him.

MANDIE
Ma, it's for his own good.

MARGIE
Then why does it hurt YOU so much?
Slow down, Mandie. You've got time.

The kitchen timer dings.

INT. JENSEN FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sophia opens the door to see Shane with his bass guitar.

SOPHIA
Come on in, Shane.

Sophia stands aside for Shane to enter with the large case.
SHANE
Thank you, Mrs. Jensen.

SOPHIA
Derek's out back in the woodshop. He's working on a gift for Mandie.

Shane rolls his eyes and leans his bass on the armchair.

SHANE
Oh, no. Lemme go get that boy!

SOPHIA
Do you mind if we talk a minute first?

SHANE
Of course. I don't mind at all.

Both Sophia and Shane make themselves comfy on the sofa.

SOPHIA
Well, you've probably figured out by now that Derek has trouble with water.

SHANE
Yes, ma'am. I noticed.

SOPHIA
No one in Campbell's Grove, except for our family know about Derek's past.

Shane settles back in the sofa. He hugs the throw pillow.

SOPHIA
Derek was in love with a beautiful young girl back home named Allison. She was a Godly young lady.

Shane smiles. He is excited to learn about Derek's past.

SOPHIA
When Derek's graduation barbecue ended early because of a thunderstorm, Allison stayed behind to help me clean up. And she never made it home.

Shane's smile turns to shock.

SOPHIA
The roads were really wet. She lost control of her car, and hydroplaned.
off the Mirror Lake Bridge.

Tears roll down Shane's cheeks.

SOPHIA
By the time someone noticed the busted railing, her car had sunk.

SHANE
Oh, my word!

SOPHIA
Derek was devastated. He couldn't eat or sleep. And all we could do was pray. The Lord brought him through.

SHANE
And then his daddy?

SOPHIA
Yes, a year later. His daddy was crushed underneath a tractor he was working on. The one was bad, but the two so close together almost killed--

SHANE
It's no wonder he hates bridges and--

Shane can't even find the words. He wipes his cheeks.

SOPHIA
And then, that crazy wonderful son of mine went against my wishes and--

SHANE
Gave you his start-up money. We talked a little bit about that before, but I had no idea about--

SOPHIA
He's so happy with y'all on the road, but I'm scared this cruise's gonna set him back. He loves your family and--

SHANE
He's in love with my sister.

SOPHIA
And she doesn't care for him?
SHANE
No, ma'am. She's pretty much an idiot.

They share a much needed laugh and wipe their tears.

SOPHIA
Now, now. I know that's just brotherly love talking but--

Derek's clopping boots give away his entrance. He turns the corner and stops cold. He knows what they've been discussing.

DEREK
I guess you know all about me now.

SHANE
(smiling)
A wise man once told me that you can't hide from life.

DEREK
That's right. God's blessed me with a whole new family. I'm moving on.

Derek walks over and hugs his mom. Shane stands and wipes his eyes on his sleeves.

SHANE
Alright. Enough waterworks. Let's get to picking that bass, boy!

DEREK
Yes, sir!

EXT. TOUR BUS - MCCORMICK HOMESTEAD - DAY

Derek stands at the bus doors. Shane approaches him dressed in a V-neck sweater.

SHANE
Dude! Thank you so much for the Man-Sweater! Gwen's digging it! She saw it this morning on FaceTime.

DEREK
I still don’t think that such a thing as a Man-Sweater exists, but you admired it, so I acquired it.

Shane and Derek do the fist bump and Shane boards the bus. Mandie approaches, dragging her bags. Derek waits for her.
MANDIE
Hello! Did you have a nice Christmas?

DEREK
Hello, yourself. And yes, I did. Now hurry up so we can get on the road.

Derek reaches down to take her suitcase which she holds in her left hand. He checks--no ring. Derek boards the bus with Mandie's suitcase and she follows.

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY

Derek leads Mandie to her bunk, walking and talking.

DEREK
And how was your vacation?

MANDIE
It was fine, thanks.

DEREK
By the way, I have something for you.

He directs her attention to the wooden box wrapped only with a red velvet bow that sits on her bed beside her bear.

Mandie places her bag on the bed in awe of the gift. She picks it up and slides off the bow. The box is handmade with scrolling on the edges, designs in the corners, and her name is burned on the lid. Underneath is burned, "Her price is far above rubies". She opens the box. It's lined with red velvet.

MANDIE
Derek, you made this?

DEREK
Yeah, you know, besides Shane's bass lessons I was really bored.

Mandie can't speak, she can only cry.

DEREK
What's wrong? Don't you like it?

Mandie sits the box down and grabs Derek in an tight hug.

MANDIE
It's beautiful. I don't deserve it.

She pulls back and looks into his eyes.
MANDIE
Derek, I've been--

DEREK
It's okay, Mandie. We're good. Now, I gotta get this machine moving.

Derek walks away quickly before he loses it. Mandie watches him walk away. She sits on the bed and takes her bear into her lap. She draws the box to her and admires it.

MANDIE
(to the bear)
Look what he did for me.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - NIGHT
Shane sits on the back pew of the church in Augusta, GA, texting Gwen. Derek stands, jiggling his leg in nervous anticipation. He keeps scanning the auditorium, and watching the doors.

DEREK
What time is it?

SHANE
IDK! You have a phone!

Derek pulls out his phone and checks the time.

DEREK
It's ten minutes until the service starts. Where are they?

SHANE
Huh?

DEREK
Mandie and him. They're not here yet.

SHANE
Oh, yeah, their fancy dinner date. I don't know. I don't care.

DEREK
What's wrong with you?

SHANE
I'm facing a solid month on the road without seeing Gwen and Mandie gets to see her--whatever he is! Hey, Gwen is
asking if you've talked to Stephanie.

DEREK
No, not really. What's keeping them?

SHANE
They'll be here. What's up with you?

DEREK
Don't know. Can't explain it. Feels like a storm's coming. I'm out.

SHANE
What do I tell Gwen?

DEREK
I don't know. Handle it. I'll be back.

Derek leaves for the men's room.

INT. MEN'S ROOM STALL - NIGHT

Derek stands in the stall. He hears the door open and the voices of men entering. It's Mitch. He listens closely.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Derek returns to the sanctuary. A smiling Mandie and the McCormicks end their performance on stage. Derek is visibly disturbed, almost frantic, but he finds a seat in the back.

When the family comes down from the stage, Shane goes to Derek on the back row. Derek whispers something to Shane, and he's mortified. Derek points to Margie, and then points to the sanctuary's back door. Derek steps out as Shane creeps up to Margie. He taps her on the shoulder. He whispers in her ear and then they both slip out the sanctuary together.

Later, PASTOR BLEDSOE dismisses everyone for refreshments. Shane scans the crowd for Mandie, who files out behind Mitch.

SHANE
Hey! Mom needs your help. Come with me right now.

MANDIE
Is she okay? Excuse me, Mitch.

Shane takes Mandie by the arm and leads her to the room.
INT. CHURCH COUNSEL ROOM - NIGHT

Margie sits on a loveseat with Derek's cell phone. Shane ushers in Mandie, backs out, and closes the door.

    MARGIE
    Sit down, Hon. You need to hear this.

Mandie sits down.

    MANDIE
    Mama, are you okay? What's going on?

Margie plays the recording. The voice of Mitch and DUANE sound through the phone.

    DUANE (V.O.)
    Mitch, my man! You're gonna ask that girl to marry you tonight?

Mandie smiles. Margie shakes her head. Mandie is confused.

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK

Mitch prims and preens in the mirror and brags.

    MITCH
    Yeah. And when Diane hears how I am how I am seriously in love with her--

    DUANE
    --and her daddy's money--

    MITCH
    --she will accept, and I'll be in!

    DUANE
    When you gonna cut Mandie loose?

    MITCH
    Well, that's the beauty of it all. I told Diane that Mandie's been chasing me and how I feel sorry for her.

    DUANE
    Diane has no idea that you've been playing both hands, does she?
MITCHE
Nope! And if Diane turns me down, then
I'll just marry Mandie. Dr.
Livingston's contacts or a star on my
arm gets me into the Country Club
either way. It's all up from there!

DUANE
You can't lose!

MITH
Nope! Let's get going! I'm off to
Diane's right after the service.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHURCH COUNSEL ROOM - NIGHT
Mandie sits in shock. One single tear runs down her cheek.

MARGIE
I'm so sorry. Say something, please!

Mandie wipes away her single tear and stands.

MANDIE
I know what to do. How's my makeup?

MARGIE
No smudges. You're good.

MANDIE
That's Derek's phone, isn't it? Hm. He
always looks out for me, doesn't he?

MARGIE
Yes. He does.

MANDIE
(mumbles)
Poor fool.

MARGIE
Derek, or you?

MANDIE
I haven't decided yet.

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY/LOBBY - NIGHT
Derek and Shane watch Mandie from a dark room across the

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hallway.

SHANE
Oh, boy. Here we go.

Mandie saunters up to Mitch and his goons in the hall. Mitch's back is to her. She taps his shoulder.

MANDIE
Mitch, Dear?

Mitch turns around to her. Mandie is all smiles.

MITCH
How is your mother?

MANDIE
Fine. Shane exaggerates everything! But I do really need to talk to you.

Mitch's friends snicker.

MANDIE
I wanted to tell you, that it's just not fair to keep leading you on this way. I'm going to California in a few hours, and I realized I need to keep my options open. You understand, yes?

Mitch is in shock and his goons snicker at him now.

MANDIE
Fellas, maybe y'all can keep him company, huh? Goodbye, Mitch.

Mandie struts away from Mitch and out the back door. As she approaches, Shane and Derek pull back to stay hidden. Mandie walks by them with confidence and poise. For now.

SHANE
"And the Oscar goes to Mandie McCormick." Man, I'm proud.

Derek checks to see if the coast is clear.

SHANE
I'll bet you a million dollars I know where she's headed right now.

Derek ventures out and Shane follows him to the bus.
DEREK
Where do you think I'm going?

INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

Derek and Shane board the bus to hear Mandie crying in her mother's arms from her bunk. Mandie holds her teddy bear.

Derek is crushed. He grabs his Stetson out of the driver's seat and slumps down in it. He stares out the open bus doors. Shane stares at the floor out of respect.

Mandie raises her head. She wipes her tears and mascara.

MANDIE
(to Derek)
I suppose you've got something witty
to say about all this, right, Tex?

DEREK
Not this time, Mandie. Not this time.

Derek bolts out the door with Shane on his heels. Margie strokes Mandie's hair as Mandie clutches her bear.

MARGIE
Why don't you go wash your face and
settle down for the night? I'll tell
Pastor Bledsoe that you're ill.

MANDIE
Thanks.

Mandie scoots back to the headboard, leaning against it. She closes her eyes and fights the snubs. She starts to think.

MANDIE
If Derek hadn't been there...

MARGIE
God put Derek where he needed to be.

Margie wets a washcloth in the galley beside Mandie's bunk.

MANDIE
Yes, He did. Derek's a good friend.

MARGIE
(handing Mandie the washcloth)
He is. Say, I missed Pastor Bledsoe's
message tonight. What did he preach?
MANDIE
Um, it was about Elijah and the Widow, about how God always has a plan.

MARGIE
Oh, yes. God does have a plan. But that widow, you know, she had to take a second look.

Mandie grabs her vanity mirror and wipes her eyes.

MANDIE
Second look? Whaddya mean?

Margie walks and talks. She picks up Mandie's bear, sets it on her vanity, and then sits across from her on Shane's bunk.

MARGIE
I'm just saying. The widow knew she had used all the meal and oil. She just knew the barrel was empty. What if she didn't have the faith to go back and look in that barrel that next day? They all would have starved.

Mandie sees the bear and the box on her vanity shelf.

MARGIE
All I'm saying is, sometimes for God's plan to work, you gotta have enough faith to take a second look.

Margie stands, turning around to smooth Shane's comforter.

MARGIE
I'm going to go get us some snacks and give your regrets to the preacher. You get comfy. Rest a little bit, alright?

Margie leaves. Mandie picks up Derek's box for a moment. She places it back on her vanity shelf, beside the bear.

INT. TOUR BUS - MANDIE'S BUNK - NIGHT

Mandie wakes up to laughter in the upper lounge, eyes swollen and bedhead. She walks upstairs, with her bear, following the laughter. The whole family and Derek are there.
INT. TOUR BUS - UPPER LOUNGE - NIGHT

MARGIE
Brian, I can't believe you went to that girl's house with the boys!

BRIAN
They filled me in on the way. I wanted to string that boy up by his toes!

Shane sees Mandie entering the lounge.

SHANE
Oh, Mandie! You missed it, Girl!

MANDIE
Missed what?

SHANE
Me, Derek, and Dad went over to Diane's house and-

Mandie sits down to listen, hugging the teddy bear.

MANDIE
Daddy? You went to her house?

BRIAN
Yes, Honey. It was the right thing to do. We met with her and her father. Mitch lied to her too, remember?

SHANE
And the best part was when Mitch showed up.

EXT. LIVINGSTON MANSION - NIGHT (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK

MARGIE (V.O.)
Mitch went there?

Mitch drives up to the Livingston Mansion and parks on the curb. He gets out and walks up the side walk leading to the large wooden front door. He knocks.

SHANE (V.O.)
Yeah! He had no idea that we were there. I guess when you broke up with him, he knew that he'd have to try and
lie his way outta his own mess before Diane got word of what had happened.

Mr. Livingston opens the door wide enough for Mitch to see Brian, Shane, and Derek seated inside. Mr. Livingston picks Mitch up by his collar and throws him out.

SHANE (V.O.)
Ole' Mitch thought he was gonna be something! You should've seen the look on his face when he saw us sitting there! And then Mr. Livingston threw him out! It was great! Woo hoo!

END FLASHBACK

INT. TOUR BUS - UPPER LOUNGE - NIGHT
Mandie shakes her head in disbelief. Shane bounces around while telling the story.

SHANE
And you'd think that he'd get the idea and leave, but oh, no!

MARGIE
How do you mean?

SHANE
He waited for us, well not all of us--

Shane directs his attention to Derek. Mandie looks at Derek.

MANDIE
He was waiting for you?

Derek tires to speak, but Shane cuts him off. Shane jumps toward Mandie as he speaks.

SHANE
Mandie, you shoulda seen it!

MANDIE
Seen what, Shane! Spit it out!

EXT. LIVINGSTON MANSION - NIGHT (BLACK AND WHITE)
FLASHBACK
Mitch hides in a bush at the end of the sidewalk/curb. When Derek approaches, he jumps out of the bush, grabs Derek by
the collar, and swings a punch at him.

SHANE (V.O.)
Yeah, ole' Mr. Wonderful was hiding in the bushes at the end of the driveway. As soon as Mr. Livingston closed that big wooden door behind us, he jumped out at Derek. He grabbed him by the collar and tried throw a punch at him.

BRIAN (V.O.)
(snickering)
Emphasis on the word tried!

Derek grabs Mitch's fist midair, wraps it behind his back, and pins Mitch up against his own car, and busts Mitch's lip.

BRIAN (V.O.)
Derek caught Mitch's fist in the air, wrapped his arm behind his back, and pinned him against his own car!

SHANE (V.O.)
And that ain't even the best part! When Derek slammed Mitch into his car, he busted Mitch's lip!

END FLASHBACK

INT. TOUR BUS - UPPER LOUNGE - NIGHT

Shane rolls on the sofa and holds his sides as he laughs. Brian and Margie both laugh heartily. Then Margie stops.

MARGIE
Oh! We shouldn't be laughing! This is bad! We're supposed to behave better!

BRIAN
Margie, I was right there, and the boy was only defending himself. Trust me; he could have really hurt that boy!

SHANE
And Mitch knew it, too!

MANDIE
(to Derek)
What do you have to say for yourself?

Derek looks at her, surprised, and answers with no remorse.
DEREK
He shouldn't have put his hands on me!

SHANE
That's one mistake Mitch will never make again, believe me! You shoulda seen his face when Derek told him--

DEREK
Shane!

SHANE
What? She needs to know!

DEREK
Ugh!

Derek looks down at the ground again, embarrassed.

MANDIE
What did you tell him, Derek?

EXT. LIVINGSTON MANSION - NIGHT (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK

Derek still has Mitch pinned against the car. When Mitch accuses Derek of trying to steal Mandie, Derek spins him around and wags his finger in Mitch's face.

SHANE (V.O.)
Ole' Mitch was hollerin' at Derek about how this was his fault, and how Derek had planned to steal you from the beginning, and Derek said--

BRIAN (V.O.)
--Derek said that you had been faithful. He defended your honor.

Derek turns Mitch around and pushes him in the direction of the driver's side of his car. He points down the road.

SHANE (V.O.)
And then he told Mitch that he'd better not ever see his ugly mug around you again. And that he'd better not call, text, or contact you in any way, or he'd have him to deal with!

END FLASHBACK

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INT. TOUR BUS - UPPER LOUNGE - NIGHT

Shane's smile quickly disappears.

SHANE
And he threw your iPad in his car, and
told him to take his junk and leave.

Shane turns to Derek.

SHANE
Dude, that was a perfectly good iPad.
I could have used it for my Gwen-time!

DEREK
I'll buy you another one! There were
bigger issues at hand!

MANDIE
You really told him that?

BRIAN
And if he hadn't told him so quickly,
I was gonna do it myself! I am very
proud of you Derek, and very grateful.

Brian stands and extends his hand to Derek. They shake.
Margie approaches him also.

MARGIE
So am I. You really made him bleed?

Derek rolls his eyes in dismay.

DEREK
Yes, ma'am. I didn't mean to, though.

Margie pats him on the shoulder.

MARGIE
I know. He sure did deserve it though!
Goodnight everyone!

BRIAN
(to Derek)
Goodnight, Son.

Margie follows Brian up to their bunk. Shane sits up, and
finally breathes normally.
SHANE
Whew! Well you sure rang in the New
Year! Ha ha! Goodnight, y'all!

Shane heads down to his bunk. Mandie stands up with her bear.

DEREK
Mandie, I'm-

MANDIE
Sorry? Don't be.

For the first time, she shows a slight smile.

MANDIE
He did deserve it. I owe you big-time,
Tex. Thank you for everything.

Mandie and Derek go down the stairwell...

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - NIGHT

...and part ways at the galley. Derek stops at his stairwell,
Mandie at her bunk. Derek smiles. Mandie smiles back.

DEREK
I'm sorry that things didn't turn out
like you wanted them to.

MANDIE
Oh, yeah, well--

DEREK
Goodnight. I'll be praying for you.

Derek turns and goes down his small stairwell to his bunk.

Mandie opens the lid of the box that Derek made on her
vanity. She places her bear inside. It is a perfect fit.

MANDIE
(to her bear)
Sleep well.

She closes the box and strokes the lid across the wood-
burning of her name before closing her bunk's privacy shield.

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY

Brian pours himself a cup of coffee. Derek comes upstairs
from his lower level quarters, with his hat in hand. He lays

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his hat on the bench beside him as he slips into the booth.

DEREK
Good morning, sir. Did you sleep well?

BRIAN
You might not believe it, but that's the best few hours of sleep that I've had in a while. Coffee?

DEREK
Yes, sir. Black is fine. I hope I didn't lose any ground with you last night. I'm usually not a physically aggressive man.

BRIAN
Not at all. I think you showed great restraint. I know you can handle yourself and any other trouble that comes along.

DEREK
That means a lot, sir.

Brian brings Derek's coffee to the table.

DEREK
Thank you, sir.

BRIAN
Sure. Let me share something with you. (Brian gets settled at the table.) About a year ago, Margie and I really started praying hard for Mandie. We knew she was lonely.

DEREK
I can understand that.

BRIAN
Long story short, I prayed for Mandie to meet someone who loves God, who wants to serve Him, who would love and protect her with all his heart. And I don't know any other man alive more suited for her than you.

DEREK
But sir...
BRIAN
I know that usually the man asks the dad for the woman's hand in marriage, but I'll tell you this--I'd be honored to officially call you my son.

A tear runs down Derek's cheek.

DEREK
There's one big problem with that, sir. She doesn't love me.

BRIAN
We'll just pray about that, won't we?

Brian pats Derek on the shoulder.

BRIAN
We've got seven hours to Quitman, Mississippi today. Are you ready?

DEREK
Yes, sir.

BRIAN
Alright, son. Let's get moving!

EXT. CHURCHYARD - GRASSY LAWN PICNIC AREA - DAY

The family is at a church barbecue. Mandie sits alone at the picnic table with a diet soda watching Shane and Derek play kickball with the kids when Margie approaches her.

MARGIE
Who would have thought that it would be so warm in January?

MANDIE
Yeah! Life in the South!

MARGIE
That charcoal smell is divine! We never get to do this. Did you eat yet?

MANDIE
No, ma'am. I'm not very hungry.

MARGIE
They why don't you go out there and have some fun with Shane and Derek?
MANDIE
Mama, I'm too old for that!

MARGIE
Derek's older than you, and he's not passing up the fresh air and exercise.

MANDIE
That's just Derek. I'm not going out there, making a fool of myself!

MARGIE
Well, you can sit here and mope or you can choose happiness. It's up to you.

Margie walks away to speak with a lady at the buffet table. Mandie picks up three bottled waters and walks over to...

EXT. CHURCHYARD GRASSY LAWN GAME AREA - DAY

...the fence and watches Shane and Derek enjoying the game.

MANDIE
I'll bet Mitch didn't even want kids.

The game has ended. Shane and Derek run up to the fence and Mandie hands them the bottles of water.

MANDIE
Here ya go.

SHANE
Thank you, Miss High and Mighty.

MANDIE
And here's one for you.

DEREK
Thanks! You didn't have to--

MANDIE
I know.

Mandie walks back towards the...

EXT. CHURCHYARD - GRASSY LAWN PICNIC AREA - DAY

...as Derek jumps the fence and follows her.

DEREK
Hey. Did you wanna get a bite of
something sweet? I didn't get dessert.

MANDIE
No, thank you. I'm not hungry. I'm gonna help Shane load some crates.

DEREK
No, way! You're not lifting those.

MANDIE
I can lift some of them, sir! And I'm sorry that I haven't been pulling my weight around here. I've been a little pre-occupied.

DEREK
Well, you don't have to, but if you want to help us, I won't stop you.

MANDIE
Like you could!

DEREK
Oh, I could now!

They both laugh. Derek stops at the dessert table for a sweet as Mandie walks with her water bottle to the bus that is parked at the edge of the grassy lawn picnic area. She doesn't eat anything. And Margie notices.

EXT. CARLSBAD CAVERNS, NEW MEXICO - DAY

The family stops to visit the caverns on the way to Los Angeles. They enter through the Natural Entrance and descend for a while, struggling.

INT. CARLSBAD CAVERN - NATURAL ENTRANCE ROUTE - DAY

SHANE
Dad! Gimme the map!

Shane snatches the map.

BRIAN
Please?

SHANE
Sorry, "please." Dad! Look right here--it says that everyone should tour the Big Room Route cause this Natural Entrance route is really steep.
BRIAN
We've come this far. Let's keep going.

The family continues to travel and climb.

INT. CAVERN - NEAR THE EXIT - DAY

On the last very steep climb to the exit, Mandie collapses.

MARGIE
Mandie!

Margie runs back to her, but Derek is already there.

MANDIE
Mama! I'm so sorry. I don't know what's wrong. My legs just quit.

MARGIE
Did you eat that banana this morning?

MANDIE
No, ma'am. Just a Diet Coke.

MARGIE
That's what's wrong with you! You need to eat something.

MANDIE
Mama, I don't think I can make it back up there. I'm too weak.

DEREK
You don't have to. I've got you.

Derek scoops her up in his arms. She puts her arms around his neck. She holds on for a minute, and then her arms fall.

MANDIE
I'm sorry.

DEREK
It's okay. Just rest on me.

Derek carries Mandie up the steep climb; the family follows.

INT. TOUR BUS - GREEK THEATER - DAY

Derek parks the bus at the Greek Theater, Los Angeles, CA. He stands to exit the bus. But he opens the doors and waits.
DEREK
Shane help with me the blocks, please.

SHANE
In a minute. I'm getting Mandie up. She's probably worn out from all the walking yesterday. She's really out of shape, you know!

DEREK
She is not. She's just right. Quit it.

Derek steps out, while Shane continues to Mandie's bunk.

SHANE
Come on, Mandie! Get your big butt out of bed! It's California, Baby!

Shane opens her divider and taps her shoulder. No response.

SHANE
Mandie. Wake up. Quit playing.

She still doesn't wake. Shane puts his hand to her cheek.

SHANE
Mama! Come quick! Mandie's burning up!

Margie and Brian run in from their upstairs room. Derek runs back onto the bus to her bunk where he watches, frozen.

MARGIE
Shane, cold washcloth and alcohol.

Shane runs on his errand as Brian takes out his cell phone.

BRIAN
I'm calling the promoter. Maybe he has a doctor on call.

Shane returns, passing the supplies to Margie. Margie soaks the rag and bathes Mandie's face. Brian ends his call.

BRIAN
The doctor is already on the premises. He will be here in five.

Mandie rouses and sits up.

MANDIE
Mama, I don't feel so--
Mandie vomits.

SHANE
Ugh! Mandie! That is foul!

Derek and Shane run off the bus, with Brian on their heels.

MARGIE
Don't move, Hon. I'll be right back.

Derek returns with trash bags, and Margie with another cold washcloth. He drops the bags at Margie's feet.

DEREK
For her clothes.

MARGIE
Thanks. She can't sing tonight. I can take her vocals, but she can't stay--

DEREK
I'll stay with her.

MARGIE
I can't ask you to do that.

DEREK
You didn't. I offered. I'll take good care of her.

MARGIE
I know you will.

Derek walks out to give her privacy.

INT. TOUR BUS - MANDIE'S BUNK - NIGHT

Mandie screams from feverish nightmares.

MANDIE
Spiders! The Spiders!

Derek rushes to her with the alcohol washcloth. He wears his Stetson and a utility holster holds a can of Lysol.

DEREK
Mandie, Honey. Wake up! It's just a bad dream! It's time for more Ibuprofen. Gotta control that fever.

Derek reaches over to the small pharmacy that he's assembled

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on Shane's bunk, ibuprofen, rubbing alcohol, a small cooler.

MANDIE
Mama? Is that you?

DEREK
No, your Mama is on stage right now.

MANDIE
Oh, no. The concert. I've missed my first California concert! It's ruined!

DEREK
No, you didn't. It's just a twenty-four hour thing. The doc said you could be right back out there tomorrow night. Don't you remember?

Mandie shakes her head 'no'.

DEREK
Well, if you don't lay back and get some rest, you won't be able to do anything. Now just be a good little girl and listen to me.

MANDIE
Alright, Tex! I'm too tired to fight. And I'm really thirsty. Can you get me some Diet Coke or something?

DEREK
I think ice chips would be better, and I have those right here.

MANDIE
Well, you're Mr. Prepared.

DEREK
Only the best for Miss Mandie.

MANDIE
I don't deserve the best.

DEREK
Now, why would you say that?

MANDIE
I've been just horrible to you. Just horrible. And now God is punishing me.
DEREK
No, He's not. You're just sick. It happens to everyone!

MANDIE
I just give up! I'm done with life.

Derek holds up a spoon of ice chips.

DEREK
Oh, you are not. Hush and take this.

Mandie winces at the cold of the ice. Derek smiles.

MANDIE
You might as well go out there and enjoy the show. I'm going to end up all alone anyway.

DEREK
You're not alone now! This is just a trial. Life is full of them. The key to making it through is keeping your eyes on Jesus. He sacrificed it all.

He holds the up spoon of ice chips again.

DEREK
Do you want some more?

MANDIE
Ice chips or lecture?

DEREK
There she is!

MANDIE
What's with the get-up?

DEREK
Oh, this. I'm on a mission.

Derek stands, grabs the Lysol can from his holster, spins it, and points it at Mandie like a pistol.

DEREK
This bus will be CLEAN!

Mandie laughs, but her sides are sore from vomiting.
MANDIE
Ow! Ow!

DEREK
Here. Stay in bed and relax. Read these. I pulled them from the trash.

Derek plops the collection of bridal magazines on her bunk.

MANDIE
I threw those out for a reason. I don't need them. It's too late for me.

DEREK
How old are you?

MANDIE
I'll be twenty-one next month.

DEREK
You got your whole life ahead of you!

MANDIE
Yeah, but you've got your email girl, what's her name, Gwen's friend...

DEREK
Stephanie?

MANDIE
Yeah her. And I got nobody.

DEREK
You have Jesus and He's all you need. That's what I've come to learn.

Shane opens the door and steps into the tour bus.

SHANE
OooWee! Lemons!

EXT. CABIN - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Derek pulls the bus up to the cabin at Big Bear Lake, CA. He opens the doors and the family drags out, exhausted. Derek steps off and turns to open the luggage compartment for everyone. Brian steps over to Derek as the rest of the fam grabs their bags.

BRIAN
Thank goodness our promoter loaned us
his cabin for a few more days. We're all ready for a break.

DEREK
I am a little saddle-sore. I think this is just what we need.

EXT. CABIN - FRONT DECK FACING THE LAKE - NIGHT

Derek rocks in a white wicker rocking chair, eyes closed. He listens to the waves lap the shore. He hears Mandie coming.

DEREK
Evening, Mandie.

MANDIE
Hey. I'm not disturbing you, am I?

DEREK
No, not at all. Come and join me.

Mandie sits in another white rocker beside him. Derek talks with his eyes still closed, soaking it all up.

DEREK
I'm pretty sure that there will be rocking chairs in Heaven.

MANDIE
What makes you say that?

DEREK
Because Heaven is full of perfection.

MANDIE
And a rocking chair is perfect?

DEREK
Not the chair itself, but the feeling that you get when rock in it. It's all...never mind. It's too hard to explain. You don't get it.

Mandie walks to the deck rail, and stares at the lake. Derek senses her movement and opens his eyes to soak that up too.

MANDIE
I know I don't get it. Why hasn't the Lord answered my prayers?

Derek slowly moves beside her, and stares at the lake,
avoiding eye contact. This could be too much for him.

DEREK
Do you know why you don't understand the rocking chair?

MANDIE
I'm talking about important stuff here, Tex, Aren't you listening?

He can't take it anymore. He turns to her.

DEREK
Are you? The reason, your Grace, is that you don't understand "SLOW".

MANDIE
What?

DEREK
It's about slowing down, resting, and waiting. You don't know how to wait.

She finally turns to Derek, exasperated.

MANDIE
I'm tired of waiting!

He responds in loud whispers. He doesn't need any extra attention from the rest of the family.

DEREK
I should have left those magazines of yours in the trash. All you want is your fairy-tale wedding. You don't even care who the groom is!

MANDIE
That's not true! I thought he was Mr. Right, but I was so very wrong. I'm so confused. How do you know when something's right?

DEREK
You just know! I've been through so much you just wouldn't understand--

As Derek becomes emotional, Mandie slips her hand over his on the rail.
DEREK
When God speaks to you, you know it right here.

Derek points to his heart.

MANDIE
Right here?

Mandie places her hand over his.

DEREK
And I know this is right.

Derek pulls Mandie to him. They kiss until Mandie pulls away.

MANDIE
No, no. This is wrong. You're not the right one--I don't--

DEREK
Don't fight this, Mandie. We both know we're right for each other.

Derek pulls her back to him. She gives in again for a moment and then pulls away again.

DEREK
Mandie--please--

MANDIE
I'm sorry, Derek. I'm so sorry.

Mandie runs back into the cabin. Derek slams his fist on the deck railing and turns towards the lake again.

EXT. BOAT ON LAKE - NIGHT

Derek and Shane fish during the wee hours of the morning. Derek's in a zipped-up life jacket with a float next to him.

SHANE
Okay. This silence is killing me. What's going on?

DEREK
I didn't sleep at all last night.

SHANE
Uh-uh. I know you, my brother. You're hiding something. How could you?

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DEREK
I messed up last night.

SHANE
Care to share?

DEREK
I was rocking on the back porch, and Mandie tried to sneak up on me, but I heard her coming a mile away--

SHANE
Yeah...

DEREK
And she sat down in the other rocker and started complaining like she does. She stood up--and I tried not to--but I did--and I walked over to her--and well--Oh, come on. You know what happened.

SHANE
Say it!

DEREK
I kissed her. We kissed.

Shane has no expression for a moment, then he slowly smiles.

SHANE
Well alright! It's about time! I knew we were gonna be brothers for real!

DEREK
Everything happened so fast. I was sharing some things--and I was fussing at her about not having patience and then here I go kissing her!

SHANE
So what's the problem? Isn't that what you wanted?

DEREK
Evidently it's not what she wanted.

Shane's smile fades.

DEREK
It's all my fault. I'm the man. I
should have never left the safety of the rocking chair.

SHANE
What are you gonna do?

DEREK
I'm gonna man-up.

EXT. BOAT DOCK - DAY

The sun rises. Mandie waits on the end of the dock. Shane and Derek's boat comes in too fast and hits the dock. Mandie falls into the lake and hits her head on the neighbor's pontoon. She doesn't come back up.

DEREK AND SHANE
Mandie!

Derek throws his Stetson off in the boat and dives in after her. He pulls her up and passes her to Shane who pulls unconscious Mandie onto the dock as Derek climbs up.

Derek sits on the dock with his head between his knees.

Shane tilts Mandie's head for CPR and nears her lips to do breaths, when she spits out water all over Shane. He rolls her on her side and then helps her sit up for the tightest hug they've ever shared.

SHANE
Thank God! I didn't want to kiss you, Mandie. I can't afford therapy.

Derek finally looks at them.

DEREK
Check her head. Is it bleeding?

Shane runs his hands all around Mandie's head.

MANDIE
Ow!

SHANE
No blood. She's good.

Derek stands and staggers toward the deck. Shane helps Mandie up, and put his arm around her shoulders, guiding her to the porch slowly.

Created using Celtx
Derek walks straight to his rocking chair and sits. Shane seats Mandie in her rocker beside Derek and then gets them all towels from the storage chest on the deck. He looks at Derek for instructions.

DEREK
Plan B.

Shane nods and walks through the glass doors of the cabin.

DEREK
We need to talk.

Mandie still breathes hard, but she manages to stand.

MANDIE
Yes, we do. Walk with me?

Mandie offers her hand to Derek.

DEREK
Haven't you had enough today? It's safer in the rocking chair. Sit.

Mandie pulls an ottoman closer to him, but he stops her.

DEREK
Please, don't come any closer. I'm doing the talking. You listen.

MANDIE
Thank you for saving my life.

DEREK
God saved your life, not me. About last night, it was my fault, plain and simple. You were tired and vulnerable, and I took advantage of the situation.

MANDIE
No, I--

DEREK
No. I take full responsibility.

A tear runs down his cheek.

DEREK
I was trying to help you be strong, and I gave in to my weakness. I know our friendship will never be the same.
I know you don't love me. Forgive me.

Mandie doesn't know what to say.

DEREK
There is a man out there for you. I won't stand in the way when he comes around one day. And I promise I will never betray you again.

MANDIE
No, you're wrong. I am the one who took advantage of you. I'm not sure why I, um... I will only forgive you, if you promise to forgive me.

DEREK
I do forgive you, and I promise to keep you safe. I've seen enough accidents to last a lifetime. The Lord has shown me again today the price--

Derek was interrupted by Shane's knocking on the glass.

MANDIE
What do you mean the price?

Derek stands and dries off with the towel.

DEREK
You won't have to worry about any more trouble from me.

Derek retreats inside. Margie comes out and checks on Mandie.

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY

Margie and Mandie make sandwiches in the galley. Mandie grabs a sandwich and drink and walks it up to Derek.

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT

MANDIE
Here's your sandwich and drink.

DEREK
Thank you.

MANDIE
Oh! I forgot your chips!
DEREK
It's okay. I don't need them.

MANDIE
But I won't even crush 'em!

DEREK
No, don't bother. Thanks.

Derek nods to dismiss her. Mandie runs...

INT. TOUR BUS - GALLEY - DAY
through the galley past Margie and...

INT. TOUR BUS - UPPER LOUNGE - DAY
...upstairs to lounge. She sits and stares at the highway and then punches the cushioned seat. Margie joins her.

MARGIE
Wanna talk about it?

MANDIE
Might as well. (takes a breath) It's been a week since Derek and I kissed and I ran away.

MARGIE
Wow! I wasn't looking for that!

MANDIE
Neither was I, but--

MARGIE
Honey, why did you run? Life isn't a dress rehearsal. We only get one shot!

MANDIE
Hm. It's funny that you called me 'Honey'. He called me that when he was taking care of me that night.

Mandie closes her eyes.

MANDIE
I can see his face from that night. He doesn't look like a hick anymore. How could he be so kind to me when I was so ugly to him?
MARGIE
It's because he loves you.

Mandie cries. The tears stream down her face.

MANDIE
I ran away, and I hurt him so badly. Now when I look at him, all I see is pain. Pain that I caused.

MARGIE
I knew something wasn't right.

MANDIE
The bad thing is he'd already moved on. He said he was content. And then I took advantage of him. He says it's his fault, but it's mine. And now, my greatest fear is that he has shut me out! He'll never love me the way I--

She realizes. She finally knows. Mandie looks straight into her mom's eyes with the truth she's been seeking.

MANDIE
The way I love him! I love him! He is the one I want. He's the man I need. But it's too late for me.

Mandie's eyes are filled with tears. Answered prayers!

MARGIE
I don't believe that for one minute.

MANDIE
How can I make this right?

MARGIE
God will have to show you, because I got nothing!

They both laugh and share a lingering hug.

INT. BUS UPPER LOUNGE - NIGHT
Shane enters the lounge where Mandie plays her keyboard.

MANDIE
Oh! Shane! I'm so glad you're here.
SHANE

(he stops and looks around for
someone else, perhaps?)
Who are you?

MANDIE
I need to talk to you. It's serious.

Shane sits down. This is new for them.

SHANE
Okay. Shoot.

MANDIE
I need help.

SHANE
Admitting that you have a problem is
the first step, Mandie.

MANDIE
Grow up, Shane! This isn't funny!

SHANE
Seriously. What can I do you for?

MANDIE
I'm in love with Derek.

SHANE
Not my problem.

Shane is aggravated and stands to leave. Mandie grabs his
hand and pulls him back to the sofa.

MANDIE
Shane, please! I've really messed up!

SHANE
I'll say! You don't just decide one
day that you love somebody, especially
after you've hurt them. Besides, I
know too much already. I want out.

Shane tries to stand again, but Mandie pulls him back and
this time pins him down on the seat cushion.

SHANE
Get off me!
MANDIE
Not until you tell me what you know!
This is serious business!

SHANE
Alright! Just let me up. I'll talk.

Mandie releases Shane.

MANDIE
Spill.

SHANE
I know he's been in love with you since Day One. I know what happened that night at the cabin. You used your feminine wiles against him and then you ran away. If you hadn't been about to die after you fell off that dock, I was gonna cut your hide myself. And, I know that it almost killed him to dive into that water to save you. He was scared to death. It was like Tennessee all over again.

MANDIE
Tennessee? What does---

SHANE
His girlfriend skidded off a bridge and drowned. They didn't find the accident site until it was too late.

Mandie places her hand over her heart in shock.

MANDIE
What?

SHANE
Yeah.

Mandie remembers.

MANDIE
The price--

SHANE
What?

MANDIE
After my fall, Derek said he'd seen
enough accidents to last a lifetime and that God had shown him the price. He wouldn't even touch my hand, and he promised to protect me! He thinks God is punishing him or something.

SHANE
All I know is he's the brother I never had, and I won't see him hurt again, Mandie, I won't.

MANDIE
I don't deserve him, but I do love him. So, I gotta know about Stephanie. Are they serious? Does he really love her? If so, I'll back off.

SHANE
You'd give him up to another woman?

MANDIE
It would kill me, but...yes, if that's what he really wants.

Shane finally smiles.

SHANE
Well, it's a good thing he stopped talking to her after New Year's.

MANDIE
Do you think I have a chance?

SHANE
You never lost his heart, Mandie. You just broke it.

MANDIE
Tell me what to do!

SHANE
I don't know! I'm really uncomfortable being in the middle of all this. It was fun at first, because I could heckle you, but now that it's serious-

MANDIE
I need to do something really big to let him know this is real. A show-stopper--Oh! I've got it!
SHANE
Care to share?

MANDIE
No! It's a secret!

SHANE
Look! I thought we were bonding here!

Mandie jumps on Shane with hugs.

MANDIE
We are! I love you! Thank you!

SHANE
Stop! It burns! It burns!

Mandie lets him go, but grabs him by the shoulders, speaking straight to his face.

MANDIE
Okay. And remember--not a word to Derek. Do not tell him that I love him. That will just ruin everything.

SHANE
Lemme get this straight. You asked for my help. You need for Derek to know that you love him, but I can't tell him, and now everything's solved?

MANDIE
I'm glad you understand.

SHANE
Great! I'm off to call Gwen!

MANDIE
Good! Because I have work to do.

The siblings break away. Shane walks downstairs...

INT. TOUR BUS - SHANE'S BUNK - DAY

...grabs a notebook from his bunk and heads...

INT. TOUR BUS - DRIVER'S SEAT - DAY

...straight to a melancholy Derek who is lost in driving.
SHANE
Dude. We gotta talk.

DEREK
What about?

SHANE
Lots of things. I need to make a list.

DEREK
What's going on?

SHANE
Too much to explain, really. Okay. First, even though I was not privy to the conversation on the porch between you and Mandie that morning--

DEREK
Privy?

SHANE
Gwen and I have been playing Words with Friends, now pay attention. It wasn't your fault. It was an accident.

DEREK
You don't know what you're talking about. God took Allison, and then Daddy, and He almost took Mandie. A family is out of the picture for me. I am one hundred percent devoted to God.

SHANE
I thought you said you were gonna man-up. Don't you still love Mandie?

Derek just stares at the road.

SHANE
Do you love her?

DEREK
Yes. You know I do.

SHANE
That's really good. Now--

Shane pulls up his stool and sits with his pen and paper.
SHANE
We have a lot to do. Gotta call Gwen.

DEREK
What's going on? You got me all riled up now! What's this about?

SHANE
I can't tell you. Oh, Man! How can I tell you without telling you?

Shane's lightbulb comes on.

SHANE
Listen--the wheels are spinning back.

DEREK
Huh?

SHANE
Read my lips--the wheels are spinning back!

DEREK
Does that mean what I think it means?

SHANE
I'm limited on what I can say here. Promises were made.

DEREK
Okay, let's just say by some miracle, you're right--why the list?

Shane's devilish smile returns.

EXT. CRUISE SHIP OPEN-AIR THEATER WINGS - NIGHT

Mandie and Margie stand close together as do Derek and Shane.

MANDIE
Mama, I'm so nervous. How do I look?

MARGIE
You look wonderful! Let's go!

The ladies take the stage. Shane tries, but Derek grabs him.

DEREK
Are you absolutely sure about this?
SHANE
Keep listening for those wheels. Bye!

Shane runs on the stage.

DEREK
What? Listen?

Derek walks back to the sound board to watch the show.

EMCEE (V.O.)
The Singing at Sea Cruise presents to you, The McCormicks!

The black sparkly curtain parts and the family stands still and silent. Finally, Mandie steps forward.

MANDIE
Thank you, everyone. Tonight, we'd like to start off with a brand new song. I wrote it last week, inspired by one of the true loves of my life.

Shane presses the playback button on the stage's grand piano that plays Mandie's pre-recorded music. Mandie sings.

MANDIE
In times of trial I often forget,
Everything but my sorrows and heartaches but yet, There is One who feels every heartache with me, He chose this road I'm walking and He knows just where it leads--

Derek watches and listens intently as she sings.

MANDIE
He knows every move, every thought, and the intent of my heart; Every feeling that I've ever felt and that's just the start. When I'm hurting and I think that no one's there, I just remember who He is, and that Jesus cares.

Derek walks toward the center aisle.

MANDIE
Remembering the Saviour is the key. He bore the cross of Calvary for you and for me. There is a purpose for the
load of burdens that we bear. If we
trust in Him, He'll give us grace and
His story we can share.

Derek walks down the center of the aisle, and stops halfway.
He is blown away. The audience whispers and points to Derek.

MANDIE
He knows every move, every thought,
and the intent of my heart; Every
feeling that I've ever felt and that's
just the start. When I'm hurting and I
think that no one's there, I just
remember who He is, and that Jesus
cares.

The audience stands and cheers for Mandie and Derek as he
reaches the stage. Mandie bends down to him.

DEREK
That was incredible.

MANDIE
God led me, but I did it for you.

Derek smiles.

MANDIE
Get outta here. I gotta show to do.

Derek tips his hat to her.

DEREK
Yes, ma'am!

EXT. CRUISE SHIP OPEN-AIR THEATER - NIGHT

The family sings the finale. And amid the audience's standing
ovation, Derek enters the stage from the wings. Brian hands
him a cordless microphone and steps back into the shadows.
Derek walks up to Mandie.

DEREK
Your show's over, now it's my turn.

Derek drops down on one knee and opens a small black velvet
box revealing a diamond ring.

DEREK
I've been wanting to ask you out for a
while, so will you go out with me,
like forever?

MANDIE
Yes! Yes, I will!

The audience goes wild! Derek puts the ring on her finger. He stands and they hug and linger as the family runs off the stage. The curtain closes for their privacy.

DEREK
When did you--

MANDIE
When you took care of me that night, I knew. I just knew, right here.

Mandie points to her heart. Derek covers her hand with his. They kiss. When they come up for air, they both laugh. It's right, but awkward at the same time.

MANDIE
So, usually people date first.

DEREK
Girl, I've been courting you ever since I stepped on that bus.

Mandie blushes.

DEREK
Aw. I know you didn't just blush?

Derek pulls her close. Mandie turns her head to hide it.

MANDIE
So, what are your plans, I mean you didn't actually ask me to marry you.

DEREK
Okay, Miss Priss! Miss Mandie McCormick, will you marry me--

He dramatically looks at his watch.

DEREK
--in two hours?

MANDIE
Quit messing around. That's not funny!
DEREK
Honey, I couldn't be more serious!

MANDIE
I don't have time to plan!

DEREK
Woman, you've been planning your wedding for months! You just weren't planning on marrying me is all.

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK
Shane pulls Mandie's bridal magazines from the trashcan.

DEREK (V.O.)
Shane lifted your bridal magazines and we teamed up with your Mama who's waiting for you right now.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - DAY (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK
Margie is laying out a wedding dress on Mandie's bed.

MANDIE (V.O.)
What? Derek, I don't have a dress!

DEREK (V.O.)
Yes, you do. The princess dress from page forty-six of Southern Bridal is laying on your bed right now.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CRUISE SHIP OPEN-AIR THEATER - NIGHT

DEREK
Out of all the pages you had marked, that's the one I wanted to see you in.

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK
Shane holds the bridal magazine open takes a picture.
DEREK (V.O.)
Shane messaged Gwen about the bridesmaid's dresses. She picked up her dress yesterday.

END FLASHBACK

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK

Shane looks at another magazine as he emails a list.

DEREK (V.O.)
And Shane took care of the rest. After you change, the staff will move your luggage to our Honeymoon Suite.

INT. CRUISE SHIP UPPER DECK CABIN (BLACK AND WHITE)

FLASHBACK CONTINUED

Derek sits in the armchair beside the King-size bed and pulls on his boots before donning his Stetson. He turns the gift box around several times, trying to decide how to leave it.

DEREK (V.O.)
My things are already there. And on that King-sized bed is a special box from me to you with that little pink item you had marked on page fifty-six.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CRUISE SHIP OPEN-AIR THEATER - NIGHT

Mandie's eyes widen. She remembers what that pink item is.

DEREK
And we gotta get moving. Your Daddy secured the time for this same stage and the crew has to redecorate.

MANDIE
Daddy! Did you ask--

DEREK
He looks down at the ground for a moment. He realizes.

I didn't have to. He gave me his
blessing on New Year's Day, after the whole Mitch thing. I told him you didn't love me, but I think deep down he always knew.

MANDIE
But Derek, how is all this possible?

DEREK
I've been saving for this since I started driving with y'all. This is my gift to you, my love.

MANDIE
Okay, Mr. Rocking chair. Why so fast?

DEREK
Well, I could say that this is every girl's dream wedding/honeymoon plan, but the truth is I can't stand to be apart from you another minute.

Mandie blushes again.

DEREK
You know you're driving me crazy when you do that.

Mandie rolls her eyes.

DEREK
Don't you love me?

MANDIE
Yes.

DEREK
Don't you want to marry me?

MANDIE
Yes!

DEREK
Then, get moving, Lambchop! And I'll see you in--

DEREK
(He checks his watch)
--one hour and forty-five minutes.

Derek kisses Mandie on the cheek and runs away.
EXT. CRUISE SHIP OPEN-AIR THEATER - NIGHT

SUPER: "One hour and forty-five minutes later..."

The stage is set. Derek and Shane stand center stage as groom and best man. Both are dressed in black tails tuxedoes. Pastor Bledsoe officiates. Gwen walks down the aisle and takes her place. Mandie walks down the aisle and up the center steps. She smiles at Shane.

MANDIE
(silently mouths)
Thank you.

Shane gives Mandie "the nod." Derek is all smiles. Mandie passes her bouquet to Gwen as she and Derek join hands.

PASTOR BLEDSOE
Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to join Mandie McCormick and Derek Jensen in holy matrimony--

MANDIE
Wait!

Derek's face drops.

MANDIE
Something's missing--

Mandie looks to Margie on the front row as she brings Mandie Derek's Stetson. Mandie gently hands it to Derek.

MANDIE
I figure if I'm marrying you, I'm marrying the Stetson, too.

The whole wedding party laughs. Derek dons the cowboy hat. They both join hands. Pastor Bledsoe resumes.

FADE OUT.

THE END
Section IV. Annotated Bibliography

Works Cited


This source establishes that there is a pattern to success in the film business. It also establishes that Disney is not concerned about the development of children into wholesome functioning adults, but they are instead catering to a liberal agenda and a bottom line.


This source is a reference card for the different archetypes established by Carl Jung, that have been applied to many literary works. It defines the types of heroes that exist in literature and describes the different types of epic journeys that these heroes take. This is the basis of the pattern that can be applied to films and other literary works.

“Escape to Witch Mountain.” IMDb, IMDb.com, 21 Mar 1975,

This database entry of movie information supported one of the childhood memories that inspired me to write screenplays/novels. It was after watching this film in 1985 that I sat down at my daddy’s typewriter and began to type my first chapter book.

ChurchPop Editor. “Hallmark Channel Triggers Backlash After Featuring Homosexual Wedding in Upcoming Movie.” ChurchPOP, 10 Aug. 2020,
This source establishes the fact that The Hallmark Channel is losing part of its
viewership as it lays down to the liberal agenda of the radical LGBTQ regime. It talks about The
Hallmark Channel’s shift into including same-sex couples in its storylines. It also supplies tweets
of protests from former viewers who stand against this agenda.

Cohen, Paula Marantz. “What Have Clothes Got to Do with It? Romantic Comedy and the
Female Gaze.” Southwest Review, vol. 95, no. 1/2, 2010, pp. 78–88. JSTOR,

This source establishes some of the many facets of Romantic Comedies that make up the
financially successful pattern. The pattern is basically spelled out in the article. Cohen states
that a female with gumption and intelligence will experience some misadventures and end up
with her soulmate in the end.

“Contemporary Children’s Cinema: National and Transnational Trends.” The Children’s Film:
Genre, Nation, and Narrative, by Noel Brown, Columbia University Press, London; New
26 May 2021.

This source establishes the fact that most filmmakers since the 1980s have geared their
films solely for profit instead of for the positive development of children. Brown asserts that this
trend actually proves that the film industry is becoming too powerful in its powers to shape the
next generation.

Dehner, Steven. “The Films of the Kendrick Brothers.” Grace Evangelical Society, 1 July 2018,
faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/the-films-of-the-kendrick-brothers/. Accessed 26
May 2021.
This source lists all the films produced by the Kendrick brothers to date. It gives synopses of the films along with their financials. The author also offers his criticism on the films’ artistic value.


This source establishes that Hallmark has introduced its first gay couple into its movie storylines. This shows that they have taken more steps to bend to the will of the gay agenda. They first started with a commercial, which they pulled at first, and then reinstated with an apology. And with the publishing of this article, the channel establishes its allegiance with the LGBTQ.


This article establishes Disney’s downward spiral over the decades. The Disney Corporation is producing programming with mouthy, disrespectful young people. They also display adults as being intellectually inferior to their children, undermining their authority.


This chapter of Brown’s book supports the assertion that family film makers are out for a profit. It asserts that the family film maker attempts to broaden the viewer base of his/her film to attract the most viewers and enhance the bottom line.

*Hutton’s article bashes the Kendrick brothers’ films. He calls them “cheesy” and unartistic. He states that they are ineffective in reaching others for Christ, and that they are made for a small section of Christian viewers.*


*This article establishes that there is a huge open door for Christian streaming services. It lists the many services to which one can subscribe for Christian films and television series. This supports the assertion that there is a now a huge market for Christian media.*


*This chapter of Archer’s book establishes the qualities of the Romantic Comedy Genre that also exist in the Road-trip Comedy. These genres share the effect that exotic settings have on an audience.*

This article lists the triggers in a storyline that qualify it as a romantic comedy. Specifically, the article mentions road trips and holidays, which are earmarks of Hallmark Christmas movies.


This article poses the question of whether or not the romantic comedy is the feminist’s dream? In most female-led romantic comedies, the female protagonist usually gets her cake and her man too.


This article gives a potential pattern for Hallmark’s Movie and Christmas Movies’ success. The author asserts that the Hallmark Channel doesn’t make fun of Christians (at that time). Norcross even asserts that Hallmark movies are simply better than the competition.


This source hears from Stephen and Alex Kendrick directly in response to their films being called “cheesy.” They admit they are still learning, but they also assert they are portraying
Christianity as it really is, and that it is possible that the critics have never experienced the Christian life abundantly.


*This source speaks of how the Kendrick Brothers look for timely topics to present to their audiences. It also supports the fact that God works on behalf of their ministry by opening and closing doors for them during the filming process.*


*This is a database entry that supports a childhood memory of my earliest writing attempts. This is one of the movies that inspired me to write my first sequel.*


*This source was the textbook for my Screenwriting Workshop class. It was invaluable as a textbook. Linda Seger points out that parts of the writer show up in his/her characters.*


*This book was the textbook for my Fiction Workshop class. This was another invaluable resource. I fell in love with the way Stein suggested developing characters, especially through their choice of clothing.*

This source is invaluable for everything. It has all the answers for everything concerned with life. It is used in this paper to support the fact that the Holy Spirit can use whatever means of delivering the Gospel that He chooses to be effective.


This source was a textbook in the Screenwriting Class. This was the ultimate reference book for formatting and learning to create interesting, believable characters. Trottier also speaks to the right comedic conditions—everyday life.