

~~Pastor Tom claps a hand on his shoulder.~~

PASTOR TOM
~~No rush. Just don't wait too long.~~
~~Some things won't hold forever.~~

~~They share a quiet beat. Then~~

PASTOR TOM (CONT'D)
~~And hey - if you're looking for a~~
~~way to involved again that's not~~
~~small talk or casseroles... Belle~~
~~could use help at the center. Even~~
~~if she doesn't say it.~~

HUTCH
~~You think she'd let me help?~~

PASTOR TOM
~~I'm saying you should show up and~~
~~see what happens.~~

~~Pastor Tom winks, then disappears into the hallway.~~

~~Hutch lingers for just a second, then tucks the prayer~~
~~blanket under his arm and steps out into the sunlight.~~

INT. BEDFORD HOUSE - FOOD PANTRY - LATE AFTERNOON

Belle is kneeling by a half-empty shelf, clipboard nearby, restocking a crate of soup cans with well-practiced efficiency. The fluorescent lights buzz softly overhead. Her shoulders carry the weight of a full day - and then some.

Behind her, the pantry door creaks open.

CLARA
 (O.C.)
 You run a tight ship.

Belle startles slightly, straightens up. CLARA, mid 30's, bright eyes, cozy scarf and a smile that reads friendly but not naive, stands just inside the door.

She's scanning the pantry with a mix of admiration and curiosity.

BELLE
 Can I help you?

CLARA
 Not this time.
 (smiles)
 But I'm hoping I can help you.

Belle's expression shifts - there's a flicker of something. Not alarm, but familiarity. Like a face from a dream or an old photograph. Clara doesn't seem to notice the moment.

BELLE
 (piecing it together)
 You're the consultant Mayor Quinn mentioned?

CLARA
 Guilty. Clara James.

Clara extends her hand.

BELLE
 Belle Carter.

CLARA
 Great to finally meet you, Belle.
 I've heard a lot about you.

Belle hesitates a beat before shaking her hand. Still polite, but guarded.

BELLE
 I can't say the same, unfortunately.

CLARA
 What do you want to know?

BELLE
 (carefully)
 What should I know?

CLARA
 Hmm...I am very blessed to work with a foundation that partners with community centers like this one.

Clara talks while she investigates the pantry shelves.

CLARA (CONT'D)
 I'm here to learn what you're doing - and see how we might come alongside and support it. I love my job, probably too much sometimes. I love people...

Start

19.

BELLE
We've had visitors before. Folks
with good intentions and short
attention spans.

Clara stops, more aware of Belle's apprehension now and
calmly -

CLARA
I understand. I'm not here to
change what you're doing. From what
I've read - and what I can already
see - this place has heart. Real
heart. I'd just like to learn and
see where I can offer any more.

Belle allows a small, weary smile.

BELLE
We'll see if we can fit it in with
the dented cans and busted
lightbulb.

They both chuckle.

BELLE (CONT'D)
I didn't expect you until next
week.

CLARA
The Mayor said you work long hours.
I thought I'd stop by while things
were still moving - get a feel for
the rhythm here.

BELLE
The rhythm is mostly...duct Tape,
stubbornness, and prayer.

Clara laughs - a genuine, easy sound.

CLARA
Well then, we have something in
common.

Belle studies her a moment longer. That flicker again -
familiarity just out of reach.

BELLE
Have we met before?

20.

CLARA
We haven't actually met before, not
that I recall. But who knows? Small
towns have long memories.

Belle's gaze lingers a second longer, trying to place it,
before she shakes off the feeling.

BELLE
Well, if you're here to help, you
picked the right time. We just ran
out of elbow grease.

CLARA
Good, I have some to spare. What do
you say?

They exchange a tentative smile. Belle gestures for Clara to
follow her as they head deeper into the pantry.

BELLE
Come on, I'll show you around. Mind
the leaky ceiling and the holy
floors - literally. Pastor Tom
likes to say the building's got
character. I say it's got cracks.

CLARA
Cracks let the light in.

~~Belle glances back, surprised by the response - but it hits.
Something tells her Clara's not just talk.
They walk on together - a little distance closed.~~

~~EXT. BEDFORD HOUSE - MORNING~~

~~Belle arrives for the day, arms overloaded as usual before
her day has ever truly begun.~~

~~She is surprised to see the center's doors and windows
adorning new gariand and decorations.~~

~~Clara stands on a small stepladder, working on some finishing
touches.~~

~~BELLE
Good morning? What's all this?~~

~~CLARA
Oh, you're here. Phew. I got it
finished just in the nick of time.~~

END