

~~Belle stands there, blinking. She looks at the cabinet. Then at her coffee. Then, reluctantly, she opens her top drawer. There it is. A slightly bruised but perfectly edible banana. She sighs — half exasperation, half something much softer.~~

~~BELLE
Lord, help me.~~

~~She peels it and takes a bite.~~

~~INT. BEDFORD HOUSE — LATER THAT DAY~~

~~Quick cuts of Hutch quietly weaving through the background:~~

~~Refilling the industrial coffee pot when no one's looking.~~

~~Changing a lightbulb in the hallway.~~

~~Picking up a flier that fell off the bulletin board and smoothing it back in place.~~

~~Tightening a leg on an old table.~~

~~He never interrupts. Never demands attention. But he's there. And Belle sees it all — even if she's not ready to talk about what it means.~~

~~PASTOR TOM
(to Belle)
Looks like some things never
change. That man isn't going to
rest until you're able to.~~

~~BELLE
He never quits, does he?~~

~~PASTOR TOM
Birds of a feather, you two.~~

~~Pastor Tom walks away, grinning.~~

~~Hutch walks over to Belle and gently takes the clipboard from her hand. He checks a couple more things off her long to-do list and hands it back to her.~~

~~HUTCH
(proudly)
Check. Check. Double check.~~

~~He walks away twirling his screwdriver, before sliding it into the back pocket of his Levi's.~~

INT. BELLE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Belle sits at her kitchen table, flipping through intake forms with a tired sigh.

Jen enters the house, without knocking, and carrying a box of cupcakes.

JEN
I brought reinforcements.

BELLE
(smiling faintly)
Unless it comes with three extra volunteers and a miracle grant, I'm not sure a cupcake is gonna cut it.

JEN
You, my friend, eat a cupcake and enjoy it.

Jen hands her one. Belle takes a bite and her face melts into enjoyment.

BELLE
I can always count on you for a sweet fix.

Jen settles into a comfy chair.

JEN
So... Clara. Consultant with a clipboard and a pastor's handshake.

BELLE
She's... lovely, actually. Smart. Kind. Very "roll up your sleeves and pitch in." And everyone seems to adore her already.

JEN
Including you?

Belle exhales.

BELLE
I want to. Really. But every time she steps in, I feel like I should've already had it figured out. Like maybe they brought her in because I'm the one falling short.

Start

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JEN
You're not falling short. You're running a miracle on faith and fumes. There's no shame in needing help. You help me all the time.

Belle nods and then sets the cupcake aside.

BELLE
It's not just Clara. It's... everything. A job offer from the mayor. Hutch showing up again. After all these years.

JEN
(gentler now)
He looks the same. Well, we all look a tiny bit older. But somehow still like that guy who brought you soup when you had strep throat senior year. You never talk about what happened with you two.

BELLE
(sighs wistfully)
We always had this...connection. Like we could just look at each other and know what the other was thinking. Same heart for service. Same values. But never the same timing. He enlisted. I stayed in Bedford.

Belle shrugs.

BELLE (CONT'D)
Life happened.

JEN
And now?

BELLE
Now he's back. Fixing cabinets. Re-filling my coffee when I'm not looking. It's like he never left - and like everything's changed at the same time.

JEN
You trust him?
BELLE
(after a beat)
100%. I always did.
(MORE)

32.

BELLE (CONT'D)
That's the thing. Even when we weren't part of each other's lives, I never stopped trusting him.

Jen studies her.

JEN
Then maybe this isn't about being replaced. Maybe it's about making room. For help. For growing. Maybe even for him.

Belle nods, blinking back unexpected emotion.

BELLE
Why do you always know the perfect thing to say?

JEN
It's a spiritual gift. Like making lasagna without measuring.

They smile. Jen reaches over, squeezes Belle's hand.

JEN (CONT'D)
You're not losing your place in the story, Belle. Maybe God's just turning the page?

Belle lets that sink in as she takes another bite.

BELLE
Man, that was a really helpful cupcake.

They both laugh.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

~~INT. BEDFORD HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY~~

~~The room buzzes with activity - kids cutting shapes at a craft table creating unique Christmas ornaments, a volunteer reading aloud in the corner, Belle directing traffic with urgency.~~

~~Clara, notebook in hand, observes quietly from the side. She's not hovering - just taking it in. Every now and then, she jots something down.~~

End