

start

The photo, displayed on a laptop computer screen in front of Cassie. Behind her, looking past her shoulder is her friend and assistant, PIPER (20s-30s) a vibrant young woman.

PIPER

Wow... that really captures the beauty of Joe's farm.

CASSIE

I agree, it's pretty cool... even if I did take the picture myself... it's the perfect cover for this week's issue.

PIPER

All we have to do is place the text and upload it to the printers... everything else is already off the presses... this is the last piece.

Cassie works her keyboard adding the magazine's title and cover blurbs.

PIPER (CONT'D)

The finished copies will be ready for pickup in the morning and we can get them to our vendors.

CASSIE

I'll pick up everything around nine and drive the copies back here and we can split them up.

Cassie taps the last key.

PIPER

Perfect.

CASSIE

And... sending.

PIPER

Good work... you've got such a talent for capturing the happy mood of the holiday season...

(smiles)

It's almost like you've done this before.

CASSIE

(laughs)

Oh, please, Piper.

(CONTINUED)

PIPER

But where's Joe? I mean, this is like the first time he hasn't been pictured with the trees.

Cassie closes her laptop, leaning back in her chair as Piper circles around to face her.

CASSIE

(concerned)

He didn't want to be... I think he's a little frazzled this year. Sales have been good and we have more trees in the field this season than ever before but he seems distracted.

PIPER

Well, it's a great cover and you can't ask for a better article on the virtues of decorating the perfect Christmas tree.

(thinking)

This should bring even more people to the farm. Maybe it will cheer him up.

CASSIE

Yeah, I hope so... but there's only a week left till Christmas and I'm a little worried.

(beat)

Grandpa seems to have lost a lot of his enthusiasm for the farm. It feels like he's just going through the motions.

(thinking)

I know he's getting on, but still...

PIPER

Maybe he's not feeling well. You know, when you reach a certain age everything hurts. Could he be thinking about retiring?

CASSIE

Oh, I hope that's not the case... what would this town be without grandpa's tree farm?

PIPER

It would be the end of an era... I can't even think about it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PIPER (CONT'D)

It's been the heart and soul of the Christmas season since this town can remember.

CASSIE

Wow... Heart and soul? Maybe you should have written the article.

PIPER

Remember all those years growing up when we used to play in the trees? Running up and down the rows till we fell down. It was always there... The Christmas tree farm. Just waiting for us.

(reminiscing)

Those chilly Fall nights when the last of the fireflies were everywhere and we'd sit in the field, listening to the sound of the nightbirds... and the train...

CASSIE

(thinking back)

Ah, yes... the train... so far away, but you could still hear the rumble of the wheels on track and the horn blowing. Faintly, but loud enough.

(beat)

We used to try to guess where the train was headed...

PIPER

And we always imagined it was going to some really important place... far away from a little town like Harvest Falls...

Cassie stands, starting to gather her stuff together.

CASSIE

And yet... here we are years later. Still in this little town.

Cassie heads for the door.

PIPER

(dreamy)

Yeah... isn't that nice?

Cassie stops at the door before exiting.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE

(smiles)

If you say so.

End

CUT TO.

~~EXT. JOE'S - HOUSE - DAY~~

~~A quaint, classic All-American farmhouse sitting back from the field of trees. The kind of house that looks like it was built in the 1940s... or earlier.~~

~~INT. JOE'S - HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY~~

~~And older woman, BONNIE (60s-70s) moves across the room with a tray of steaming cider cups.~~

BONNIE

(smiling)

~~Here you boys go... hot cider from Miller's farm next door.~~

JAMES

~~Next door?~~

BONNIE

~~Yep. They had a big apple harvest this year... they've been blessed for sure.~~

JOE

~~Thank you, Bonnie... you're the best.~~

~~James accepts his cup and takes a sip. Delightful.~~

JAMES

~~Yes. Extraordinary... and very warming on a cold day.~~

BONNIE

~~You're all welcome, Mister...~~

~~Everyone's eyes dart around, what to say... and then...~~

JAMES

~~York. James York.~~

~~Bonnie wipes her hands on a dish towel.~~

(CONTINUED)