

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Written by

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INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY

In coats, MADDIE, 20s, pretty and brainy, and JEFF, 20s, handsome and almost as brainy, sift through the flotsam and jetsam of a long life.

They can see their breath in the cold as they cull through boxes and crates and an occasional bureau.

JEFF

Can't this wait till it warms up?

MADDIE

No, whatever is left after New Year's will go to auction. If we want anything, we take it now.

He shows her a velvet picture.

JEFF

What do you think?

MADDIE

Bring that home, and you'll be sleeping with it.

She holds up an old, leather suitcase.

JEFF

And what exactly would we do with that?

MADDIE

Put it in our attic.

JEFF

Exactly.

MADDIE

It has their names, Anna and Nikita. We should keep it.

Jeff shakes his head.

JEFF

Sentimental always outranks practical.

MADDIE

I knew you'd see it my way.

He comes upon a box.

JEFF
Hey, Christmas ornaments. That goes with us.

MADDIE
They must be old. Grandma hasn't had a tree for years.

He moves the box toward the door.

JEFF
If they're really old, we'll sell them on eBay.

MADDIE
In your dreams.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

KATE, 50s, dips a tea bag into a cup of hot water.

KATE
Christmas ornaments? Mother gave me hers when she stopped putting up a tree.

Maddie arrives at the table with a plate of cookies and a cup of coffee.

MADDIE
What can I say? The box is marked Christmas ornaments.

KATE
Wait, I think I remember something about something my father brought home. No, that was a velvet painting, the last thing I remember about him.

MADDIE
The painting was up there too.

KATE
You didn't...

MADDIE
Not on a dare.

KATE
Are you going to use the ornaments?

MADDIE

We haven't decided. I mean, we haven't even looked at them.

KATE

Well, if grandma hid them in the attic, they must be hideous.

They laugh.

MADDIE

When are you going to decorate?

KATE

Tomorrow.

MADDIE

I'll come over.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

On tiptoes, Jeff puts a star atop a smallish tree set in the corner of this smallish room. This is a first house, something small and affordable. Into the room comes Maddie.

MADDIE

It's up already?

JEFF

How do you like it?

MADDIE

Looks great. I thought you were going to wait for me.

JEFF

The spirit moved me.

She examines the tree and changes a few bulbs.

MADDIE

Were grandma's ornaments that bad?

JEFF

Not ornaments. Come with me.

He leads her to the dining room where a Christmas village has been set up on the table.

JEFF

How do you like it? Odd fact, there are thirteen figures. You would think that unlucky.

She studies the quaint, old village and the little figures set amidst the buildings.

MADDIE

My god, it's wonderful. I wonder why grandma never used it.

JEFF

The village is great, but look yonder.

He points to an elf, bigger, with something akin to a smirk on its face.

MADDIE

Ugly little bugger, isn't he?

JEFF

Where do you want him?

MADDIE

Out of my sight.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - SHOWER - DAY

Maddie showers, and she's hot in suds.

JEFF (O.S.)

HEADING OUT!

MADDIE

TAKE CARE!

She rinses one more time and shuts off the water. Reaches out and retrieves a towel.

Wrapped in a towel, Maddie pulls back the curtain and lets out a little SCREAM.

On the floor, looking at her is the Elf.

She steps out and grabs the Elf.

MADDIE

Very funny.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - JEFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Dressed, Maddie enters, the Elf in her hand. She pauses to look around a moment before she places it on top a filing cabinet. Smiling, she leaves.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Maddie adds icicles to a small tree set on top a table. She steps back to admire the decorated tree. Into the room comes Kate, several wrapped presents in hand.

MADDIE

How do you like it?

KATE

(adding gifts)

It looks great. Did you use
grandma's ornaments?

MADDIE

There weren't any. It turned out
to be a Christmas village.

KATE

I don't remember a Christmas
village. Oh wait, a long, long
time ago, when I was five or six.
God, I had forgotten all about
that. I guess that was part of the
bad year.

MADDIE

Bad year?

KATE

The Christmas that my father left
us.

MADDIE

What?! I thought he died.

KATE

Grandma wanted everyone to think
that, but actually, he left us on
Christmas Eve.

MADDIE

You're kidding.

KATE

I was too young to see it, but my
father was not a good man. I was
older when my mother's friends told
me how he abused her. Aunt Ethel
said my mother invoked Baba Yaga,
whatever that is.

MADDIE

Baba what? Is that some kind of
curse?

KATE

How would I know? You and Jeff are
coming for Christmas dinner?

MADDIE

Wouldn't miss it.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Maddie goes to the bureau and stops cold. On top the bureau
is the elf.

MADDIE

(snatching Elf)
Ha, ha, funny boy.

She crosses the room to a second bureau. She pulls out a top
drawer full of his underwear. She places the Elf on top.

MADDIE

Finish your shower, baby.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Maddie stirs a pot of spaghetti sauce. Jeff enters and
kisses her cheek.

MADDIE

Going commando, now?

JEFF

What?

MADDIE

Oh, I get it. A silent war.

JEFF

What are you talking about?

MADDIE

Never mind. We'll see who wins.

She taps his nose and walks away, leaving him confused.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maddie enters and looks around. No Elf. She goes to her bureau, and with care, she opens each drawer, expecting to find the Elf. But she doesn't. Frowning, she leaves.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Maddie enters, opens the fridge, and jumps back with a CRY. The Elf stands on a shelf, a small knife cradled in its arms. She snatches at the Elf, and the knife cuts her hand.

MADDIE
(sucking finger)
Son of a...

She carefully removes the knife before she takes the Elf.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - JEFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jeff sits in front of his computer as Maddie enters and slams the Elf on the desk.

MADDIE
Enough of the games.

JEFF
What?

MADDIE
(showing bloody finger)
That's what happens when you do
stupid things.

JEFF
I don't know what you're talking
about.

MADDIE
Yeah, right. The next time I see
that little bastard, it goes in the
trash.

She storms out, leaving a baffled Jeff.

JEFF
(to Elf)
What the hell did you do?

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maddie is in bed, her back to Jeff as he exits the bathroom. He slides into bed.

JEFF

I'm not exactly sure what I did,
but I apologize. Oh, and the ugly
little dude is sleeping in a file
drawer, OK?

She doesn't answer.

JEFF

Tomorrow is Christmas eve, and I
don't want to spend it fighting.

She turns over. She smiles, and they kiss.

Unseen, the Elf stands by the bureau, watching.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Maddie sets the timer on the oven. In coat, Jeff enters and kisses her cheek.

JEFF

I'm off. Wine, fresh spinach, and
whipped cream.

He heads for the door.

MADDIE

And mushrooms if you can find them.

JEFF

Consider them found.

He leaves. Happy, she looks around and heads out.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Maddie comes out of the closet with a wrapped present. She looks around. No Elf.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maddie places the present under the tree. She walks over to the Christmas village and runs her fingers over the little figures.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - JEFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Maddie stands in front of the file cabinet. She takes a deep breath and opens the top drawer. Nothing. Frowning, she opens the next drawer. No Elf. She opens each drawer one by one. No Elf. Fuming, she slams the last drawer and leaves.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She enters, looks around, and grabs a knife from the wooden block. She means business.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

On her hands and knees, Maddie looks under the bed. Nope. Nothing.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maddie looks behind the couch and under the chairs. No Elf.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Steamed, Maddie rushes into the room. She stops and looks around. Then, she looks up.

Elf stands on top the fridge.

MADDIE

Fucker.

She snatches the Elf and slaps him on the cutting board. She smiles as she raises the knife.

JEFF (O.S.)

MADDIE!

Jeff, sack in arms, stands in the doorway.

JEFF

What the hell are you doing?

MADDIE

What the hell did you do?

He sets the sack on the counter and comes toward her, even as she brandishes the knife.

JEFF
Whoa, whoa, let's set down the
knife, OK?

She puts the knife on the table.

MADDIE
Get that ugly fucker out of here.

Jeff grabs the Elf.

JEFF
Are you all right?

MADDIE
No, I'm not all right, not all
right at all. Just take it away.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Jeff pulls the lid off the trash can. He studies the Elf a moment before he hurls it into the can and slams the lid.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maddie turns on the shower and strips.

JEFF
(through the door)
Maddie.

MADDIE
Go away.

JEFF
What can I do?

MADDIE
GO AWAY!

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeff stands in front of the Christmas village. He reaches out and touches a figure.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Jeff and Maddie face each other, the food-laden table between them.

JEFF

I honest to god put it in the file drawer.

MADDIE

I don't want to talk about it.

JEFF

It's Christmas eve. You gonna stay mad at me?

MADDIE

Maybe.

JEFF

How about after dinner, we open one gift?

MADDIE

Giver's choice?

JEFF

Absolutely.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - LATER

Jeff pulls an ugly Christmas sweater from a box. He and Maddie laugh as he models it.

She opens a box and pulls out lacy, shorty PJs.

JEFF

You should probably try those on.

She laughs and heads out.

MADDIE

Turn out the lights.

He watches her go before he turns out the lights, leaving only the lit tree. He starts out. Out of the shadows leaps the Elf. Startled, Jeff steps back and trips on a chair. He hits the floor, dazed.

Even as he blinks, the Elf moves up his chest. Fangs appear in the Elf's mouth. Jeff looks at the Elf as it grins hideously—right before it bites Jeff's neck.

Jeff SCREAMS.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

In lacy PJs, Maddie admires herself in the mirror. Humming a Christmas noel, she can't hear the fading screams.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maddie emerges from the bathroom and scampers into bed. Smiling, she looks at the door.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - LATER

In PJs, Maddie enters. She looks around.

MADDIE

Jeff?

No one answers.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Maddie and Kate drink coffee at the table.

KATE

He'll come back.

MADDIE

It's been a week.

Kate reaches out and takes Maddie's hand.

KATE

He'll be back.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

The village buildings are already in the box. Kate picks up a figure, slides it into a baggy, and places it in the box. There is one figure left but no more baggies.

KATE

I need a baggy.

Maddie takes ornaments off the tree.

MADDIE

I counted out thirteen.

KATE

There are fourteen figures.

Maddie tosses as box of baggies to Kate.

MADDIE

That's odd. I swear Jeff counted
thirteen.

KATE

Thirteen is unlucky.

Kate slides the last figure into a baggy and places it in the
box...right next to the Elf.

FADE OUT