

## **Title: Picture Perfect Us**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Tessa Quinn, early 30s, stylish but currently in “comfy mode,” sits cross-legged on her couch, laptop balanced on a cushion, a glass of wine in one hand, phone in the other.*

**MADDIE (V.O., SPEAKERPHONE)**

(off-screen)

"You need to stop being so picky, Tess. Just swipe already."

*Tessa squints at the screen.*

**TESSA**

"Maddie, this guy's bio says: 'Looking for someone to split my gym membership with.' Is that a euphemism?"

**MADDIE**

(laughing)

"Okay, fair. But seriously, how bad can it be? You've been on what, three dates this year?"

**TESSA**

"Two. And one tried to recruit me for a pyramid scheme."

**MADDIE**

(dramatic)

"Romance is dead."

(beat)

"But statistically, you're bound to find a decent human eventually."

*Tessa groans, flicking through profiles like she's window-shopping for disappointment.*

**TESSA**

"Fish guy. Gym selfie guy. Sunglasses-and-no-other-traits guy..."

*Then she pauses.*

**TESSA (CONT'D)**

"Wait."

**MADDIE**

(excited)

"Did you find someone?!"

*Tessa leans in, intrigued.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

A profile of NATE RIVERS. Late 20s, warm smile, city lights in the background. His bio reads: *“Filmmaker. Professional dreamer. Amateur dumpling critic. Swipe right if you want an adventure.”*

**TESSA**

“Hmm.”

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

“Translation: You think he’s cute.”

*Tessa rolls her eyes and dramatically hits “swipe right.”*

**TESSA**

“Goodbye, Maddie.”

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PARK – DAY**

*Nate Rivers, scruffy and charismatic, holds a camera while wrangling his chaotic film set.*

**NATE**

“Zane, you’re not the star. Penny is the star. You’re the tree.”

*ZANE WHITAKER, their overconfident friend, leans against the park bench.*

**ZANE**

“Tree number one.”

*Nate sighs and adjusts the camera.*

**NATE**

“Just... stand still and look treelike.”

**PENNY**

(raising hand)

“Quick question: What’s my motivation?”

**NATE**

“You’re a hopeful dreamer whose world just fell apart, but you believe something better is coming.”

*Penny strikes a ridiculous, toothpaste-commercial pose. Nate’s phone buzzes in his pocket. He pulls it out and reads the notification.*

**INSERT – SCREEN:**

*Tessa Quinn has matched with you.*

*Nate grins.*

**NATE**

“Well, hello, Tessa Quinn.”

**ZANE**

(peering over)

“Who’s Tessa?”

**NATE**

(stuffing phone away)

“No one.”

*But his smile lingers.*

**CUT TO:**

**INT. COFFEE SHOP – DAY**

*Tessa sits at a window, phone buzzing with a new message from Nate.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

*Nate: “Hey Tessa, I’m scouting for the lead in my next short film. Genre: rom-com. Role: girl-next-door who doesn’t believe in love. Interested?”*

*Tessa laughs, shaking her head as she types back.*

**TESSA (TEXTING)**

“Depends. Do I get my name in the credits? Or am I just ‘Girl #1’ eating a bagel?”

*Three dots appear, then vanish before a response pops up.*

**NATE (TEXTING)**

“You’d get top billing. And maybe a bagel. I’m working with a student budget.”

*Tessa chuckles, catching the barista’s curious glance.*

**NATE (TEXTING)**

“Let’s make a deal. I’ll send you a disposable camera. We’ll take turns shooting photos that tell a story. No selfies. Deal?”

*Tessa tilts her head, intrigued.*

**TESSA (TEXTING)**

“Let me get this straight. You want me to join a photo scavenger hunt with a stranger I met on a dating app?”

**NATE (TEXTING)**

“Yep. Welcome to New York dating, Tessa Quinn.”

*Tessa smirks and types back.*

**TESSA (TEXTING)**

“Fine. But if this is some pyramid scheme pitch, I’m out.”

**NATE (TEXTING)**

“Noted. I’ll drop off the camera tomorrow. What’s your neighborhood?”

*Tessa pauses, then types the name of her favorite coffee shop instead of her address.*

**TESSA (TEXTING)**

“Beans & Brews. Ask for ‘Tessa’s reel.’ She’ll know.”

**NATE (TEXTING)**

“Creative and cautious. I like it. Be ready to take the best photo of your life.”

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BEANS & BREWS – THE NEXT DAY**

*Tessa walks in, half-expecting nothing. The barista hands her a brown paper bag labeled: TESSA QUINN, CO-DIRECTOR.*

*Tessa opens it and pulls out a disposable camera and a note.*

**INSERT – NOTE:**

*“Theme: ‘hope.’ Your turn. See you next week.”*

*Tessa smiles, the edges of her skepticism softening.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Well played.”

**FADE OUT.**

**INT. NATE’S FILM STUDIO – DAY**

*Nate leans back in his chair, a small smile playing on his face as he replays the conversation with Tessa in his head.*

**PENNY**

(raising an eyebrow)

“Why are you grinning like a kid who just got free pizza?”

**NATE**

(half-distracted)

“Met someone.”

*He spins the disposable camera in his hand, balancing it between his fingers like a coin.*

**PENNY**

(spotting the camera)

“And you’re already giving her homework?”

**NATE**

“It’s not homework. It’s an experience.”

*Penny raises an eyebrow, crossing her arms.*

**PENNY**

“Sure. And if she hates it?”

**NATE**

“Then I’ll know right away.”

**PENNY**

“And if she likes it?”

*Nate’s smile widens as he flips the camera again.*

**NATE**

“Then I guess I’ll have to see where this story goes.”

**EXT. NEW YORK CITY – DAY**

*Tessa walks briskly through the chilly December streets, wrapping her scarf tighter against the cold. Holiday lights blink in every window, and carolers sing “Jingle Bells” nearby, their cheerful voices cutting through the cold air.*

*Despite herself, Tessa smiles at the scene.*

*She adjusts the camera in her bag, feeling the weight of Nate’s challenge. The word “hope” scrawled on his note echoes in her mind.*

**TESSA (V.O.)**

“What does hope even look like?”

\*She glances toward a coffee cart, considering snapping a photo of her empty mug labeled:  
*“Hope is finding a refill.”*

*But something stops her. She keeps walking, passing festive holiday stalls in Union Square.*

#### **EXT. UNION SQUARE HOLIDAY MARKET – DAY**

*Tessa drifts through the market, passing stalls filled with ornaments, candles, and mugs of cider. The scent of pine and cinnamon fills the air.*

*Her eyes land on a little boy with messy curls, holding a bright red balloon. He stands on tiptoes, pointing excitedly at a carousel while his mother kneels to adjust his scarf.*

*Tessa stops, captivated by the scene. The boy’s face radiates pure joy.*

*She pulls out the camera and frames the shot, pausing just long enough to smile before clicking the shutter.*

#### **INT. NATE’S FILM STUDIO – LATER THAT DAY**

*Nate is adjusting string lights and tinsel on a small set. The faint scent of peppermint lingers from the candy canes Penny insisted on hanging from the lights.*

*Penny enters, holding a steaming cup of cocoa.*

#### **PENNY**

(raising her cup)

“Let me guess—you’re thinking about her again.”

*Nate glances up, pretending to be confused.*

#### **NATE**

“Who?”

#### **PENNY**

(smirking)

“It’s like watching a Hallmark movie in real-time.”

#### **NATE**

(admitting)

“Just curious if she’ll like the challenge.”

#### **PENNY**

(sipping)

“You gave her ‘hope.’ You’re practically proposing.”

**NATE**

(snorting)

"It's Christmas. Hope's in the air."

*He leans back, fiddling with the camera strap.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

"It's not just about the picture. It's about the story behind it."

**PENNY**

(amused)

"You're either a genius or an idiot. The jury's still out."

**INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Tessa sits by her window, staring out at the flurries swirling in the glow of the streetlights. The city looks like a postcard.*

*She picks up her phone and types a message.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Tessa: "Your turn. The reel's at Beans & Brews. Theme: wonder."

*A moment later, Nate's reply pops up.*

Nate: "Wonder, huh? Sounds like Christmas to me. See you in a week, co-director."

*Tessa smiles and sets the phone down, resting her chin in her hand as snowflakes drift past her window.*

**EXT. BEANS & BREWS – THE NEXT DAY**

*Nate steps out of the coffee shop, the disposable camera tucked into his bag. Snow swirls around him, catching on his scarf and beanie.*

*The streets of New York shimmer under twinkling lights. People rush by with shopping bags and scarves wrapped tightly around their necks.*

**NATE (V.O.)**

"Wonder."

*Nate pauses, letting the weight of the word settle. He chuckles softly, Penny's voice in his head.*

**PENNY (V.O.)**

"You're either a genius or an idiot."

*Nate pulls his scarf tighter and heads toward Bryant Park, where strings of fairy lights crisscross the skating rink. He watches as couples laugh, kids wobble on skates, and a street performer strums a soft melody on his guitar.*

*The hum of the city surrounds him, and for a moment, everything slows down.*

*Nate pulls out the camera and clicks the shutter.*

**FADE OUT.**

**EXT. BRYANT PARK – DAY**

*The park is alive with Christmas energy. Couples skate hand-in-hand at the ice rink, laughing as they slip. Children wobble in skates, giggling as they fall. The aroma of roasted chestnuts and cocoa drifts through the air.*

*Nate strolls through the holiday stalls, his camera slung over his shoulder. He pauses near a stand selling hand-carved wooden toys.*

*An older man, his hands rough but steady, sands a small wooden reindeer at his workbench. His face is a blend of focus and peace.*

*A little girl nearby clutches a tiny wooden bear, her wide eyes brimming with awe as the old man hands it to her. Her face lights up.*

*Nate raises the camera and snaps a photo, capturing the joy in her smile.*

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BEANS & BREWS – LATER**

*Nate places the disposable camera on the counter, wrapped in a small paper note.*

**INSERT – NOTE:**

*"Hope is a moment we create. Wonder is a moment we share. Your turn, Co-Director."*

**INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*The Christmas lights outside cast a soft glow across the room. Tessa sits by the window, reading Nate's note, a small smile tugging at her lips.*

*Her phone buzzes.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

*Nate: "So? How'd I do?"*



*Tessa smirks and types back.*

**TESSA (TEXTING)**

"Not bad. But now I have to up my game. I'm raising the stakes. Theme: connection."

**NATE (TEXTING)**

"Connection. That's deep. Don't scare me now, Quinn."

**TESSA (TEXTING)**

"Consider it a dare."

**NATE (TEXTING)**

"I love a good dare. Let's see what you've got."

*Tessa sets her phone down, the warmth of their playful banter lingering.*

**INT. TESSA'S KITCHEN – NIGHT**

*Tessa leans over the counter, biting her lip as she stares at her phone.*

**MADDIE (V.O., PHONE)**

"Let me guess—you're grinning like an idiot because of the film guy."

*Tessa picks up the phone, groaning as she tosses a dish towel across the counter.*

**TESSA**

"First of all, I don't grin like an idiot. Second, it's just a fun little... thing we're doing. A challenge."

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

(mock serious)

"A challenge, huh? Is that what the kids are calling flirting these days?"

**TESSA**

"It's not flirting!"

*Her voice wavers slightly, enough for Maddie to burst into laughter.*

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

(laughing)

"Right. And I'm the Queen of England."

*Tessa rolls her eyes and moves toward the coat rack.*

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

"Wait—aren't you supposed to be at your parents' tonight? Christmas Eve dinner with the Quinn clan?"

*Tessa freezes, eyes wide.*

**TESSA**

(cursing under her breath)

"Crap! I forgot the cookies!"

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

(with mock gravity)

"Quinn family Christmas without cookies? You're doomed. Disowned by morning."

*Tessa grabs her coat and keys.*

**TESSA**

"I'm hanging up now. Pray for me."

*Maddie cackles as Tessa hurries out the door.*

**EXT. QUINN FAMILY BROWNSTONE – NIGHT**

*The brownstone is decorated with twinkling lights and a festive wreath. Tessa stands on the porch, clutching a plastic container of store-bought cookies. She takes a deep breath and rings the doorbell.*

*The door swings open, revealing her mom, CAROL QUINN, mid-50s, sharp-eyed but warm-hearted.*

**CAROL**

"Tessa! You're late!"

**TESSA**

"It's five minutes past six."

**CAROL**

(dramatically)

"Exactly. Late."

*Carol snatches the cookie container and peels off the lid, inspecting the contents with a frown.*

**CAROL (CONT'D)**

(suspiciously)

"These aren't homemade."

**TESSA**

(defensively)

"They're made by someone's hands. Just... not mine."

*Carol sighs and waves Tessa inside.*

**INT. QUINN FAMILY KITCHEN – NIGHT**

*The kitchen is a flurry of holiday chaos. Tessa's dad, BILL QUINN, is hunched over the oven, wielding a meat thermometer like a sword.*

**BILL**

(dramatic)

"It's too dry. Drier than the Mojave Desert."

*Tessa leans toward her mom.*

**TESSA**

(whispering)

"Is he okay?"

**CAROL**

(sighing)

"He's on his third turkey crisis of the night. You'd think we were hosting a cooking show."

*Tessa grabs a cookie and takes a bite, savoring the sweet reprieve from the holiday madness.*

**INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Nate sits at his desk, editing footage from his latest short film. The screen flickers with scenes of Bryant Park, Penny's antics, and the holiday market.*

*His phone buzzes.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

*Tessa: "Connection. Your turn, Film Guy."*

*Nate smiles as he types back.*

**NATE (TEXTING)**

"Challenge accepted."

*Nate looks toward the city lights outside his window, the reflection of holiday lights dancing across the glass.*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. QUINN FAMILY KITCHEN – NIGHT**

*Carol stirs gravy while Bill frowns at the turkey with the intensity of a man fighting a losing battle.*

**CAROL**

"It's fine, Bill. No one will notice after they drown it in gravy."

**BILL**

(dramatic)

"Spoken like someone who hasn't tasted this disaster!"

*Tessa chuckles, grabbing a cookie as she makes her way into the living room.*

**INT. QUINN FAMILY LIVING ROOM – NIGHT**

*Chloe, Tessa's younger sister, sprawls across the couch, scrolling through her phone.*

**TESSA**

(flopping onto the armchair)

"Hey, Chloe."

**CHLOE**

(not looking up)

"Hey."

(beat)

"How's your dating life? Still a dumpster fire?"

*Tessa grabs a throw pillow and tosses it at Chloe's head.*

**CHLOE**

(laughing)

"Classic."

**INT. QUINN FAMILY DINING ROOM – NIGHT**

*The family gathers at the dinner table. The turkey, now salvaged, sits proudly in the center, and Bill pours wine like it's his salvation.*

**CAROL**

"So, Tessa... Are you seeing anyone?"

*Tessa nearly chokes on her mashed potatoes.*

**TESSA**

(clearing her throat)

"Nope. Why?"

**CAROL**

(casual, but devastating)

"You're not getting any younger, honey."

**TESSA**

(sarcastic)

"Thanks for the holiday cheer, Mom."

**BILL**

(leaning in)

"Remember that nice boy from high school? What was his name? Bobby?"

**TESSA**

(deadpan)

"Dad, Bobby tried to sell me essential oils at prom."

*Chloe snickers into her water glass.*

**CHLOE**

"Iconic."

**CAROL**

(dramatic sigh)

"Well, when you're ready to bring someone home, just know we're open to meeting anyone. Even a... filmmaker, if that's your thing."

*Tessa freezes, fork halfway to her mouth.*

**TESSA**

(slowly)

"Who told you about Nate?"

*Carol's eyes twinkle with mischief.*

**CAROL**

"Maddie called. She said, and I quote, 'Tessa's texting a filmmaker, and it's the cutest thing I've ever seen.'"

*Tessa mutters under her breath.*

**TESSA**

"I'm going to kill her."

*Chloe grins.*

**CHLOE**

"I like him already."

**INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Tessa sits cross-legged on her couch, phone in hand.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Tessa: *"Wonder is overrated. My family just had a full-scale war over turkey and cookies. Your turn. Theme: connection."*

*Nate's reply comes quickly.*

Nate: *"Connection? Oh, you're raising the stakes now."*

Tessa: *"Consider it a dare."*

Nate: *"Challenge accepted. Also, is your family always this festive, or did I get lucky hearing about it?"*

*Tessa rolls her eyes but smiles.*

Tessa: *"Trust me, you don't want in on the Quinn Christmas chaos."*

Nate: *"Sounds like my kind of chaos. Maybe next year."*

*Tessa's fingers hover over the keyboard. She hesitates, heart skipping. Was he kidding?*

*She shakes her head and types back.*

Tessa: *"Focus on the dare, Rivers."*

*She sets the phone down and watches the snowflakes drift past her window. The city sparkles under the glow of streetlights, making the world outside look like a scene from a holiday card.*

**TESSA (V.O.)**

(softly)

"For the first time in a long time... I feel a little magical."

**EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER – NIGHT**

*Nate strolls through the bustling crowd around the Christmas tree. Tourists snap selfies, lights shimmer, and voices ring out.*

*A group of friends huddle together, yelling at someone to "look at the camera."*

*A messy-haired guy spins around, exasperated.*

**GUY**

"For the last time, my name is Macaulay, not Kevin!"

*Nate stifles a laugh and keeps walking.*

**NATE (V.O.)**

"Yeah... that's not the shot."

**EXT. BRYANT PARK HOLIDAY MARKET – NIGHT**

*Nate wanders through the market, camera ready. The scent of spiced cider and roasted chestnuts fills the air. Vendors call out cheerful greetings. Couples stroll, snowflakes landing on their scarves.*

*Everywhere he looks, he sees moments of connection—laughter, embraces, whispers shared over cups of cocoa. But it all feels too big to capture in one photo.*

*Nate sighs, glancing down at his camera.*

**NATE (V.O.)**

"It's too big... too much."

*Just as he's about to give up, his eyes land on an elderly woman sitting alone at a small table. She sips tea from a thermos, her scarf meticulously wrapped. Her gloved hands hold the teacup delicately, almost as if she's cradling something fragile.*

*Nate hesitates. The moment feels private, sacred—like taking her photo would be intruding on a story that wasn't his to tell.*

*He lingers, watching the quiet serenity of her moment. Finally, he lifts the camera, framing her against the backdrop of holiday lights.*

*Click.*

*Nate lowers the camera, exhaling slowly.*

**INT. BEANS & BREWS – NIGHT**

*Nate places the disposable camera on the counter with another note.*

**INSERT – NOTE:**

*"Connection isn't always loud. Sometimes, it's just quiet understanding. Your move, Quinn."*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. HOLIDAY MARKET – NIGHT**

*Nate watches the elderly woman as she sits, sipping tea. Her calm, thoughtful expression is serene.*

*A young boy runs up, holding a candy cane.*

YOUNG BOY

"Grandma, look!"

*The woman's face lights up, warmer than the glow of the holiday lights around them. She pulls him into a hug, and the bustling noise of the market seems to fade away.*

*Nate raises his camera, adjusts the angle, and clicks the shutter. He lowers the camera slowly, letting out a quiet breath.*

NATE

(whispering)

"That's it."

INT. BEANS & BREWS – THE NEXT MORNING

*Nate slides the disposable camera and a folded note across the counter. The barista raises an eyebrow, recognizing him.*

BARISTA

"Your mystery pen pal's got you working hard, huh?"

NATE

(grinning)

"It's worth it."

EXT. NEW YORK CITY – DAY

*The city is blanketed in fresh snow, the streets gleaming in white. Tessa walks with the disposable camera tucked under her arm, snow crunching under her boots.*

**INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – DAY**

*Tessa sits cross-legged on her couch, unfolding Nate's note.*

**INSERT – NOTE:**

*"Connection isn't just about being together—it's about seeing each other. Your turn, Co-Director. Theme: magic."*

*Tessa chuckles.*

**TESSA**

*"Of course. The filmmaker goes for magic."*

*Her phone buzzes with a message from Nate.*



**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Nate: *“You’ve got this one in the bag, right? It’s Christmas. Magic’s everywhere.”*

Tessa: *“You make it sound easy. What if I fail the vibe check?”*

Nate: *“Impossible. But if you do, I’ll make a montage to redeem you. I’m good at those.”*

*Tessa laughs, already scrolling through ideas in her head.*

*Spying? No. That would require way more planning. This is... accidental reconnaissance.”*

*Jamie, still flopped dramatically on the bench, chimed in, “She’s probably here to rescue me from your boring photography obsession.”*

*Tessa raised an eyebrow. “And you are?”*

*“My brother, Jamie,” Nate said, slinging an arm around the boy’s shoulders. “He thinks he’s funny.”*

*“I am funny,” Jamie said, sticking out his tongue.*

*Tessa smiled. “Nice to meet you, Jamie. I see sarcasm runs in the family.”*

*They ended up walking together, Nate balancing his camera in one hand while Jamie marched ahead, kicking clumps of snow and declaring himself the snowball champion of the world.*

*Tessa tilted her head. “You didn’t mention a brother.”*

*“You didn’t ask,” Nate said lightly, but there was a flicker of something in his expression—hesitation, maybe.*

*“And what’s the deal with your mysterious life?” she teased, though her curiosity was genuine. “You show up with these poetic notes and epic challenges, and now you’re hanging out with a mini-you. What gives?”*

*Nate chuckled, but his voice softened. “Jamie’s not just my brother. He’s my kid’s brother, with emphasis on the kid. I’ve been taking care of him since... well since our mom passed.”*

*Tessa blinked, her teasing grin fading. “Oh.”*

*“Yeah,” Nate said, his gaze on Jamie, who was now attempting to throw a snowball at a lamppost. “He’s why I started filming in the first place. It was something to distract both of us. Something to keep us moving forward.”*

*Tessa felt a pang of guilt for prying, but Nate didn’t seem upset. If anything, his smile was almost wistful.*

*“Well,” she said after a pause, “you’re doing a pretty good job. Jamie seems happy. And your photos don’t suck, so there’s that.”*

*Nate laughed, his usual charm returning. “High praise from Tessa Quinn, Co-Director of Hope and Wonder.”*

*As they reached a small café, Nate held the door open for her and Jamie.*

*“Hot chocolate?” he asked, gesturing inside.*

#### **EXT. SMALL PARK – DAY**

*The snow falls gently as Tessa walks through the quiet streets. The usual city chaos is muted by the snow’s stillness.*

*In a small park, kids build lopsided snowmen, their parents watching fondly. Nearby, a man in a Santa suit plays the saxophone, the jazzy notes of “Silent Night” drifting through the air.*

*Tessa pauses, smiling as she raises her camera and snaps a photo.*

#### **EXT. BRYANT PARK HOLIDAY MARKET – NIGHT**

*Tessa’s steps carry her back to Bryant Park. The festive energy pulses under the strings of twinkling lights. She snaps quick photos as she walks:*

- *A row of intricately painted ornaments.*
- *A family posing with a giant nutcracker.*
- *A steaming cup of cider cradled in a vendor’s hands.*

*Each photo is good... but not magic.*

*Tessa sighs, leaning against a lamppost.*

**TESSA (V.O.)**

*“It’s just... okay.”*

*She debates calling it a night when she spots him.*

#### **EXT. BRYANT PARK ICE RINK – NIGHT**

*Nate stands at the edge of the ice rink, bundled in a navy coat and wool cap. His camera is raised, his head tilted as he adjusts the angle.*

*Behind him, a couple twirls across the ice, laughing as they spin hand in hand.*

*Tessa blinks, half convinced she’s imagining things.*

*Nate lowers his camera, revealing a boy standing beside him—a mini version of Nate, bundled in a bright red coat.*

**JAMIE**

*“Can we go now? You promised hot chocolate.”*

**NATE**

*(laughing)*

*“Five more minutes, Jamie. I need one good shot.”*

*Jamie groans and flops dramatically onto a bench.*

**JAMIE**

*“You’re such a dork.”*

**EXT. ICE RINK – CONTINUOUS**

*Tessa steps closer, trying to stay unnoticed. Her boot slips on a patch of ice, and she stumbles with a yelp.*

*Nate turns instantly, eyes widening.*

**NATE**

*“Tessa?”*

*Tessa waves awkwardly, cheeks flushed.*

**TESSA**

*“Hi. Fancy seeing you here.”*

*Nate grins, amusement softening the surprise in his expression.*

**NATE**

*“Are you... spying on me?”*

*Tessa laughs, brushing snow off her coat.*

**TESSA**

*“I think you have that backward, Rivers. This is my spot.”*

*Nate tilts his head, eyes twinkling.*

**NATE**

*“Oh really? So, you’re saying I’m the intruder?”*

*Tessa gestures to the rink.*

**TESSA**

*"Technically, yes."*

**JAMIE**

*(sitting up, curious)*

*"Wait, who's she?"*

*Nate ruffles Jamie's hair.*

**NATE**

*"Jamie, this is Tessa."*

*Tessa smiles at Jamie.*

**TESSA**

*"So, you're the hot chocolate enthusiast?"*

**JAMIE**

*(proudly)*

*"The best."*

*Nate shakes his head, amused.*

**NATE**

*"Want to join us? There's a place that does peppermint marshmallows."*

*Tessa hesitates for half a second, then nods.*

**TESSA**

*"Why not? I could use some holiday magic."*

**EXT. STREET – NIGHT**

*Nate, Tessa, and Jamie walk toward the café, their breath fogging in the cold air. The city sparkles around them.*

*Tessa's gaze lingers on Nate for a moment.*

**TESSA (V.O.)**

*"Maybe magic isn't just something you find. Maybe it's something—or someone—you stumble into."*

**FADE OUT.**

**INT. COZY CAFÉ – NIGHT**

*The café is warm and inviting, its windows fogged from the contrast between the cozy heat inside and the chill of the snowy night outside. Tessa cups her hands around a steaming mug of hot chocolate, the whipped cream brushing her fingers.*

*Across the table, Nate tugs his mug away from Jamie, who's reaching for the marshmallows.*

**NATE**

*"You've had enough sugar."*

**JAMIE**

*(confidently)*

*"Hot chocolate rules don't apply to me."*

*Tessa laughs, the sound light and unguarded.*

**TESSA**

*"You two are like a sitcom."*

*Nate raises an eyebrow, smirking.*

**NATE**

*"And you're enjoying the show?"*

**TESSA**

*(grinning)*

*"Immensely."*

*Jamie starts building a marshmallow tower on his napkin while Nate leans in slightly, his expression softening as he watches Tessa.*

**NATE**

*"So, why are you out here tonight? Don't you have family waiting with Christmas chaos?"*

**TESSA**

*(sipping her drink)*

*"Not tonight. We had our big dinner yesterday. Today, I just wanted to... I don't know, feel the city. It's different at Christmas, you know?"*

*Nate nods thoughtfully.*

**NATE**

*"Yeah. It's like everyone's holding their breath, waiting for something magical to happen."*

*Tessa's eyes brighten with surprise.*

**TESSA**

*"Exactly."*

*For a moment, the noise of the café fades into the background. Their eyes meet across the table, the space between them filled with unspoken thoughts and something fragile, new, and electric.*

**JAMIE**

*(breaking the moment)*

*“Can we get more marshmallows?”*

*Nate leans back in his chair with a chuckle.*

**NATE**

*“You’re impossible, kid.”*

**JAMIE**

*(grinning)*

*“You love me.”*

*Tessa watches Nate with a small smile, her heart softening as she sees the way he looks after his brother. Beneath the teasing, there’s a tenderness that makes her chest tighten.*

**EXT. SNOWY CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*The three of them walk down the snow-dusted street, the city glowing with holiday lights. Jamie runs ahead, laughing as he kicks up snow and sticks out his tongue to catch snowflakes.*

*Nate and Tessa lag, their shoulders brushing occasionally.*

**NATE**

*(softly)*

*“So, what’s the verdict on tonight? Did I ruin the magic theme for you?”*

*Tessa glances up at him with a small smile.*

**TESSA**

*“Ruin it? You made it better.”*

*Nate’s lips curve into a grin.*

**NATE**

*“I’ll take that as a win.”*

*They stop at the corner where their paths diverge. Jamie is building a mini-snowman near a fire hydrant, oblivious to the quiet moment between his brother and Tessa.*

*Nate turns to face her, his expression serious.*

**NATE**

*"Thanks for hanging out tonight. I didn't plan on running into you, but... I'm glad I did."*

*Tessa's heart thuds in her chest.*

**TESSA**

*(softly)*

*"Me too."*

*For a beat, it feels like he might lean in. But instead, Nate stuffs his hands into his coat pockets and nods toward Jamie.*

**NATE**

*"I'd better get this guy home before he tries to make friends with the hydrant."*

*Tessa laughs, the tension easing but not disappearing.*

**TESSA**

*"Goodnight, Nate."*

*Nate's gaze lingers for a second too long.*

**NATE**

*"Goodnight, Tessa."*

*She watches as Nate calls Jamie over and they walk away, their figures disappearing into the snow-covered night.*

**FADE IN:**

**INT. COZY CAFÉ – NIGHT**

*The café is warm and inviting, its windows fogged from the contrast between the cozy heat inside and the chill of the snowy night outside. Tessa cups her hands around a steaming mug of hot chocolate, the whipped cream brushing her fingers.*

*Across the table, Nate tugs his mug away from Jamie, who's reaching for the marshmallows.*

**NATE**

*"You've had enough sugar."*

**JAMIE**

*(confidently)*

*"Hot chocolate rules don't apply to me."*

*Tessa laughs, the sound light and unguarded.*

**TESSA**

*"You two are like a sitcom."*

*Nate raises an eyebrow, smirking.*

**NATE**

*"And you're enjoying the show?"*

**TESSA**

*(grinning)*

*"Immensely."*

*Jamie starts building a marshmallow tower on his napkin while Nate leans in slightly, his expression softening as he watches Tessa.*

**NATE**

*"So, why are you out here tonight? Don't you have family waiting with Christmas chaos?"*

**TESSA**

*(sipping her drink)*

*"Not tonight. We had our big dinner yesterday. Today, I just wanted to... I don't know, feel the city. It's different at Christmas, you know?"*

*Nate nods thoughtfully.*

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*"Yeah. It's like everyone's holding their breath, waiting for something magical to happen."*

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**TESSA**

*"Exactly."*

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*(softly)*

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**NATE**

*"Goodnight, Tessa."*

*She watches as Nate calls Jamie over and they walk away, their figures disappearing into the snow-covered night.*

**INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Tessa sits by the window, watching the snowflakes drift down past the streetlights. The city looks like a scene from a holiday card.*

*She picks up her phone and starts typing.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

*Tessa: "Your next theme: bravery. Let's see what you've got, Rivers."*

*A few moments later, her phone buzzes with Nate's reply.*

*Nate: "Bravery, huh? You trying to get me into trouble?"*

*Tessa: "Trouble's part of the fun."*

*Nate: "Then you'd better be ready. This time, I'm raising the stakes."*

*Tessa smiles to herself, resting her head against the couch. The glow of the Christmas lights reflects softly in her eyes.*

**EXT. CITY STREETS – NIGHT**

*Nate walks Jamie home, snowflakes settling in his hair. His phone buzzes in his pocket. He checks the screen and grins.*

**NATE (V.O.)**

*(softly)*

*"Bravery. Let's see where this leads."*

*He glances up at the snowy sky, the city alive with possibility.*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Nate stares at the disposable camera on his desk, turning it over in his hands. The challenge Tessa had given him—bravery—was gnawing at him. Bravery wasn't just a cute photo of lights or a sweet holiday moment. It demanded action.*

*Penny sits cross-legged on the couch, eating cereal out of a bowl.*

**PENNY**

"Just take a photo of yourself jumping off a building into a pile of marshmallows or something."

**NATE**

(dryly)

"Very practical."

**PENNY**

(shrugging)

"I'm just saying, bravery's subjective. What's terrifying for one person might be easy for someone else."

*Nate paces, frowning.*

**NATE**

"Exactly. So how do I make it meaningful?"

*Penny leans back with a knowing smirk.*

**PENNY**

"You mean, how do you impress Tessa?"

*Nate pauses, about to argue, but then exhales.*

**NATE**

"I'll figure it out."

**PENNY**

(chewing loudly)

"You'd better. She's not going to wait forever, Rivers."

**FADE IN:**

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### **PENNY**

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### **NATE**

“I'll figure it out.”

### **PENNY**

(chewing loudly)

“You'd better. She's not going to wait forever, Rivers.”

## **EXT. QUEENSBORO BRIDGE – NIGHT**

*Nate stands at the entrance of the Queensboro Bridge, his breath visible in the frosty air. The city glows beneath him, a patchwork of twinkling lights stretching across the skyline.*

*He's not about to jump or pull a stunt as Penny suggested, but this—this moment—feels like stepping off an emotional ledge.*

*Nate lifts the camera and frames the towering arches of the bridge against the skyline.*

*Click.*

*He lowers the camera and pulls a notepad from his coat pocket. In quick, bold handwriting, he scrawls:*

**INSERT – NOTE:**

*"Bravery is more than a leap—it's letting someone in. See you tomorrow."*

**INT. BEANS & BREWS – DAY**

*Tessa sits at a corner table, fingers drumming lightly against the surface. The disposable camera rests in front of her, a familiar yet comforting weight. The word "bravery" echoes in her mind like a dare she's unsure she's ready to accept.*

*The door swings open with a burst of cold air. Tessa looks up, and there he is—Nate Rivers, cheeks flushed pink from the cold, scarf slightly askew, and that same lopsided grin that always seems one part confidence, one part chaos.*

*For a heartbeat, she expects a wave or a cheeky comment. Instead, Nate strides across the room stops in front of her, and leans down.*

*His hand brushes her cheek. Then, before she can even process it—*

*He kisses her.*

*The world tilts. The café, the noise, the lights—all of it vanishes.*

*Tessa's breath hitches. The kiss is soft and quick, but enough to leave her completely untethered.*

*Nate pulls back, his eyes searching hers, a flicker of vulnerability behind his grin.*

**NATE**

*(quietly)*

*"I figured I'd go for it. Bravery, right?"*

*Tessa stares at him, her heart hammering.*

**TESSA**

*(softly)*

*"That's... one way to interpret it."*

*Nate straightens, his grin widening, but softer now.*

**NATE**

“Sorry. Was that too much?”

*Tessa’s mind feels scrambled, but she manages to speak.*

**TESSA**

“Not sure yet.”

*Nate slides into the seat across from her. The space between them hums with unspoken energy.*

**NATE**

(grinning)

“So, what’s the verdict?”

*Tessa’s lips twitch into a smile despite herself.*

**TESSA**

“Are you calling that your opening move?”

**NATE**

(shrugging)

“Go big or go home.”

*Tessa studies him, searching for his usual cockiness but finding something more honest beneath it.*

**TESSA**

“It was... unexpected.”

**NATE**

(sincerely)

“Good. That was the point.”

*They sit in comfortable silence for a moment until Nate leans forward, resting his elbows on the table.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

“Okay, your turn. What’s something you’ve always wanted to do but were too afraid to try?”

*Tessa’s eyes narrow as she leans back.*

**TESSA**

“Why does this feel like a trap?”

**NATE**

(teasing)

“Because it might be.”

*Tessa rolls her eyes, but the question lingers in her mind. She exhales and shrugs.*

**TESSA**

“Singing in public, maybe. But it’s not like I’m going to break into song right here.”

*Nate’s eyes twinkle with mischief.*

**NATE**

“Never say never.”

*Tessa laughs, shaking her head.*

**TESSA**

“Not a chance.”

*Nate holds up his hands in surrender, but the playful grin on his face says he’s not done with the idea yet.*

**EXT. SNOWY STREET – LATER**

*Nate and Tessa walk side by side down the snowy street. Their footsteps leave soft prints behind them.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“You know, bravery isn’t just big moments. Sometimes, it’s the small stuff. Like showing up.”

*Tessa glances at him, her expression thoughtful.*

**TESSA**

“I guess you’re right.”

*Their shoulders brush as they walk, the quiet between them filled with more than words could hold.*

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Tessa sits by her window, staring at the snowy city below. She pulls out her phone and types a message.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Tessa: “Your next theme: bravery, round two. Let’s see what you’ve got, Rivers.”

*Nate's reply comes moments later.*

Nate: *"Bravery, round two? You're relentless."*

Tessa: *"Trouble's part of the fun."*

Nate: *"Then you'd better be ready. I'm raising the stakes."*

*Tessa leans back, smiling to herself as the glow of the holiday lights outside brightens the room.*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. CAFÉ – NIGHT**

*Nate and Tessa step out of the café as snowflakes swirl gently around them. The streetlights cast a soft glow, and the city feels hushed, wrapped in holiday magic.*

*Tessa pulls her scarf tighter as they walk side by side.*

**TESSA**

"So... what's next in your bravery plan?"

*Nate's eyes twinkle with mischief as he pulls out his phone. A moment later, Tessa's phone buzzes with a message.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Nate: *"Your next theme: vulnerability. Take your time with this one."*

*Tessa slows her steps, reading the message. The word "vulnerability" settles in her chest like a weight.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

"Careful, Rivers. You're starting to sound serious."

*Nate tucks his hands into his coat pockets and looks at her, his gaze steady.*

**NATE**

"Maybe I am."

*Tessa's heart thuds a little harder, and for a second, she can't think of a witty comeback.*

**INT. QUINN FAMILY KITCHEN – DAY**



*Tessa sits at the kitchen table, her hands wrapped around a warm cup of tea. The soft hum of holiday music plays from the living room as her mom, JUDY, bustles around, rearranging a tray of cookies.*

*Judy's movements are methodical—cookie perfectionism at its finest.*

**JUDY**

(casually)

“So... when are you going to tell me about the kiss?”

*Tessa chokes on her tea, coughing.*

**TESSA**

“The what?”

*Judy turns, one eyebrow raised in practiced mom's suspicion.*

**JUDY**

“The kiss. Maddie mentioned something about a filmmaker. What's his name—Nick? Nate?”

*Tessa groans, setting down her mug.*

**TESSA**

“I'm going to kill Maddie.”

*Judy waves her hand dismissively, smirking.*

**JUDY**

“Oh, stop. She's being a good friend. Now spill.”

*Tessa sighs, her cheeks flushing pink.*

**TESSA**

“It was... surprising. He just walked in and kissed me. No warning, no build-up. Just—bam!”

*Judy places a hand on her chest, her expression dramatically dreamy.*

**JUDY**

(swooning)

“Oh, if your father had ever done that, you'd have two more siblings, minimum.”

**BILL (O.S.)**

(from the living room)

“Judy, for the love of—I'm right here!”

*Tessa and Judy laugh as Bill, tangled in Christmas lights, appears in the doorway, looking thoroughly unimpressed.*

**BILL**

(half-muffled)

“I’m still in the room, you know!”

*Judy leans conspiratorially toward Tessa.*

**JUDY**

“Your father? Total slow burn. I practically had to hit him over the head with a frying pan to get him to ask me out.”

**BILL**

(defensive)

“That is not true!”

*Tessa shakes her head, unable to stop smiling.*

**TESSA**

“I don’t know what’s worse—this conversation or how much you’re enjoying it.”

*Judy sits down across from Tessa, folding her hands and softening her tone.*

**JUDY**

(Serious)

“So... what did you do after he kissed you?”

*Tessa’s smile fades slightly as she runs her finger around the rim of her mug.*

**TESSA**

“I froze.”

**JUDY**

“Froze?”

**TESSA**

(shrugging)

“I mean, what was I supposed to do? It was so... bold.”

*Judy’s eyes sparkle as she leans forward.*

**JUDY**

“Bold is good. Especially if you like him.”

*Tessa’s eyes flicker with uncertainty.*

**TESSA**

(quickly)

“I don’t know if I like him.”

*Judy's knowing smile deepens.*

**JUDY**

"Sweetheart, you're not fooling anyone. Not me, not Maddie, and not yourself."

*Bill finally sits at the table, Christmas lights still draped over his shoulders like a glowing scarf.*

**BILL**

(frowning)

"What kiss?"

**JUDY**

(grinning)

"The kiss."

*Bill turns to Tessa, his face serious.*

**BILL**

"Is he respectful? Does he have a real job? Does he—"

**JUDY**

(rolling her eyes)

"Bill, he's a filmmaker, not a bank robber."

**BILL**

(grumbling)

"Same difference. They're always broke."

**JUDY**

(teasing)

"You're just jealous. You're afraid you're not the most charming man in her life anymore."

*Bill puffs out his chest slightly.*

**BILL**

"I'm still plenty charming."

*Tessa laughs, shaking her head.*

**TESSA**

"You two are impossible."

*Judy reaches across the table and takes Tessa's hand, her voice softening.*

**JUDY**

"Listen, sweetheart. If he makes you feel that spark... don't overthink it. Sometimes, the best things in life come out of nowhere."

*Tessa's smile falters slightly as her thoughts drift back to the kiss.*

**TESSA**

(quietly)

"Even a kiss in a café?"

*Judy squeezes her hand.*

**JUDY**

"Especially a kiss in a café."

**EXT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Tessa stands outside her apartment, staring up at the glowing windows as snowflakes drift lazily to the ground.*

*She pulls out her phone and opens Nate's text thread.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Nate: "Vulnerability, huh? This one might be my kryptonite."

*Tessa types back.*

Tessa: "Bravery round two and vulnerability? Bold of you, Rivers."

Nate: "I figured I'd raise the stakes. You game?"

*Tessa hesitates for only a second before replying.*

Tessa: "Always."

**EXT. CITY BRIDGE – NIGHT**

*Nate leans against the railing, the city sprawled out below him in glittering lights. His breath fogs the air as he stares at the skyline.*

*He lifts the disposable camera, framing the view of the city under the stars.*

*Click.*

**NATE (V.O.)**

"Let's see if you're ready, Quinn."

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

## **EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*The snow falls softly, swirling in the streetlights as Tessa walks with purpose. The sound of her boots crunching against the snow-covered pavement echoes in the quiet evening.*

*Tessa's scarf is pulled tight around her, her breath visible in the cold air. Maddie's message echoes in her mind.*

## **MADDIE (V.O.)**

*"Be bold. You deserve this."*

*Tessa's steps quicken as she approaches Nate's apartment building. Her heart pounds—not from the cold, but from the weight of what she's about to do.*

## **INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Nate sits on his couch, staring at a string of colorful holiday lights draped haphazardly across the wall. It's festive in a half-hearted way—Penny's influence.*

*His phone buzzes on the coffee table. He picks it up, expecting a message from Jamie, but it's from Tessa.*

## **INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

*Tessa: "Are you home?"*

*Nate's brow furrows as he types back.*

*Nate: "Yeah. Why?"*

*He waits for a response. Nothing.*

*Then—*

*A knock at the door.*

*Nate's heart skips. He sets the phone down and moves to open it. When he does, he's greeted by Tessa, cheeks pink from the cold, snowflakes melting in her hair. Her eyes shine with determination.*

## **NATE**

*(surprised)*

*"Tessa? What are you doing here?"*

*Tessa steps inside without hesitation, brushing past him.*

## **TESSA**

*"I was thinking about your challenge."*

**NATE**

(closing the door)

“My challenge?”

**TESSA**

(turning to face him)

“Vulnerability.”

*Nate tilts his head, his lips curving into a small, curious smile.*

**NATE**

“You said to take my time. But I realized something: I don’t want to take my time.”

*Nate steps closer, his playful demeanor softening as he watches her carefully.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“Oh?”

*Tessa crosses her arms, more to ground herself than anything else.*

**TESSA**

“That kiss—what you did—it threw me off. But it also made me realize... I’ve been waiting for the perfect moment to let someone in. And maybe that moment doesn’t exist. Maybe I just have to decide to leap.”

*Nate’s expression shifts—he’s listening, really listening.*

**NATE**

“Tessa, I—”

**TESSA**

(holding up a hand)

“Let me finish.”

*She takes a deep breath, her heart racing.*

**TESSA (CONT'D)**

“You’re not what I expected, Nate Rivers. You’re bold, annoying, way too confident... and you challenge me in ways I didn’t think I needed. And I like it.”

(pause)

“I like you.”

*Nate blinks, stunned, but his smile grows slow and genuine.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“Wow. Vulnerability looks good on you, Quinn.”

*Tessa rolls her eyes, but she’s smiling.*

**TESSA**

“Don’t make me regret this.”

*Nate steps even closer, the space between them disappearing.*

**NATE**

(quietly)

“You won’t.”

*He lifts his hand to her cheek, his thumb brushing lightly against her skin.*

*Then, he leans in and kisses her.*

*This time, Tessa doesn’t freeze. Instead, she leans into him, her hands resting against his chest as the world outside the apartment fades away.*

*When they finally pull apart, Nate rests his forehead against hers.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“I like you too, Tessa Quinn. A lot.”

*Tessa’s smile is small but radiant.*

**TESSA**

“Good. Because I’m not going anywhere.”

**MONTAGE – NEW YEAR’S EVE PREPARATIONS**

1. *Tessa stands in front of her closet, flipping through dresses with a mix of nerves and excitement.*
2. *Nate adjusts his jacket in the mirror, smoothing down his hair. Penny leans in the doorway, giving him a knowing grin.*
3. *Maddie sends Tessa a series of text messages: "YOU GOT THIS!" followed by a string of clapping emojis.*
4. *Tessa puts on her earrings, taking one last deep breath before stepping out of her apartment.*

**EXT. QUINN FAMILY HOME – NIGHT**

*The house is glowing with twinkling lights, and the faint sound of music and laughter spills out onto the front steps.*

*Tessa stands beside Nate, adjusting her coat nervously.*

**NATE**

(whispering)

“Are you sure you want me to meet your entire family at once?”

**TESSA**

(half-joking)

“Too late to back out now.”

*Nate reaches over and gives her hand a reassuring squeeze.*

**NATE**

(smiling)

“Let’s do this.”

**INT. QUINN FAMILY LIVING ROOM – NIGHT**

*The room is full of warmth and chaos. Kids chase each other with noisemakers, and aunts and uncles gather around the buffet table.*

*Judy spots Tessa and Nate and waves them over.*

**JUDY**

“Tessa! And you must be Nate!”

*Nate offers a friendly smile.*

**NATE**

“Nice to meet you, Mrs. Quinn.”

**JUDY**

(winking)

“Call me Judy. Anyone brave enough to date my daughter gets first-name privileges.”

*Nate laughs, but Tessa shoots her mom a look.*

**TESSA**

(muttering)

“Subtle, Mom.”

**MADDIE (O.S.)**

(from across the room)

“Tessa! Nate!”



*Maddie weaves through the crowd and pulls Tessa into a quick hug.*

**MADDIE**

(whispering)

“He passed the first impression test. Now comes the interrogation.”

*Nate leans toward them, amused.*

**NATE**

“Is this where I find out if your dad’s secretly an FBI agent?”

**MADDIE**

(grinning)

“Nope. Worse. He’s an accountant with dad jokes.”

*Bill appears, holding a plate of appetizers.*

**BILL**

“Who’s talking about me?”

*Nate straightens, offering a handshake.*

**NATE**

“Sir, nice to meet you.”

**BILL**

(narrowing his eyes playfully)

“Do you like spreadsheets?”

*Nate blinks, caught off guard.*

**NATE**

“Uh... can’t say I’ve ever bonded with one.”

*Bill nods solemnly.*

**BILL**

(seriously)

“That’s the correct answer.”

*Judy nudges him, rolling her eyes.*

**JUDY**

“For heaven’s sake, Bill, let the poor boy breathe.”

Here’s the **extended rom-com script continuation** with more detail to build tension, character emotions, and the introduction of Nate meeting Tessa’s family:

**FADE IN:**

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*Tessa steps inside without hesitation, brushing past him.*

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**NATE**

(softly)

“Oh?”

*Tessa crosses her arms, more to ground herself than anything else.*

**TESSA**

“That kiss—what you did—it threw me off. But it also made me realize... I’ve been waiting for the perfect moment to let someone in. And maybe that moment doesn’t exist. Maybe I just have to decide to leap.”

*Nate’s expression shifts—he’s listening, really listening.*

**NATE**

“Tessa, I—”

**TESSA**

(holding up a hand)

“Let me finish.”

*She takes a deep breath, her heart racing.*

**TESSA (CONT'D)**

“You’re not what I expected, Nate Rivers. You’re bold, annoying, way too confident... and you challenge me in ways I didn’t think I needed. And I like it.”

(pause)

“I like you.”

*Nate blinks, stunned, but his smile grows slow and genuine.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“Wow. Vulnerability looks good on you, Quinn.”

*Tessa rolls her eyes, but she’s smiling.*

**TESSA**

“Don’t make me regret this.”

*Nate steps even closer, the space between them disappearing.*

**NATE**

(quietly)

“You won’t.”

*He lifts his hand to her cheek, his thumb brushing lightly against her skin.*

*Then, he leans in and kisses her.*

*This time, Tessa doesn’t freeze. Instead, she leans into him, her hands resting against his chest as the world outside the apartment fades away.*

*When they finally pull apart, Nate rests his forehead against hers.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“I like you too, Tessa Quinn. A lot.”

*Tessa’s smile is small but radiant.*

**TESSA**

“Good. Because I’m not going anywhere.”

**MONTAGE – NEW YEAR’S EVE PREPARATIONS**

1. *Tessa stands in front of her closet, flipping through dresses with a mix of nerves and excitement.*

2. *Nate adjusts his jacket in the mirror, smoothing down his hair. Penny leans in the doorway, giving him a knowing grin.*
3. *Maddie sends Tessa a series of text messages: "YOU GOT THIS!" followed by a string of clapping emojis.*
4. *Tessa puts on her earrings, taking one last deep breath before stepping out of her apartment.*

#### **EXT. QUINN FAMILY HOME – NIGHT**

*The house is glowing with twinkling lights, and the faint sound of music and laughter spills out onto the front steps.*

*Tessa stands beside Nate, adjusting her coat nervously.*

#### **NATE**

*(whispering)*

*"Are you sure you want me to meet your entire family at once?"*

#### **TESSA**

*(half-joking)*

*"Too late to back out now."*

*Nate reaches over and gives her hand a reassuring squeeze.*

#### **NATE**

*(smiling)*

*"Let's do this."*

#### **INT. QUINN FAMILY LIVING ROOM – NIGHT**

*The room is full of warmth and chaos. Kids chase each other with noisemakers, and aunts and uncles gather around the buffet table.*

*Judy spots Tessa and Nate and waves them over.*

#### **JUDY**

*"Tessa! And you must be Nate!"*

*Nate offers a friendly smile.*

#### **NATE**

*"Nice to meet you, Mrs. Quinn."*

**JUDY**

(winking)

“Call me Judy. Anyone brave enough to date my daughter gets first-name privileges.”

*Nate laughs, but Tessa shoots her mom a look.*

**TESSA**

(muttering)

“Subtle, Mom.”

**MADDIE (O.S.)**

(from across the room)

“Tessa! Nate!”

*Maddie weaves through the crowd and pulls Tessa into a quick hug.*

**MADDIE**

(whispering)

“He passed the first impression test. Now comes the interrogation.”

*Nate leans toward them, amused.*

**NATE**

“Is this where I find out if your dad’s secretly an FBI agent?”

**MADDIE**

(grinning)

“Nope. Worse. He’s an accountant with dad jokes.”

*Bill appears, holding a plate of appetizers.*

**BILL**

“Who’s talking about me?”

*Nate straightens, offering a handshake.*

**NATE**

“Sir, nice to meet you.”

**BILL**

(narrowing his eyes playfully)

“Do you like spreadsheets?”

*Nate blinks, caught off guard.*

**NATE**

“Uh... can’t say I’ve ever bonded with one.”

*Bill nods solemnly.*

**BILL**

(seriously)

“That’s the correct answer.”

*Judy nudges him, rolling her eyes.*

**JUDY**

“For heaven’s sake, Bill, let the poor boy breathe.”

**INT. KITCHEN – LATER**

*Tessa pulls Nate into the kitchen, away from the noise.*

**TESSA**

“Still doing okay?”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“Your dad’s intimidating... but I’m holding up.”

*Tessa laughs, leaning against the counter.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

(softly)

“Thanks for bringing me. I know this was a big deal.”

*Tessa’s smile softens.*

**TESSA**

“It was... but I’m glad you’re here.”

*Nate steps closer, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear.*

**NATE**

(whispering)

“Me too.”

*They share a quiet moment, the noise of the party fading behind them.*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

## **INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – MORNING**

*The city is blanketed in white as the first January snowstorm settles over the streets. Everything is hushed, the usual hum of New York stilled by the snow. Tessa stands by her window, wrapped in a cozy sweater, her coffee mug warm in her hands.*

*The fire escape is piled high with fresh snow, and the windows are frosted with delicate patterns.*

*Her phone buzzes on the counter. She picks it up, Nate's name lighting up the screen.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

"Morning, Rivers."

*Nate's voice is warm, his familiar teasing lilt already making her smile.*

**NATE (V.O.)**

"Morning, Co-Director. Ready for our final challenge?"

*Tessa leans against the counter, smirking as she cradles the phone to her ear.*

**TESSA**

"I didn't realize there was a final round. What's the theme this time—perfection?"

*Nate chuckles, the sound low and easy.*

**NATE (V.O.)**

"Close. The theme is 'us.'"

*Tessa's smile falters, her heart skipping at the weight of the word.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

"Us?"

**NATE (V.O.)**

"Yep. No clever metaphors, no scavenger hunts—just us. One last photo. What do you think?"

*Tessa stares out the window, watching the snow drift lazily past the buildings. The quiet between them is filled with something tender, something unspoken.*

**TESSA**

(whispering)

"I think... I like it."

**EXT. CITY STREETS – DAY**



*Tessa steps out into the snow-covered streets, her boots leaving small imprints behind. The cold air nips at her cheeks, but there's an excited energy in her steps.*

*She adjusts her scarf, pulls out the disposable camera Nate gave her, and snaps a photo of the empty street, the snow creating a blank canvas where the world feels new.*

#### **INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – DAY**

*Nate paces his apartment, camera in hand. Penny watches him from the couch, eating a bag of popcorn.*

**PENNY**

“So... what's the plan, Romeo?”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“No plan. Just honesty.”

*Penny raises an eyebrow.*

**PENNY**

“Who are you, and what have you done with Nate Rivers?”

*Nate laughs, shaking his head.*

**NATE**

“Trust me, I've asked myself that question a lot lately.”

**PENNY**

(softly)

“She's something, huh?”

*Nate pauses, his smile softening.*

**NATE**

“Yeah. She is.”

#### **EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK – LATER**

*The arch stands tall, framed by snow-covered trees. Tessa waits on a nearby bench, her breath visible in the cold air.*

*A familiar voice calls out:*

**NATE (O.S.)**

“Fancy meeting you here.”

*Tessa turns, her face lighting up as Nate approaches, his coat dusted with snowflakes.*

**TESSA**

“You’re late again.”

**NATE**

“Fashionably, as always.”

*He pulls out his camera and snaps a candid photo of her, catching the way her scarf flutters in the breeze and the way she looks at him—caught between amusement and affection.*

**TESSA**

(laughing)

“Did you just ambush me with a photo?”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“Documenting the moment. It’s part of the job.”

*Tessa shakes her head but can’t hide her smile.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

(softly)

“You ready for the last shot?”

*Tessa holds up her camera, narrowing her eyes playfully.*

**TESSA**

“Only if you are.”

*Nate steps closer, their breath mingling in the cold air.*

**NATE**

“Together, then?”

*They lift their cameras at the same time, snapping photos of each other.*

*The clicks of the shutters echo in the stillness, capturing the quiet magic of the moment.*

## **MONTAGE – DEVELOPING THE FINAL PHOTOS**

1. *Tessa and Nate laugh as they wait in line at a local photo shop, shivering as they stomp snow from their boots.*
2. *The photos slide out of the developer machine, still glossy and warm. They sift through them, pausing at their final shots.*
3. *Nate’s photo: Tessa standing under the arch, snow in her hair, her smile wide and bright.*
4. *Tessa’s photo: Nate caught mid-laugh, the city behind him, his gaze soft and open.*

**INT. PHOTO SHOP – DAY**

*They sit at a small counter, their photos spread between them. The world feels smaller here—just the two of them in their little moment.*

**NATE**

(quietly)

“Looks like ‘us’ turned out pretty good.”

*Tessa reaches across the table, taking his hand.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Yeah. It did.”

**EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*The snow continues to fall as Nate and Tessa walk side by side, their fingers intertwined. The city hums with quiet life around them—soft, steady, and full of promise.*

*Nate pauses, tugging Tessa gently to a stop.*

**NATE**

(Serious)

“Hey... what do you want this year to be?”

*Tessa looks at him, her smile thoughtful.*

**TESSA**

“Messy. Full of surprises. Maybe a little scary.”

*Nate leans in, his forehead touching hers.*

**NATE**

“Sounds like a story worth telling.”

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. BRYANT PARK – NIGHT**

*Tessa and Nate walk side by side, their boots crunching through the snow. The Polaroid photo rests safely in Tessa’s coat pocket, a tangible reminder of the moment they’ve just created.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Okay, I’ll admit it. That was... pretty perfect.”

*Nate bumps her shoulder lightly, a grin playing on his lips.*

**NATE**

“Pretty perfect? I was going for unforgettable.”

**TESSA**

(laughing)

“Don’t push your luck, Rivers.”

*They reach the edge of the park, where the holiday market is still lit with soft, glowing lights. A nearby vendor selling hot cocoa waves at them.*

**NATE**

“Hot chocolate?”

*Tessa nods, her cheeks flushed from the cold—and maybe something else.*

**TESSA**

“Only if there are extra marshmallows.”

**NATE**

(teasing)

“Dealbreaker if they’re out?”

**TESSA**

(mock serious)

“Absolutely.”

**EXT. HOLIDAY MARKET STALL – NIGHT**

*The vendor hands them two steaming cups of cocoa, each topped with a generous pile of marshmallows. Nate takes a sip and sighs contentedly.*

**NATE**

“I think this might be the best night I’ve had in... a long time.”

*Tessa watches him, her gaze soft.*

**TESSA**

“Me too.”

*There’s a quiet pause where the world seems to fade again, leaving only the two of them.*

**NATE**

“So, what’s next on our list of adventures?”

*Tessa tilts her head, pretending to think.*

**TESSA**

“Maybe something less cold?”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“Agreed. I heard there’s an indoor art exhibit opening tomorrow. Ever heard of interactive projection art?”

*Tessa’s face lights up.*

**TESSA**

“Are you asking me on a real date?”

*Nate holds up his cocoa cup like a toast.*

**NATE**

“Guilty as charged.”

*Tessa taps her cup gently against his.*

**TESSA**

“I accept.”

*Nate’s eyes crinkle with genuine happiness.*

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Later that night, Tessa sits cross-legged on her couch, the Polaroid photo resting on the coffee table in front of her. She stares at it, smiling as she runs her thumb along the edge.*

*Her phone buzzes with a message from Maddie.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Maddie: “You went ice skating with Prince Charming and didn’t tell me? Spill.”

*Tessa snorts, shaking her head as she types back.*

Tessa: “It wasn’t ice skating. Long story. But... it was kind of perfect.”

Maddie: “Kind of? Who are you and what have you done with Tessa Quinn?”

*Tessa sets the phone down, laughing to herself. The warmth in her chest lingers, making the apartment feel cozier.*

## **EXT. INTERACTIVE ART EXHIBIT – THE NEXT NIGHT**

*The building is covered in soft, colored lights that ripple across the facade like waves. People mill around, taking photos, while soft music hums from hidden speakers.*

*Tessa and Nate step inside, their breath visible from the cold as they shake off the chill.*

### **NATE**

“Ready to be amazed?”

*Tessa raises an eyebrow, already intrigued.*

### **TESSA**

“Depends. Is this going to be another photo challenge?”

### **NATE**

(smirking)

“Maybe. But I promise, no Polaroid this time.”

*They step into the exhibit, and Tessa’s eyes widen as the walls around them come to life with swirling colors and projected images that respond to their movements.*

*The room is filled with stars—every time someone steps forward, they ripple across the floor and walls like constellations in motion.*

### **TESSA**

(whispering)

“This is... beautiful.”

*Nate watches her, not the exhibit.*

### **NATE**

(softly)

“Yeah. It is.”

*Tessa turns, catching him staring. She blinks, her breath catching slightly.*

### **TESSA**

(playfully)

“Smooth, Rivers.”

*Nate grins but doesn’t look away.*

**NATE**

“Just telling the truth.”

*They wander through the exhibit, the lights following their steps like a dance. In one corner, the projected stars create an outline of the city skyline.*

*Nate pauses and pulls out his phone.*

**NATE**

“One last photo for the night.”

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“Of the lights or us?”

**NATE**

“Why not both?”

*Tessa steps beside him, and they frame the shot with the swirling lights behind them. The photo captures their silhouettes, close and framed by shimmering stars.*

**EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*They step back out into the crisp night air, the noise of the city rushing back in like a familiar song.*

**NATE**

“Okay, you win. No more photo challenges... for now.”

**TESSA**

(laughing)

“Is this you admitting defeat?”

*Nate raises a hand in surrender.*

**NATE**

“Consider this a temporary truce.”

*They walk hand in hand, their steps slow and unhurried.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Can I ask you something?”

**NATE**

“Of course.”

*Tessa hesitates for a moment before speaking.*

**TESSA**

“What made you pick ‘us’ as the final theme?”

*Nate looks down at their joined hands before meeting her gaze.*

**NATE**

“Because I wanted to remind myself—and you—that some stories aren’t about the ending. They’re about what happens in between.”

*Tessa’s heart swells, and she squeezes his hand.*

**TESSA**

“Well... I like this story.”

*Nate leans closer, his grin softening.*

**NATE**

“Me too.”

*The camera pans upward as they walk down the street, their laughter mingling with the quiet hum of the city.*

## **EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*Tessa and Nate stroll hand in hand, their breath visible in the cold air. The street lamps cast a warm glow over the snowy sidewalks. The interactive art exhibit still feels like it lingers between them—a quiet, magical hum.*

**TESSA**

(tilting her head)

“So, since we’ve called a truce on photo challenges, what’s next?”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“Next? I figured you’d suggest something ridiculous, like karaoke.”

*Tessa stops in her tracks, narrowing her eyes playfully.*

**TESSA**

“Oh, I’m sorry—did you just call karaoke ridiculous?”

*Nate lifts his hands in defense.*

**NATE**

“I just meant... it’s bold. And you’re always telling me you don’t sing in public.”



*Tessa crosses her arms, pretending to be offended.*

**TESSA**

“Maybe I’ve changed.”

**NATE**

(raising an eyebrow)

“Is that a challenge?”

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“Maybe it is.”

### **INT. KARAOKE BAR – NIGHT**

*The small karaoke bar is cozy and bustling, filled with off-key singing, laughter, and the smell of nachos and wings. A neon “KARAOKE NIGHTS” sign flickers near the stage.*

*Nate and Tessa step inside, brushing snow off their coats. Nate glances at her, a mix of curiosity and amusement on his face.*

**NATE**

“Wait—are you serious? We’re doing this?”

*Tessa flashes a grin, already scanning the song list.*

**TESSA**

“Oh, we’re doing this. Pick your song, Rivers.”

*Nate chuckles, shaking his head as he grabs a songbook from the counter.*

**NATE**

“Alright. But you’d better be ready to lose.”

*Tessa narrows her eyes in mock seriousness.*

**TESSA**

“This isn’t a competition. This is art.”

### **MONTAGE – KARAOKE NIGHT**

1. *Nate stands on stage, holding the mic as the opening beats of “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough” start playing. He sings with exaggerated passion, earning cheers from the crowd and laughter from Tessa.*
2. *Tessa jumps on stage during the chorus, grabbing a second mic and belting out the lines alongside him. They harmonize horribly but enthusiastically.*

3. *The crowd claps and sings along as Nate kneels dramatically during the bridge, pointing at Tessa as if they're in a cheesy music video.*
4. *By the end of the song, they're both breathless and laughing as the crowd erupts into applause.*

Got it! I'll keep the tone light, romantic, and playful with room for deeper moments. Here's what happens next:

## **EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*Tessa and Nate stroll hand in hand, their breath visible in the cold air. The street lamps cast a warm glow over the snowy sidewalks. The interactive art exhibit still feels like it lingers between them—a quiet, magical hum.*

### **TESSA**

(tilting her head)

“So, since we’ve called a truce on photo challenges, what’s next?”

### **NATE**

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“Next? I figured you’d suggest something ridiculous, like karaoke.”

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*Nate lifts his hands in defense.*

### **NATE**

“I just meant... it’s bold. And you’re always telling me you don’t sing in public.”

*Tessa crosses her arms, pretending to be offended.*

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### **NATE**

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(teasing)

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4. *By the end of the song, they’re both breathless and laughing as the crowd erupts into applause.*

**INT. KARAOKE BAR – LATER**

*Tessa and Nate collapse into a booth, still catching their breath as the next singer takes the stage.*

**TESSA**

(gasping)

“Okay... I take it back... you might’ve missed your calling.”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“As a karaoke legend?”

**TESSA**

(laughing)

“Something like that.”

*A server sets down two glasses of soda and a plate of fries. Tessa grabs a fry, dunking it in ketchup.*

**NATE**

(Serious)

“You were amazing, by the way.”

*Tessa pauses, the compliment catching her off guard.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Thanks. I... don’t usually do stuff like that.”

**NATE**

“Exactly. That’s why it was amazing.”

*Tessa’s gaze softens as she looks at him, her heart warming at how earnest he is.*

**TESSA**

(playfully)

“Alright, calm down before you make me blush.”

**NATE**

(teasing)

“Too late.”

**EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*They step out of the bar, the air cold but refreshing after the heat of the crowded room.*

**TESSA**

“That was ridiculous... and exactly what I needed.”

**NATE**

“See? I knew you’d love it.”

*Tessa bumps her shoulder against his.*

**TESSA**

“Fine. I’ll admit you had a good idea.”

*Nate stops walking, turning toward her.*

**NATE**

(quietly)

“Tessa... I’m really glad we’re doing this.”

*Tessa’s smile softens.*

**TESSA**

“Me too.”

*Nate reaches for her hand, lacing his fingers with hers.*

**NATE**

“So... what’s next?”

*Tessa laughs, her breath forming little clouds.*

**TESSA**

“I’m kind of starving. And if you suggest one of those trendy places that serve tiny portions, I’m walking away.”

*Nate’s grin widens.*

**NATE**

“Greasy pizza it is.”

**EXT. PIZZA PLACE – NIGHT**

*They sit outside under the heater, sharing a giant pepperoni pizza. Nate watches as Tessa folds her slice in half and takes a huge bite.*

**NATE**

(amused)

“Elegant.”

**TESSA**

(with a mouthful)

“Judge all you want. This is peak New York living.”

*Nate laughs, taking a bite of his slice.*

*For a while, they eat in comfortable silence, the city buzzing softly around them.*

**TESSA**

(suddenly)

“Nate?”

**NATE**

“Yeah?”

*Tessa sets her slice down, her expression shifting to something quieter.*

**TESSA**

“What if this... us... what if it doesn’t work out?”

*Nate pauses, the question hanging between them.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“Then I guess I’ll be glad we tried. But... what if it does?”

*Tessa’s eyes search his, vulnerability creeping in.*

**TESSA**

“Then it’ll be something I didn’t expect... but something I want.”

*Nate reaches across the table, taking her hand.*

**NATE**

“Me too.”

*They sit there, fingers intertwined, as the snow continues to fall.*

## **INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – LATER THAT NIGHT**

*Tessa kicks off her boots and flops onto the couch, pulling the Polaroid from her coat pocket. She looks at the photo of them in Bryant Park and smiles.*

*Her phone buzzes—another text from Maddie.*

### **INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Maddie: “So... how serious are we talking here?”

*Tessa types back, pausing before sending.*

Tessa: “Serious enough to hope.”

*Maddie’s reply comes almost instantly.*

Maddie: “Good. You deserve it.”

*Tessa sets her phone down and pulls a blanket over herself, staring at the photo until her eyes drift* **INT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – MORNING**

*Sunlight streams through the curtains as Tessa slowly wakes up. The blanket is still wrapped around her, and the Polaroid photo rests on the coffee table, right where she left it.*

*Her phone buzzes. She reaches for it groggily.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

*Nate: "Morning, sleepyhead. Breakfast plans?"*

*Tessa smiles as she types back.*

*Tessa: "Pancakes at Molly's?"*

*Nate: "Be there in 20. Don't forget to wear something warm—I have a surprise after."*

*Tessa sits up, her curiosity piqued.*

**TESSA**

*(muttering)*

*"Of course you do."*

*Closed.*

**EXT. MOLLY'S DINER – DAY**

*Molly's is a classic New York corner diner with red booths and a neon "OPEN" sign that flickers slightly. Inside, the hum of conversations mixes with the sizzle of bacon on the grill.*

*Tessa sits at a booth, stirring cream into her coffee as Nate slides in across from her, still dusted with snow.*

**NATE**

*(grinning)*

*"Beat me here again. You're starting to make me look bad."*

**TESSA**

*(smirking)*

*"It's called punctuality. You should try it sometime."*

*The waitress, MOLLY, approaches with a notepad.*

**MOLLY**

*"The usual?"*

*Tessa nods, then glances at Nate.*

**NATE**

*“Double stack of pancakes. And coffee. Lots of it.”*

*Molly writes it down, giving them a wink before walking away.*

**NATE**

*(leaning forward)*

*“Okay. Are you ready for your surprise?”*

*Tessa raises an eyebrow.*

**TESSA**

*“You know how I feel about surprises.”*

**NATE**

*“Exactly. Which makes this even better.”*

*Tessa narrows her eyes playfully.*

**TESSA**

*“Is it karaoke again? Because if it is, I’m walking out.”*

**NATE**

*(laughing)*

*“No karaoke. Promise.”*

**EXT. CENTRAL PARK – DAY**

*Tessa and Nate walk side by side through the snow-covered paths of Central Park. The lake is frozen, and kids skate on the makeshift ice rink nearby.*

*Tessa glances around, trying to spot whatever Nate has planned.*

**TESSA**

*“Alright, I give up. What’s the surprise?”*

*Nate points to a small clearing ahead, where an easel and a set of canvases are set up under a string of fairy lights.*

*Tessa stops, her eyes widening.*

**TESSA (CONT'D)**

*“Wait... is that...?”*

*Nate steps in front of her, holding out a small bag of paints.*



**NATE**

*“Welcome to Paint in the Park: Winter Edition.”*

*Tessa laughs, shaking her head.*

**TESSA**

*“You’re impossible.”*

**NATE**

*“But brilliant.”*

*Tessa takes the paint supplies, warmth blooming in her chest.*

**EXT. PAINTING AREA – LATER**

*Tessa and Nate sit side by side, bundled in their coats and scarves. Tessa dips her brush into blue paint and starts creating messy strokes across her canvas.*

**TESSA**

*“So... is this supposed to be a masterpiece or...?”*

**NATE**

*“Definitely. You’re painting history right now.”*

*Tessa snorts and holds up her canvas—it’s a lopsided attempt at the city skyline.*

**TESSA**

*“I call it... ‘Mediocre at Best.’”*

*Nate laughs, showing his canvas, which is mostly smudges.*

**NATE**

*“Mine’s called ‘Abstract Disaster.’”*

*They both burst into laughter, the cold forgotten in their shared amusement.*

*Nate’s smile fades slightly as he watches her.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

*“Can I say something without you thinking I’m too cheesy?”*

*Tessa pauses, lowering her paintbrush.*

**TESSA**

*“Depends on how cheesy.”*

**NATE**

*(softly)*

*"I've never felt this way before. Like... just being here with you is enough."*

*Tessa's expression softens as she meets his gaze.*

**TESSA**

*(quietly)*

*"You're not being cheesy. You're being honest."*

*Nate reaches out, brushing a streak of blue paint from her cheek.*

**NATE**

*"Good. Because I meant it."*

*Tessa leans in and kisses him, the rest of the world fading into the snowy backdrop.*

**EXT. TESSA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Later that night, Tessa steps inside, brushing snow off her coat. Her phone buzzes as she sets down her bag.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

*Maddie: "So how was the surprise?"*

*Tessa grins as she types.*

*Tessa: "Cold. Messy. Perfect."*

*Maddie's reply pops up immediately.*

*Maddie: "That sounds like love."*

*Tessa pauses before typing back.*

*Tessa: "Yeah... I think it is."*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – MORNING**

*Nate's apartment is a cozy mess. Half-empty coffee cups sit next to open notebooks filled with ideas and scribbles. His camera gear is sprawled across the table alongside an empty plate of bagels.*

*Nate stands at his kitchen counter, scrolling through the photos they took at the park the day before. He pauses on the Polaroid of them bundled in scarves, laughing mid-spin under the lights.*

*His phone buzzes. It's a text from Penny.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Penny: *“Hey, I just got word there’s a last-minute opening for that film pitch next week. You in?”*

*Nate’s eyes widen. He quickly types back.*

Nate: *“Seriously? I thought the list was full!”*

Penny: *“They loved your concept. Just say the word.”*

*Nate hesitates for a second, glancing at the photo of him and Tessa on the table before typing back.*

Nate: *“I’m in.”*

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – SAME MORNING**

*Tessa stands in front of her closet, eyeing her wardrobe like she’s facing a life-or-death decision. Maddie is on speakerphone, her voice cutting through the chaos.*

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

*“Wear the red dress. Red screams ‘I have my life together and I’m charming as hell.’”*

**TESSA**

*“It also screams ‘Please notice me.’”*

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

*“Exactly. You’re meeting his work friends for the first time—you want to stand out.”*

*Tessa pulls the red dress off the hanger, holding it up in front of her.*

**TESSA**

*(sighing)*

*“Fine. But if this turns into a disaster, I’m blaming you.”*

**MADDIE (V.O.)**

*“Deal. Now go make them all jealous.”*

**EXT. FILM COLLECTIVE EVENT – NIGHT**

*The venue is bustling with creatives—writers, actors, and directors all gathered under dim, moody lights. A projector hums as short film reels play against the brick walls.*

*Nate and Tessa step inside. Nate's hand rests lightly on the small of her back, a gesture that feels protective but effortless.*

**NATE**

(whispering)

"Nervous?"

**TESSA**

(softly)

"A little. Are you?"

**NATE**

(grinning)

"Not when you're here."

*A familiar voice calls out.*

**PENNY (O.S.)**

"There he is! The man of the hour!"

*PENNY, wearing a vintage leather jacket and an amused grin, waves them over. A few other filmmakers linger nearby, their conversations halting as they notice Tessa.*

**PENNY**

(eying Tessa)

"And you must be the famous Tessa."

**TESSA**

(blinking)

"Famous?"

**PENNY**

(nodding)

"Nate doesn't stop talking about you. We were beginning to think you were a figment of his imagination."

*Nate groans, but Tessa laughs, relaxing a bit.*

**TESSA**

"Well, I'm real. I think."

*Penny clinks her glass against Nate's.*

**PENNY**

"Good luck tonight, Rivers. No pressure, but if you bomb, I'm telling everyone it's because you're 'distracted by love.'"

**NATE**

(teasing)

“Don’t you have somewhere else to be?”

**PENNY**

(smiling)

“Not until after I see you crush this.”

### **INT. EVENT STAGE – LATER**

*Nate steps onto the small stage as the crowd settles. A projection of the city skyline fades in behind him.*

*Tessa watches from the audience, her hands clasped tightly in her lap. The energy in the room buzzes with anticipation.*

**NATE**

(steady)

“Stories matter because they remind us who we are. And sometimes... they remind us of who we want to be.”

*He clicks a button, and photos begin to flash across the screen—candid moments of the city, a kid flying a kite in Central Park, a couple embracing at the top of the Empire State Building, and finally, a Polaroid of him and Tessa, spinning under the fairy lights.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

“This is what I want to capture. Real life. Real moments. Stories that remind us that the in-between moments matter just as much as the milestones.”

*Tessa’s breath catches when she sees their photo projected for everyone to see. Nate’s voice doesn’t waver, but there’s a vulnerability in his expression.*

*The room is silent for a beat before applause breaks out, filling the space.*

### **INT. EVENT LOBBY – LATER**

*Nate steps down from the stage, exhaling as Penny claps him on the back.*

**PENNY**

“See? No need for nerves.”

*Tessa pushes through the crowd and pulls Nate into a tight hug.*

**TESSA**

(whispering)

“You were incredible.”

*Nate smiles, brushing her hair back.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“I was just honest.”

**TESSA**

(looking up at him)

“Showing our photo was... brave.”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“I thought the theme was vulnerability.”

*Tessa laughs, leaning her forehead against his.*

**TESSA**

“Well, you nailed it.”

*Penny gives them a knowing look before walking off, leaving them alone in the glow of the after-party.*

**NATE**

(quietly)

“Thanks for being here tonight.”

*Tessa squeezes his hand.*

**TESSA**

“Always.”

*Nate leans in, pressing a soft kiss to her forehead. The sounds of the party fade around them, and for a moment, it's just the two of them again.*

**EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*They walk home, their steps slow and unhurried despite the cold. Snowflakes begin to fall, sticking to their hair and scarves.*

**TESSA**

(looking up)

“Think we'll ever run out of things to challenge each other with?”

**NATE**

(smiling)

“Not a chance.”

*Tessa laughs, twirling under the streetlights, her arms outstretched.*

**TESSA**

“Good. I like a challenge.”

*Nate watches her, his expression full of warmth.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“I like you.”

*Tessa slows her spin, her smile softening as she steps back toward him.*

**TESSA**

“Good. Because you’re stuck with me now.”

*Nate leans down, their foreheads touching as the snow falls around them.*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – MORNING**

*Sunlight pours through the window as Tessa sits cross-legged on the couch, sipping her coffee and scrolling through her phone. She pauses on a photo of her and Nate from last night—the Polaroid moment projected on the big screen.*

*Her phone buzzes with a new text from Maddie.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Maddie: “So... Nate showed your photo to a room full of strangers? That’s next-level romantic—or reckless. Which one is it?”

*Tessa grins as she types back.*

Tessa: “A little of both.”

Maddie: “Lucky you. He’s a dreamboat. Are you sure he’s not a rom-com hallucination?”

Tessa: “If he is, I’m not ready to wake up.”

**INT. NATE’S APARTMENT – SAME MORNING**

*Nate stands at his cluttered desk, adjusting the tripod for his camera. His laptop screen glows with an open project—video clips and photos scattered across a timeline.*

*His phone buzzes. It's a text from Penny.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Penny: *“Congrats, Romeo. The festival director just called—they’re fast-tracking your pitch. You’re officially in!”*

*Nate’s eyes widen in shock as he reads the message again. A grin breaks across his face as he types back.*

Nate: *“Wait—are you serious?!”*

Penny: *“Dead serious. Get ready for the big leagues.”*

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – DAY**

*Tessa is still lounging when there’s a knock at the door. She glances toward it, confused.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Nate?”

*She opens the door to find Nate standing there, his grin wider than she’s ever seen it.*

**NATE**

“Get dressed.”

*Tessa raises an eyebrow.*

**TESSA**

“Why?”

**NATE**

(excitedly)

“Because I have news. Big news.”

**EXT. CITY STREET – DAY**

*They walk side by side down the snowy sidewalk. Nate’s excitement is practically bursting out of him.*

**NATE**

“So... remember that festival pitch I told you about?”

*Tessa nods, adjusting her scarf.*



**TESSA**

“The one that had a six-month waiting list?”

*Nate stops, turning to her.*

**NATE**

“Not anymore. I’m in.”

*Tessa’s eyes widen as the realization sinks in.*

**TESSA**

(stunned)

“Nate... that’s huge!”

*She throws her arms around him, nearly knocking him backward in the snow.*

**NATE**

(laughing)

“Easy, Quinn! You’re stronger than you look.”

*Tessa pulls back, her smile beaming.*

**TESSA**

“You deserve this.”

*Nate’s grin softens, his eyes full of gratitude.*

**NATE**

(quietly)

“I wouldn’t have gotten here without you.”

*Tessa nudges him playfully.*

**TESSA**

“Let’s not get too sentimental yet. We have to celebrate first.”

**INT. DINER – DAY**

*The cozy corner diner hums with soft chatter as Nate and Tessa slide into a booth. The waitress sets down two plates of pancakes stacked high with whipped cream and syrup.*

**TESSA**

(toasting with her fork)

“To Nate Rivers: festival-worthy filmmaker and official rom-com lead in real life.”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“To Tessa Quinn: queen of photo challenges and the reason I’m eating my body weight in pancakes today.”

*They clink their forks together and dig in. Tessa laughs mid-bite as whipped cream sticks to the corner of Nate’s mouth.*

**TESSA**

“Hold still.”

*She leans across the table, wiping it off with a napkin. Nate watches her with a soft smile.*

**NATE**

“You’re good at this.”

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“What, keeping you from looking like a disaster?”

**NATE**

“Yeah... and making everything better.”

*Tessa’s teasing fades for a second as their eyes meet.*

**TESSA**

(quietly)

“Right back at you.”

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Later that night, they’re sprawled on the couch, half-buried under blankets. A classic black-and-white movie plays softly in the background.*

*Tessa’s head rests on Nate’s shoulder as he absently runs his fingers through her hair.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“So, now that we’ve survived the pitch and pancakes... what’s next?”

*Tessa closes her eyes for a moment, content.*

**TESSA**

“Something simple. Like... doing nothing together for a day.”

*Nate smiles.*

**NATE**

“I like that plan.”

*They sit in comfortable silence for a while until Tessa speaks again.*

**TESSA**

“But if we’re doing nothing... can we at least make popcorn?”

*Nate laughs, shifting to sit up.*

**NATE**

“Deal.”

*Tessa watches him head to the kitchen, warmth filling her chest as she realizes how perfectly the quiet moments fit with the loud, exciting ones.*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. PENNY’S APARTMENT – DAY**

*The living room is a whirlwind of chaos. Penny is perched on the couch with a massive bowl of popcorn, her feet propped up on a stack of scripts. Maddie is sprawled in an armchair, scrolling through memes on her phone.*

*Nate and Tessa stand in the middle of the room, bewildered by the scene.*

**NATE**

(whispering)

“Is this a film collective meeting or a low-budget intervention?”

**PENNY**

(overhearing)

“Both. Welcome to chaos. We’ve got coffee and unsolicited opinions.”

*Maddie looks up and waves dramatically.*

**MADDIE**

“I’m here to judge and eat snacks. And I’m all out of snacks... oh wait, no I’m not.”

*Tessa stifles a laugh as Maddie grabs another handful of popcorn.*

**TESSA**

(eyeing the room)

“Okay, seriously. What’s happening here?”

*Penny jumps up, clapping her hands.*

**PENNY**

“We’re brainstorming! Nate’s big project is getting fast-tracked, which means it’s time for...”

**MADDIE & PENNY (IN UNISON)**

“Content chaos!”

*Nate pinches the bridge of his nose while Tessa crosses her arms, amused.*

**NATE**

(sighing)

“I knew this would happen.”

**MONTAGE – THE CREW IN ACTION**

1. *Penny sticks a giant Post-it note to the wall that reads “GENIUS IDEAS ONLY.” Maddie immediately writes: “Alien love story: they’re just here for snacks.”*
2. *Maddie dramatically pitches an idea with arm gestures while Nate takes fake “serious” notes and Tessa bites her lip to keep from laughing.*
3. *Tessa adds “NO PYRAMID SCHEMES” to the board in bold letters while Penny throws her head back, cackling.*
4. *Nate sketches out a storyboard, but Maddie keeps adding tiny, unrelated doodles in the margins.*
5. *They all pause to debate the eternal question: “Is Die Hard a Christmas movie?” It gets heated.*

**INT. PENNY’S APARTMENT – LATER**

*The floor is littered with crumpled ideas, empty coffee cups, and more popcorn than seems humanly possible.*

*Maddie dramatically flops onto the couch.*

**MADDIE**

“Okay, so maybe I’m not *exactly* helping, but I bring flair.”

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“Flair? You just spent ten minutes defending a space opera starring sentient houseplants.”

**MADDIE**

(sitting up)

“Exactly! Picture it—‘Love Fern: The Saga.’”

*Nate blinks.*

**NATE**

“That sounds like an aggressive gardening documentary.”

*Penny grabs a marker and circles a scribbled idea on the board.*

**PENNY**

“Alright, focus. Let’s get back to the pitch outline. We’re actually making progress.”

*Nate leans in, eyes narrowing at the board.*

**NATE**

(seriously)

“I like where this is going.”

*Tessa leans against him, peeking at the board.*

**TESSA**

(whispering)

“Me too... even if we have to pretend Maddie didn’t suggest musical tap-dancing ghosts.”

*Maddie throws a pillow at Tessa.*

**INT. COFFEE SHOP – NIGHT**

*The crew piles into a local coffee shop, occupying the largest booth. The barista raises an eyebrow as Penny orders a “quad shot cappuccino of chaos.”*

*They settle in with their drinks, the table already covered in notebooks and napkins with doodles.*

**MADDIE**

(serious)

“So... real talk. What’s next for you guys?”

*Tessa and Nate exchange a glance.*

**TESSA**

(surprised)

“What do you mean?”

**PENNY**

(grinning)

“She means... you’re practically a rom-com in motion. What’s the next act? Moving in? Engagement? Spontaneous trip to Paris?”

*Maddie leans in, wiggling her eyebrows.*

**MADDIE**

“Or a double wedding. I’m just saying—it’s an option.”

*Tessa chokes on her latte, coughing as Nate pats her back, biting back a laugh.*

**NATE**

(playing along)

“Oh yeah. Double wedding. We can rent out the karaoke bar.”

**TESSA**

(smirking)

“I’d rather elope with aliens.”

**MADDIE**

(gasping)

“Full circle! ‘Love Fern: The Saga’ is back!”

*The table dissolves into laughter. For a moment, the chaos feels like home—a group of people who shouldn’t fit together but somehow do.*

**EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*The group spills out of the coffee shop, still laughing as they head toward their separate trains and cabs.*

*Maddie hugs Tessa tightly.*

**MADDIE**

(softly)

“For real, though. You and Nate? You’re good together.”

*Tessa’s smile softens.*

**TESSA**

“Thanks, Mads.”

*Maddie pulls back, pretending to wipe a tear.*

**MADDIE**

(teasing)

“My little rom-com lead is all grown up.”

**EXT. NATE’S APARTMENT – LATER**

*Tessa and Nate walk hand in hand toward his building. The streets are quieter now, the snow crunching softly under their feet.*

**NATE**

(quietly)

“They’re not wrong, you know.”

*Tessa raises an eyebrow.*

**TESSA**

“About the double wedding?”

**NATE**

(laughing)

“No. About... us.”

*They stop under a streetlamp, the soft glow making the snow sparkle around them.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

“I don’t know what’s next. But... I know I want you there. For all of it.”

*Tessa’s breath catches as she searches his face.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Me too.”

*Nate cups her cheek, brushing a thumb across her skin before leaning in. Their kiss is soft, sweet, and filled with quiet promises.*

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**INT. NATE’S APARTMENT – EVENING**

*Nate’s apartment is a bit more organized (but only barely). Penny, Maddie, Tessa, and Nate are gathered around the coffee table, which is covered with takeout pizza boxes, sodas, and random Post-it notes. A string of fairy lights flickers above the window.*

*Maddie grabs a slice of pizza and dramatically flops onto the couch.*

**MADDIE**

“Okay, team. We’re here for three things: pizza, planning, and judging Nate’s life choices.”

**PENNY**

(smirking)

“Honestly, I’m just here for the last one.”

*Nate rolls his eyes, taking a bite of pizza.*

**NATE**

“You know, normal friends offer encouragement.”

**PENNY**

“Encouragement is boring. Hot takes are forever.”

*Tessa laughs as she grabs a plate.*

**TESSA**

(sitting cross-legged)

“Alright, let’s get this started. What’s the next step in this pitch of yours, Nate?”

*Nate sets his pizza down, looking animated.*

**NATE**

“So, I was thinking... short film first, then build toward a feature. But I need a solid hook—something personal, but universal.”

*Maddie waves her hand like an eager student.*

**MADDIE**

“Ooh! How about this: forbidden love between rival synchronized swimmers?”

**PENNY**

(deadpan)

“Yes. Nothing says ‘universal’ like underwater angst.”

*Nate leans back, pointing at Maddie.*

**NATE**

“I’m genuinely afraid of how quickly you came up with that.”

*Maddie shrugs, unbothered.*

**MADDIE**

“I contain multitudes.”

*Tessa shakes her head, still smiling.*

**TESSA**

(sincerely)

“You know, it doesn’t have to be groundbreaking. Sometimes the best stories are the simplest ones.”



**PENNY**

(smirking)

“Spoken like someone who’s accidentally living a rom-com.”

*Tessa throws a balled-up napkin at Penny.*

**TESSA**

“Living is a strong word. Surviving might be more accurate.”

**NATE**

(raising his soda)

“To surviving the plot twists.”

*They all toast with their sodas and pizza slices.*

**INT. NATE’S APARTMENT – LATER**

*Everyone is lounging now. Maddie has taken over the armrest, scrolling on her phone. Penny is drawing something absurd on a Post-it.*

**PENNY**

(holding up her doodle)

“Behold: Nate’s life story in three acts.”

*Nate squints at the doodle. It’s a cartoon version of him juggling cameras, pizza, and a stick figure labeled “Emotional Growth.”*

**NATE**

(flatly)

“Wow. Deeply accurate.”

**MADDIE**

(snorting)

“I love that you put pizza as a core theme.”

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“Well, to be fair, pizza has been there for Nate longer than any of us.”

**NATE**

(defensive)

“Hey. Pizza and I go way back.”

*Maddie grabs a marker and starts adding ridiculous dialogue bubbles to Penny’s doodle.*

**MADDIE**

(pretending to narrate)

“Nate Rivers: destined for greatness... if he can survive his carb addiction.”

*Everyone laughs as Nate groans and leans back against the couch.*

**EXT. FIRE ESCAPE – NIGHT**

*Tessa and Penny step out onto the fire escape, bundled in coats as the cool night air greets them. Below, the city hums with quiet energy.*

**PENNY**

(taking a breath)

“You guys... are really good together.”

*Tessa leans against the railing, watching the lights.*

**TESSA**

(smiling)

“Thanks. I’m still figuring it out. But it feels... right.”

**PENNY**

(softly)

“That’s how you know.”

*Tessa glances at Penny, her tone shifting.*

**TESSA**

“Okay, your turn. What’s going on with you?”

**PENNY**

(smirking)

“Me? Please. I’m a delightful disaster, as always.”

**TESSA**

(raising an eyebrow)

“And...?”

*Penny hesitates for a second before shrugging.*

**PENNY**

“I might’ve met someone. But I’m not telling you anything yet because Maddie will never let me live it down.”

*Tessa grins.*

**TESSA**

"Fair point. But... if you need backup, I've got you."

**PENNY**

(mock serious)

"You're officially hired."

**INT. NATE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Maddie is lying upside-down on the couch while Nate scrolls through some footage on his laptop.*

**MADDIE**

(musing)

"You know what you need for this pitch? A hook. Something memorable."

**NATE**

(without looking up)

"Like synchronized swimmers?"

**MADDIE**

(sitting up)

"No. Something real. Like... maybe the photo challenges. You and Tessa's thing."

*Nate pauses, his fingers hovering over the keyboard.*

**NATE**

(thoughtful)

"Huh."

**TESSA (O.S.)**

(entering)

"Huh? What kind of answer is that?"

*Nate looks up, smiling as Tessa re-enters with Penny.*

**NATE**

"Maddie thinks the photo challenges could be the heart of the pitch."

**PENNY**

(nodding)

"It's got that whole 'story behind the story' vibe. People eat that stuff up."

*Tessa tilts her head, considering it.*

**TESSA**

"It... could work."

**MADDIE**

(grinning)

“Of course it could. I’m a genius.”

**NATE**

(smiling at Tessa)

“And it all started with a disposable camera and a dare.”

*Tessa’s smile widens.*

**TESSA**

“Guess we really do make a good team.”

**EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*The group steps outside into the chilly night air, their laughter echoing down the street as they say their goodbyes.*

*Maddie points dramatically at Nate.*

**MADDIE**

“Don’t mess this up, Rivers. The world deserves your story—and maybe some synchronized swimmers.”

*Nate laughs, waving as Maddie and Penny head off in the opposite direction. He and Tessa linger under the streetlights.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“Think they’ll ever stop giving me a hard time?”

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“Not a chance.”

*They walk down the quiet street, hand in hand.*

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – AFTERNOON**

*Tessa is mid-sentence on a work call when her phone buzzes with a text from Maddie. She glances at it and almost chokes on her coffee.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Maddie: “Emergency. Brunch plans. Don’t argue.”

*Another buzz follows.*

Maddie: *"Also, Penny's bringing someone new. We're investigating. Wear something cute."*

*Tessa sighs, balancing her phone between her shoulder and ear as she types back.*

Tessa: *"Brunch or a stakeout?"*

Maddie: *"Both."*

#### **EXT. LITTLE BLUE CAFE – DAY**

*The small brunch spot is bustling, the scent of cinnamon rolls wafting out the door. Tessa arrives just in time to see Maddie holding up a "reserved" sign like a referee and Penny dramatically fixing her hair.*

#### **MADDIE**

*(whispering)*

*"Operation Hot Seat is a go."*

#### **TESSA**

*(laughing)*

*"Please tell me you're not calling it that."*

#### **PENNY**

*(sighing)*

*"You guys are ridiculous."*

*Maddie narrows her eyes, scanning the room.*

#### **MADDIE**

*"Is this ridiculous... or thorough? Jury's out."*

*The door swings open, and a tall, scruffy guy with an easy smile walks in, waving at Penny.*

#### **MADDIE (whispering)**

*"He's cute. And punctual. This is suspicious."*

#### **TESSA (whispering back)**

*"Punctuality is suspicious?"*

#### **MADDIE**

*"Only when paired with dimples."*

#### **INT. LITTLE BLUE CAFE – MINUTES LATER**

*They're seated at a cozy table, menus open but mostly ignored.*

**PENNY**

(casual)

“Guys, this is Ryan.”

*Ryan flashes a warm smile as he shakes hands with Tessa and Maddie.*

**RYAN**

“Nice to meet you. Penny talks about you a lot.”

*Maddie leans in, faux-serious.*

**MADDIE**

“Does she now?”

*Penny shoots Maddie a warning glare.*

**PENNY**

“Don’t start.”

**MADDIE**

(innocently)

“Start what?”

*Tessa hides her grin behind her coffee mug.*

**INT. LITTLE BLUE CAFE – LATER**

*The conversation flows easily, filled with laughter. Maddie leans back, watching Penny and Ryan interact.*

**MADDIE**

“So, Ryan... big question.”

*Ryan raises an eyebrow, amused.*

**RYAN**

“Go for it.”

**MADDIE**

“If you had to pick between karaoke night or trivia night, what’s your move?”

*Ryan doesn’t miss a beat.*

**RYAN**

“Karaoke. Hands down.”

*Maddie gasps, clutching her chest.*

**MADDIE**

“A man of chaos! Penny, you’ve outdone yourself.”

*Penny shakes her head, laughing.*

**PENNY**

“Why do I even bring you people places?”

**TESSA**

(grinning)

“Because you secretly love us.”

**EXT. CITY STREET – AFTER BRUNCH**

*The group walks down the street, their breath forming little clouds in the chilly air.*

**RYAN**

“Thanks for letting me crash brunch. You guys are hilarious.”

**MADDIE**

(teasing)

“Don’t thank us yet. You survived round one. There will be more.”

*Ryan laughs, wrapping an arm around Penny’s shoulders.*

**RYAN**

“Bring it on.”

*Maddie shoots Tessa a look and whispers dramatically.*

**MADDIE**

“Penny’s in trouble. This guy’s actually cool.”

*Tessa chuckles, nudging Maddie.*

**INT. TESSA’S APARTMENT – NIGHT**

*Tessa kicks off her boots and collapses onto the couch, her phone buzzing again.*

**INSERT – PHONE SCREEN:**

Nate: “How was brunch? Did Maddie behave?”

Tessa: “Define ‘behave.’”

Nate: “Let me guess—interrogation?”

Tessa: “With side commentary and mimosas.”

*Nate’s response pops up immediately.*

Nate: *"Sounds about right. By the way... dress warm tomorrow. I've got plans."*

*Tessa raises an eyebrow, curiosity sparking.*

Tessa: *"Another surprise?"*

Nate: *"Of course. What's life without a little mystery?"*

*Tessa smiles, setting her phone down and leaning back. Her life was full of unexpected turns, but right now, she wouldn't change a thing.*

## **EXT. PARK – DAY**

*The park is a winter wonderland, blanketed in fresh snow. Kids are sledding, couples are walking hand in hand, and someone is building an oddly lopsided snowman with mismatched stick arms.*

*Tessa arrives bundled in a thick coat, her scarf practically swallowing her face. She scans the park until she spots Nate standing near the frozen pond, holding two steaming cups of coffee.*

## **NATE**

(grinning)

"Right on time."

*Tessa trudges through the snow toward him, eyeing the cups.*

## **TESSA**

(raising an eyebrow)

"If one of those isn't hot chocolate, you're in trouble."

*Nate holds one out to her, winking.*

## **NATE**

"Extra whipped cream. I'm not a monster."

*Tessa takes a sip, sighing contentedly.*

## **TESSA**

"You're safe—for now. So what's the surprise?"

*Nate gestures toward a small clearing where Penny, Maddie, Ryan, and a few other familiar faces are gathered, each holding a snowball.*

## **TESSA**

(realizing)

"No. Absolutely not."



**NATE**

(grinning mischievously)  
“Snowball fight.”

**MADDIE (O.S.)**

“Did someone say war?”

*Maddie launches a snowball that flies past Nate’s head and explodes in a puff of snow against a tree.*

**RYAN**

(shouting)  
“Every man for himself!”

**EXT. PARK – SNOWBALL CHAOS**

*The group splits into teams. Penny ties her scarf like a headband, looking ready for battle. Ryan dives behind a snowbank like he’s in an action movie. Maddie, ever dramatic, raises her arms.*

**MADDIE**

“This is for brunch justice!”

*She hurls a snowball that hits Penny square in the shoulder.*

**PENNY**

(mock offended)  
“Et tu, Maddie?”

**NATE**

(to Tessa)  
“We need a strategy.”

*Tessa bends down, scooping up snow and patting it into a ball.*

**TESSA**

“Here’s the plan—don’t get hit.”

*Nate throws an arm around her shoulders.*

**NATE**

“That’s the kind of leadership I signed up for.”

**MONTAGE – SNOWBALL MAYHEM**

1. *Penny pelts Ryan with three snowballs in a row, cackling as he tries to dodge.*
2. *Maddie builds a “snow fortress” that immediately collapses when she tries to sit behind it.*

3. *Tessa and Nate crouch behind a park bench, plotting sneak attacks.*
4. *Penny ambushes Nate with a well-aimed snowball to the back, shouting, "For karaoke night!"*
5. *Nate retaliates with a snowball that sails through the air and... misses by a mile.*

#### **EXT. PARK – LATER**

*The fight winds down as the group collapses into a heap near the bench, breathless and laughing. Tessa brushes snow off her coat.*

#### **RYAN**

(grinning)

"I think we just invented snowball dodgeball."

#### **PENNY**

(smirking)

"And we crushed you."

#### **MADDIE**

(pointing)

"Speak for yourself. I built a fortress."

#### **NATE**

(teasing)

"A fortress that lasted ten seconds."

*Maddie waves him off.*

#### **MADDIE**

"Details."

#### **EXT. HOT CHOCOLATE STAND – MOMENTS LATER**

*The group gathers around a small stand that serves hot chocolate and cider. Everyone warms their hands on steaming cups.*

#### **RYAN**

(sipping)

"So... is this a typical Saturday for you guys?"

#### **TESSA**

(grinning)

"More or less."

**PENNY**

(to Ryan)

“Still think you can handle us?”

*Ryan wraps an arm around Penny’s shoulders, pulling her close.*

**RYAN**

“Bring it on.”

*Maddie raises her cup.*

**MADDIE**

“To questionable decisions and overly competitive snowball fights.”

**NATE**

(raising his cup)

“And to not getting hit in the face.”

*Everyone laughs and toasts their cups.*

**EXT. PARK – SUNSET**

*As the sun sets, casting a golden glow over the snow, the group slowly parts ways. Maddie, Penny, and Ryan head in one direction while Tessa and Nate linger near the park entrance.*

**NATE**

(softly)

“You held your own out there.”

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“Did you expect anything less?”

**NATE**

“Not even a little.”

*Tessa links her arm through his, her cheeks still pink from the cold.*

**TESSA**

“What’s next on your surprise list?”

*Nate pretends to think hard.*

**NATE**

“Maybe something that doesn’t involve frostbite.”

**TESSA**

(mock serious)

“Novel idea.”

*Nate leans in, brushing a kiss against her forehead.*

**NATE**

“Let’s go get pizza.”

*Tessa’s eyes light up.*

**TESSA**

“Now *that’s* a winning strategy.”

*They walk off, their laughter echoing as snowflakes begin to fall again.*

**EXT. CITY PARK – SPRING MORNING**

*The snow has melted, and the park is alive with spring energy. Cherry blossoms bloom along the path, petals swirling in the breeze.*

*Tessa sits on a bench with a journal open on her lap, absentmindedly doodling hearts around the word “adventure.”*

*Nate jogs up, a bouquet of wildflowers in hand.*

**NATE**

(grinning)

“I come bearing clichés.”

*Tessa laughs, standing to meet him.*

**TESSA**

(teasing)

“Flowers, really? Next, you’ll pull out a boombox and play ‘In Your Eyes.’”

**NATE**

(pretending to search his pockets)

“Damn. Left it at home.”

*Tessa takes the flowers, smiling softly as she leans into him.*

**EXT. PARK PATH – DAY**

*They walk hand in hand through the park, the sounds of laughter and birdsong filling the air.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Your film pitch is next week. You ready?”

*Nate shrugs, but there’s a sparkle of excitement in his eyes.*

**NATE**

“Not really. But I’ve learned something.”

**TESSA**

“Yeah? What’s that?”

**NATE**

(grinning)

“That things usually work out when I have you by my side.”

*Tessa rolls her eyes, but her blush betrays her.*

**TESSA**

“You’re ridiculous.”

**NATE**

“Maybe. But I’m also right.”

#### **INT. FILM FESTIVAL – ONE WEEK LATER**

*The theater is packed. The lights dim as Nate’s short film begins to play on the screen.*

*The film is simple but powerful—moments captured through a vintage lens. Clips of strangers sharing quiet connections, kids playing in fountains, and couples dancing in the park. And then, near the end, the Polaroid of Tessa and Nate under the park lights appears.*

*The audience murmurs softly at the tenderness of the moment. Tessa, seated near Penny and Maddie, feels her breath catch as her own image flickers on the screen.*

#### **INT. FILM FESTIVAL – LATER**

*The crowd erupts in applause as the screen fades to black. Nate stands on stage, blinking at the standing ovation before clearing his throat.*

**NATE**

(earnest)

“This film started as a dare. A challenge. But somewhere along the way, it became a love letter—to the small moments, to risks, and to the people who make life messy and wonderful.”

*His eyes drift to Tessa in the crowd.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

(softly)

"To the co-director of my life."

*Tessa's heart skips a beat as the audience cheers louder. Maddie elbows her excitedly.*

**MADDIE**

(whispering)

"I swear, if this doesn't end with a proposal..."

*Tessa laughs through her tears.*

**EXT. FESTIVAL LOBBY – NIGHT**

*The crowd trickles out into the night, buzzing with excitement. Nate finds Tessa near the doors, her eyes shining.*

**TESSA**

"You killed it."

**NATE**

(grinning)

"I had good inspiration."

*He takes her hands, his smile softening.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

"I've been thinking about what's next."

*Tessa tilts her head.*

**TESSA**

"Next film? Next trip? Next snowball fight?"

**NATE**

(serious)

"Next chapter."

*Tessa's smile falters slightly, unsure what he means until Nate drops to one knee. The room seems to freeze around them.*

**NATE (CONT'D)**

"Tessa Quinn, you've made me braver, messier, and happier than I ever thought possible. Life's an adventure, and I can't imagine mine without you. Will you marry me?"

*Tessa gasps, her hands flying to her mouth. The crowd around them watches, waiting with bated breath.*

**TESSA**

(tearing up)

“Yes. A thousand times, yes.”

*Nate slips a simple, elegant ring onto her finger and stands, pulling her into a kiss as the crowd erupts in cheers.*

*Maddie wipes an exaggerated tear away while Penny records the whole thing.*

**MADDIE**

(dramatic)

“This is the greatest rom-com finale of all time.”

**EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT**

*Nate and Tessa walk home together under the glow of the streetlights, their fingers intertwined.*

**TESSA**

(softly)

“Think we’ll ever run out of surprises?”

**NATE**

(smirking)

“With you? Never.”

*They pause under a blooming cherry blossom tree as petals fall around them. Nate pulls out his camera.*

**NATE**

“One more for the scrapbook?”

*Tessa leans in, her smile radiant as he clicks the shutter.*

**FREEZE FRAME – POLAROID SNAPSHOT OF NATE AND TESSA KISSING UNDER THE BLOSSOMS.**

**FADE OUT.**

**TEXT OVERLAY:**

*“The best stories are the ones we create together.”*

**ROLL CREDITS.**