

# EVERGREEN

Written by

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**BLUE SKY**

A steady breeze whistles way up high.

We descend... a green tip cuts into frame.

It's the top of a fir tree.

A hushed nature documentary voice narrates-

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Douglas fir. An evergreen  
conifer species in the pine family.

The mighty evergreen sways above miles of unbroken forest.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Also known as the Douglas spruce  
the Oregon pine and-

A BOY'S spry voice interrupts.

BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)

And I can take it from here- it's  
my story after all.

A tan truck PUTTERS to a halt at the forest floor.

BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)

Oh sap! Hang on, would ya?

At the wheel is a PARK RANGER (more of a boy scout). He looks  
around with binoculars, marks up his journal- drives off.

We watch him go...

TWEET! A sharp whistle calls us.

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Over here!

We WHIP TO that, landing on a-

BIRD, it looks at us, *wasn't me*.

Points down to a-

SMALL FIR TREE.

The tree's eyes blink open.

*This* is our hero. He speaks to camera.

SMALL FIR TREE  
Hi- I'm Tim Timbers.

Tim smiles at us.

TIM  
Welcome to my home! Can you say  
"Great Big Forest"?

He waits for us to respond...

Blinks.

TIM  
Very good! And can you say...  
(laughs)  
Just pullin' your limb. I crack  
jokes when I'm nervous- well-  
excited! That's because I'm getting  
picked to be a.. *drum roll, please?*

A WOODPECKER in a tree starts drilling- DUDUDUDUDUDUDUDUDUDU...

TIM  
CHRISTMAS TREE!

Tim shakes off snow. What's left clings like snow-ornaments.

TIM  
Only the best trees get picked.  
Last year it was Aspen.

**FLASHBACK:**

***ASPEN, the Michael Phelps of trees, flexes. TREES swoon.***

TIM (V.O.)  
Maple and Cypress both got picked  
the year before that.

***MAPLE bats her luscious frond-eyelashes.***

***CYPRESS sways back and forth in a dance circle.***

TIM  
Man, Cyp sure had the moves.

DUDUDUDUDUDU- That woodpecker keeps pounding, a gaping hole  
already formed, when a GROAN ROARS from above.

DOUG (O.S.)  
Peckham!

PECKHAM (the woodpecker) stops.

PECKHAM

Sorry, Doug. Got carried away.

DEEP VOICE (O.S)

The squirrels will use it.

Peckham flies off, revealing he was in the branches of-

DOUG TIMBERS. A towering Douglas fir. Endless. Regal. His trunk disappears into the sunlit canopy.

He hears Tim below, still naming off Trees.

TIM

Oakley, Sequoia, Kevin.

DOUG

Tim. Who are you talking to?

Tim shakes those snow ornaments off.

TIM

Oh, uhh- no one, pops.

(winks at us)

That's my dad. Doug.

Doug has kind sunken eyes- the window to a soul that's weathered the storms of life.

TIM (V.O.)

He could've been picked when he was my age, but he picked to settle down and start a family.

Doug leans into DOROTHY TIMBERS the tall tree next to him.

DOROTHY

Drink your breakfast, sweetie.

TIM

I'm not thirsty.

DOUG

Listen to your mother if you want to hit your growth spurt.

TIM

If I grow too tall I might not-

DOUG

See? Fraser gets it!

Reveal FRASER TIMBERS. Tim's big brother. Emphasis on big.

FRASER  
Slurps up, Tiny Tim.

Tim rolls his eyes.

TIM (TO US)  
I wish I was an only sapling.

**FLASHBACK:**

***BABY TIM sprouts from the soil, big-eyed and adorable.***

***WHOOSH!***

***Sunlight vanishes. Blocked by TODDLER FRASER.***

TIM (TO US)  
Pain in my stump...

A porky voice cuts in-

STUMP(O.S.)  
What's up?

Reveal STUMP, a proudly compact tree.

TIM  
Oh- not you, Stump.  
(to us)  
My best bud since we were sprouts.

Stump squints, trying to find who Tim's talking to.

Tim glances up at his family.

TIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Around here... you don't really get  
to choose what you grow into.

Fraser stretches toward the sun.

Higher-

Doug stands tall.

TIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Dad's tall...

Even higher-

Dorothy towers above them all.

TIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 ...but Mom's the tallest tree in  
 the whole forest.

Dorothy stands above all else, but only slightly over Doug.

TIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Dad says it's just the way she  
 styles her fronds.

DOUG  
 It's just the way you style your  
 fronds, dear.

Doug stretches out his trunk, but she's still taller.

DOROTHY  
 It's not about the height of your  
 trunk, it's the width of your  
 roots.

We drift down them, passing CRITTERS in their branches.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)  
 Got a fresh hollow here, Reggie.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL and his SON climb branches with acorns.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL  
 Thanks Dee Dee! Scurry up, son.

The little squirrel lags behind. He stops and watches the  
 BIRDS fly around freely. He SIGHS, back to climbing.

DOUG  
 Benny, up already?

BENNY THE BEAVER, waddles past.

BENNY THE BEAVER  
 Early beaver gets the cedar, Doug!

BAXTER THE PIGEON soars past carrying twigs in his beak.

DOUG  
 Baxter, did you ask for those?

Baxter lands on Tim and mumbles back with a full mouth.

BAXTER BIRD  
 Free forest.

DOUG (O.S.)  
 What was that? I'm way up here.

BAXTER  
 FREE FOREST!  
 (drops all the twigs)  
 -son of a finch.

Baxter flies off, frustrated.

Doug chuckles. Dorothy elbows him.

DOUG  
 He's gotta follow the rules.

DOROTHY  
 Your rules?

DOUG  
 Everybody loves the rules. Without  
 them, this forest becomes a jungle.

TIM (V.O.)  
 Baxter just moved in from a  
 concrete jungle where they don't  
 have manners, Dad says.

We push into Tim's branches as Baxter builds his nest.

TIM (V.O.)  
 I like Baxter. We both love  
 Christmas.

We push into a dark hollow of Tim's trunk...

FADE TO BLACK:

Snow flurries fall on a misty night.

A WING FLAPS- swirling them skyward.

That wing belongs to Baxter. We lock onto him as he  
 soars-cutting through the clouds like a fighter pilot.

He looks down at **NEW YORK CITY** covered in holiday lights.

It's a bee hive of activity below while WORKERS set up the  
 iconic ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE.

Baxter closes his wings and dives! WHOOSH! Nearly hitting  
 another bird flying much more casually- His wife, BRITTANY.

BRITTANY  
 Watch out you Dodo!

BAXTER  
 Could a Dodo do this?

Baxter plummets through a fire escape, dodging the rafters. Past an apartment window— KIDS wait for the tree lighting.

Baxter glides low, avoiding... HONKING TRAFFIC, A STREET VENDOR, SIDEWALK PEDESTRIANS, SKATERS out on the ICE RINK.

He swirls around the base of the tree, following the wired path of unlit bulbs, round and round, up to the top and—

DOOSH! THE TREE'S LIGHTS BURST ON! APPLAUSE ERUPTS.

Brittany looks down at Baxter's antics... with a grin—

BRITTANY

*Such a peacock.*

Baxter flies in next to her, admiring the lights behind.

BAXTER

I'm gonna miss this.

BRITTANY

We'll *all* visit.

Brittany indicates her belly, she's expecting.

Baxter smiles at her, then faces the horizon.

BAXTER

Set a course, my love.

The two love birds soar off into the darkness.

Behind them, the STAR atop the Rockefeller tree SHINES...

MATCH CUT TO:

A STAR on top of Tim... His eyes are closed, imagining it.

TIM

(DREAMY SIGH)

Christmas.

NERDY TREE (O.S.)

Not to be a splinter, but the odds of being picked are very low.

Poof! Tim's star disappears.

TIM

I know, Rootie...

Reveal ROOTIE, a nerdy skinny tree.

ROOTIE  
 What's so great about being a  
 Christmas tree, anyway?

TIM  
 Well when you're a Christmas tree.  
 Nobody cares how *right* you are...  
 (points to Rootie's brain)  
 It's about how bright you are!

Tim tosses a pine cone into a puddle, causing the sunlight to reflect off the water- the caustic rays GLIMMER on Tim.

STUMP  
 (wide eyes)  
 Ooooo-Aaaaa. What else?

TIM  
 This guy-Santa Claws- he's red with  
 huge claws, leaves gifts under you.

Rootie and Stump exchange confused looks. Tim's losing them.

TIM (CONT'D)  
 Decorations hang on your branches!

STUMP  
 Like pine cones?

TIM  
 But shiny!

ROOTIE  
 I still don't get it.

TIM  
 When you're a Christmas tree.  
 You get picked. Not picked on.

Rootie actually likes that.

TIM (CONT'D)  
 And if you're a good tree all year-  
 Santa picks a family just for you.

STUMP  
 How do you get picked?

TIM  
Be-leaf.

Tim closes his eyes. The star begins to form.

TIM (CONT'D)  
Say it. I be-leaf.

STUMP I be-leaf... ROOTIE I be-leaf...

Stars take shape on them too. And just before they fully form-

FRASER (O.S.)  
I be-leaf.. it's time to grow up.

Poof-poof-poof! The stars disappear.

Rootie and Stump look unsure.

Tim shakes his head.

Dorothy leans down to comfort Tim.

DOROTHY  
Tim, the best trees don't always  
stand the tallest or brightest.  
(beat)  
They stand where they're needed.  
They stand for others.

TIM  
And I will mom... After I become a  
famous Christmas tree, like Aspen!

DOROTHY  
(whispers)  
I be-leaf... in you.

DOUG  
Are you sure you wanna be a..  
(off Dorothy's look)  
Being a Christmas tree is just a  
seasonal job- and it's hard work.

TIM  
I've been working on my strength-

**FLASH: Tim curls rock-ornaments like dumbbells.**

TIM (V.O.)  
Flexibility.

**Tim contorts into intricate poses.**

TIM (V.O.)  
And aesthetics.

**Tim pushes Stump out of the way to get sun. He glows green.**

DOUG

It's flashy and I don't want all  
the attention to go to your trunk.  
You should have a plan B. Grow tall  
and strong, protect our woods.

TIM

I'm just one tree. I won't make a  
difference. I want this. For me!

DOUG

Timothy Arbor Timbers!

THUNDER RUMBLES- clouds darken and churn in the distance.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Trees don't stand for themselves.  
We stand together.

Tim lowers his head, responsibility weighing on him.

TIM

(softly, to himself)  
What if I want to stand...  
for something else?

A beat.

Baxter swoops in. Collects some of Tim's dead pine needles.

BAXTER

Mind if I borrow these, Tim?

TIM

You don't have to ask.

BAXTER

It's the law of the land.

TIM

Don't let him ruffle your feathers.

Baxter enters Tim's branches where he adds the twigs to his

**NEST.** TWO EGGS lie unhatched.

BAXTER

He's the least of my worries.

**BACK OUTSIDE**

TIM

Baxter, why'd you pick me?

BAXTER  
 ...Honestly. Random.

Tim doesn't love that answer.

TIM  
 You might've thought it was random,  
 but look around. Slim pickings.

BAXTER  
 You're closer to the ground. Safer  
 for the eggs.

Tim smizes, hiding the burn. He nods.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
 Sometimes ya just get a feelin'  
 you're right where ya belong.

Tim appreciates that.

TIM  
 Like be-leaf?

Baxter winks.

BAXTER  
 Felt that way when I met my wife.

TIM  
 How *did* you meet Mrs Brittany?

BAXTER  
 She was a famous model/singer on  
 billboards all over the city.

**FLASHBACK:**

***A human model on a billboard for a perfume advertisement.***

***SMASH ZOOM into a LADY BIRD perched on top of that billboard  
 singing for a CROWD OF BIRDS. It's Young Brittany.***

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
 Had me wrapped around her feathers.

BRITTANY (O.S.)  
 Wrapped around whose feathers?

Brittany flies up to her nest.

BAXTER  
 Oh nothing, tweet-heart.

TIM  
I should've known you were famous!  
Can you sing something?

BRITTANY  
That was a long time ago. I don't  
even know if I still-

Brittany erupts into an effortless *HARMONIC RUN*.

Tim claps his branches.

TIM  
Wow! I can't sing..  
But I can whistle!

Tim WHISTLES! It's loud. Long. Ear piercing.

**SOMEWHERE** - MR DEER looks up from grazing. / Benny drops his wood and covers his ears. / Reggie drops his acorns, trips.

**BACK WITH TIM.** He finishes his WHISTLE...

On Baxter and Brittany, *thank goodness that's over.*

... Tim INHALES to go again..

UNSEEN FOREST ANIMALS shout: "No!- We're good!- That's okay!"

BAXTER  
Wow- That was-

BRITTANY  
You can really- carry a tune!

TIM  
We should have a forest concert!

BRITTANY  
Maybe after the eggs hatch.

TIM  
Yes, ma'am!

BRITTANY  
*Ma'am-* Your folks raised you right.

Baxter doesn't like Doug so he awkwardly changes the subject.

BAXTER  
How about this weather, huh?

A GUST BLOWS.

TIM  
Don't worry! I'm small, but sturdy.

STUMP  
What are we worrying about?

TIM  
We're not!

FRASER  
Good luck, twigs. Gonna need it.

Stump and Rootie shudder.

TIM  
We'll be fine. We just have to  
stick together.

SMASH CUT TO:

*FLASHES OF- FREEZING HOWLING WINDS. SLEET. DARKNESS. MAYHEM.*

TIM (CONT'D)  
Hang on!

*THUNDER ROARS. LIGHTNING STRIKES.  
WOOD CRACKS! SNAPS! DEBRIS SWIRLS ALL AROUND FEROCIOUSLY.*

STUMP  
(teeth clattering)  
I think I'm losing my bark!

FRASER  
(faux confidence)  
I think this is fun!

TIM  
I think this is the worst of it!  
Stand tall! Stand together!

CUT TO BLACK:

**EXT. FOREST - THE NEXT MORNING**

Tim's eyes blink open, sore and dazed.

TIM  
*What happened?*

He surveys the aftermath.

THICK SNOW AND DEBRIS COVERS EVERYTHING.

Tim feels something leaned on him, he pushes it off.

STUMP

Ouch?!

TIM

Sorry, Stump. You okay?

STUMP

Bent, but not broken. You?

TIM

I'm fine... Birds?!

BAXTER (IN THE NEST)

We'll fly.

TIM

Fraser?! Rootie?!

Fraser uses his strength to shove stray branches off himself.

FRASER

Worst log pile ever, but I'm good.

ROOTIE

Me too. And I'm not even upset I was brought up last.

Tim breathes a SIGH of relief.

TIM

*Oh thank Mother Nature.*

Tim shouts up to his father.

TIM (CONT'D)

That wind was wild! Wasn't it, Dad?

A pregnant pause.

TIM (CONT'D)

Dad?

### **THE BIRD'S NEST INSIDE TIM'S BRANCHES**

Brittany nudges Baxter to go check. Baxter flies out.

BAXTER

He's probably got snow lodged in his ears again. I'll get him.

Baxter flies up to Doug.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
Up and at 'em big fella, kids  
calling for ya.

Baxter reaches Doug's face, landing on a nearby branch.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
Silent treatment? Look, I'm sorry  
about the twigs, but the kid-

Baxter realizes.

Doug's eyes are open... Frozen still. Looking down. Unmoving.

Baxter's eyes follow Doug's gaze to the forest floor where a mound of snow covers the shape of...

A tree.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
*Oh no.*

Baxter dives down. Lands on Tim's branch. Enters his nest and whispers into Brittany's ear. She tears up.

BRITTANY  
You have to tell Tim.

TIM  
Tell me what?

Baxter slowly walks out onto Tim's branch, right in front of his face. Baxter takes a deep breath.

TIM (CONT'D)  
What is it? Is it my dad? He okay?

Baxter nods his head, *yes, he's okay.*

Baxter speaks, but everything goes SILENT...

We read his lips.

"It's your mom."

Tim's ears begin to ring. He eyes the mound of snow next to him, only a few meters away, where his mother once stood.

He breaks down. Baxter lowers his head. All the other trees realize what has just happened.

Dorothy has fallen.

...

WE PUSH INTO the MOUND OF SNOW until there's only WHITE.

The WHITE FLICKERS. Glows YELLOWISH-GREEN.

It's the tail of a FIREFLY.

We pull back to reveal THOUSANDS of them drifting through the night, their glow washing the forest in soft, living light.

High above, on a branch, BRITTANY perches alone.

She steels herself.

She SINGS- a beautiful original song in memory of DOROTHY.

As she sings, the forest listens.

STUMP and ROOTIE stand close. Even FRASER, usually too proud to show anything, can't hide it.

Predator and prey alike gather in silence.

Above them, the fireflies rise together... forming a glowing shape in the sky.

A tree.

As the SONG FADES OUT... the shape dissolves as the fireflies disperse into the night.

DOUG watches the full moon like it might give an answer. A SOB from below.

### **FOREST FLOOR**

The forest sleeps. Tim weeps.

DOUG

Tim?

TIM

Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you.

DOUG

I can't sleep either.

TIM

I just don't get it. Mom was the strongest. Even stronger than you- why did it have to be her- sorry. I didn't-

DOUG

No. You're right, son.  
She was.  
She is the strongest.  
(beat)  
Can you see the moon tonight?

Tim strains, looking through the canopy.

TIM

Kinda.

DOUG

You will someday. It's bright.  
(a chuckle)  
Your mother was so tall, she  
blocked my view.

Tim looks at the space where Dorothy used to be. The empty patch of sky looks cold.

DOUG (CONT'D)

It's easy to stand tall when the  
sun is out, Tim.  
But strength? Real strength is  
tested in the uncertainty of dusk.  
Your mother took the west. She  
stood between us and the coming  
night, catching the sun's last  
rays, not for glory, but so that we  
could sleep peacefully.

Tim let that soak in.

TIM

So you can see the sunset now?

DOUG

Yes, my son.

TIM

Can't you just look away?

DOUG

I could. But when it matters-  
we face it. For the ones we love.

TIM

... Mom wasn't scared of the storm?

DOUG

Trees don't shake because they're  
scared. We shake to let the wind  
pass through.

(MORE)

DOUG (CONT'D)

But your mother didn't let it pass.  
She caught the storm and refused to  
let it go. She protected us and  
those who couldn't protect  
themselves.

She was our shield.

(beat)

And a shield takes the hit.

Tim's proud of his mom.

TIM

I want to be like that. A shield.

Tim looks up to the sky, feeling better.

DOUG

You will. But you've gotta grow  
strong enough to hold.

TIM

I'll be ready... Tomorrow.

DOUG

(chuckles)

We'll see, get some rest, son.

Tim shuts his eyes. We push through his branches to Baxter-  
wide awake.

Baxter looks to his sleeping wife... their eggs. The looming  
weight of parenthood settles in. He closes his eyes.

**EXT. WOODS - DAY**

A brighter day with a fresh layer of snow. All the animals  
scurry about cleaning up the forest.

Tim shakes off the snow, he shivers, leans into a ray of sun,  
feeling the warmth. He realizes-

TIM

Sorry, guys.

Tim scoots out of the way, letting Stump and Rootie catch  
some rays too. They nod, *thanks*.

WHOOSH! AN AVALANCHE OF SNOW COMES CRASHING DOWN ON THEM.  
Their eyes blink open through the white.

Doug chuckles. Tim's glad his dad is in better spirits.

Baxter digs out a snow tunnel- pops out on Tim's branch.

BRITTANY (IN THE NEST)  
How do the penguins do this?

BAXTER  
We coulda picked a palm tree.

Benny waddles up.

BENNY  
Got just the thing. Feathered  
folks, follow me!

Brittany pops out of the nest.

BRITTANY  
Ya mind egg-sitting, Tim?

TIM  
I'll be around.

BAXTER  
Eggs-cellent.

Benny leads as Baxter and Brittany take for the sky.

They don't see it, but in the distance a CONVOY OF TRUCKS  
crest the hill on a winding dirt road.

Tim watches the birds fly off.

TIM  
Ever wonder what it's like to fly?

Stump, Rootie and Fraser shake their trunks, *no*.

Tim SIGHS.

STUMP  
Ya tired of standing out with us?

TIM  
Not that. I just feel... stuck.

STUMP  
Stuck? You're right where you  
belong. We're made of wood. The  
woods are named after us!

TIM  
Maybe you're right.

**EXT. THE LAKE - DAY**

Close on Brittany and Baxter, crammed, visibly uncomfortable.  
We pull back- they're in a JACUZZI packed with BEAVERS.

BENNY  
Relaxin', right?

The birds fake smiles. BUBBLES POP on the water.

BAXTER  
Jets were a nice touch.

A BIG BEAVER sheepishly raises a paw.

BIG BEAVER  
Sorry.

Brittany hops out.

BRITTANY  
Tweet-heart. I'm hungry.

BAXTER  
Now?

BRITTANY  
(get out)  
I saw some berries by the mountain.

She's gone. Baxter SIGHS- takes off after her.

The beavers settle into the warmth when-

VROOM! They duck as a TRUCK puttters past the lake.

**EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - DAY**

Stump scans the forest.

STUMP  
I spy something... Green.

TIM  
A tree.

STUMP  
Right again!

Tim SIGHS. Bored.

STUMP (CONT'D)  
Ya look sadder than a weeping  
willow.

TIM  
Just not feeling up for it today.

Stump chooses not to pry.

STUMP  
Your turn Rootie.

ROOTIE  
I spy...

Rootie scans through the dense foliage-  
DOOSH! The sound of a truck door slams.

ROOTIE (CONT'D)  
...something...

Rootie catches movement through the trees-

ROOTIE (CONT'D)  
HUMANS!

Unseen CHAINSAWS REV to life.

**WE HITCHCOCK THROUGH THE FOREST**

BZZZZ. BZZZZ. BZZZZ.

Trees fall.

Caught mid-drop by a team of BURLY LUMBERJACKS.

They carry happy TREES over their shoulders to-  
TRUCKS. Loaded and driven off.

TIM watches, eyes wide, *his chance!*

He WHISTLES for their attention, but the SAWS drown it out-  
Tim looks around for a new plan- spots someone out of place-

A SKINNY LUMBERJACK, struggling to carry a BIG TREE over his  
shoulder. He loses his balance, spins-

The big Jacks duck "Woah! Watch it!" "Careful where you're  
pointing that thing!"

SKINNY LUMBERJACK

Sorry!

BIG LUMBERJACK

Leave it to the professionals.

The big lumberjack presses a button on a remote.

A YELLOW EXCAVATOR ARM grabs multiple trees at once. The trees cheer "Our turn!" "Woo-hoo" "We're picked!"

They're sardined into a truck- cheering like it's a parade float.

Tim watches the fun- jealousy and panic washes over his face.

BIG LUMBERJACK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Let's wrap it up, folks.

Tim's out of time. He steels himself. Focuses on skinny Jack.

He inhales deeply aaaand WHISTLES!

The sound travels. Fast.

WHOOSH! The whistle blasts off skinny jack's hat. He turns to-

Our trees. They look at Tim, *what are you doing?*

TIM

Act natural!

The trees straighten up... and sway a bit awkwardly.

The skinny jack plops his chainsaw on his shoulder, nearly toppling himself over, he finds his footing and comes over.

Stump sucks in. Stands as tall as he can. Still stumpy.

The skinny jack measure him and moves on.

Rootie nervously shakes. His needles shed to the floor.

The skinny jack flicks Rootie's branches, BOING! Too thin.

It's down to the brothers. Tim stands calm, cool and collected. Fraser puffs his chest out, confident.

Both are good options, but Fraser is taller and thicker.

The skinny jack takes a moment to decide...

Picks Fraser.

Tim sags. Absolutely gutted. He whispers-

TIM (CONT'D)  
*Congrats, Fraser.*

FRASER  
*Better luck next year, lil bro.*

Skinny jack yanks the pull cord. His chainsaw REVS to life.

Right before he touches chain to wood... he pauses.

Eyes Tim.

A beat.

He takes another look at Fraser, sees how tall he is...

And how far away his LITTLE RED BEATER TRUCK is...

**EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY**

The skinny jack lifts Tim into the bed of his truck.

**EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - SAME TIME**

Stump, Rootie and Fraser watch Tim get put into the truck.

FRASER  
 (shrugs)  
 I didn't want it anyway.

Rootie and Stump shout-

ROOTIE	STUMP
Rooting for you!	Break a limb!

Stump cries tears of joy. He SNORTS... Back to water works.

Rootie hears some more crying, but it's not Stump...

ROOTIE (CONT'D)  
 Fraser... are you sapping too?!  
 (Fraser hides his tears)  
 You're totally sapping right now.

FRASER  
 Got some saw dust in my eye is all.

Rootie and Stump share a look.

**EXT. DIRT ROAD, BED OF TRUCK - SAME TIME**

The truck clicks into gear. Tim looks back and waves goodbye.

Tim watches the forest pass him by. For the first time in his life... he's moving. He takes in the sights.

He remembers. Looks high above the tree line to the tallest tree. Tim WHISTLES then shouts-

TIM  
I love you, Dad!

**ABOVE THE TREE LINE**, Doug watches his son drive away over the rolling hills. He WHISTLES back and shouts-

DOUG  
Love you too, son!  
(sotto)  
I'll miss you.

A tear forms.

Reggie the Squirrel climbs up. Doug steels himself.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL  
Your boy got picked! That's huge  
for our neck of the woods.

DOUG  
Thanks. Who'd've thought? My Tim.

Doug watches as the truck disappears over the hill.

**BEGIN "ROAD TRIP" MONTAGE**

Tim rides in the truck bed- the wind in his fronds.

**RURAL ROAD.** Tim takes in the picturesque scenery.

**HIGHWAY.** A MINIVAN of KIDS point at Tim with amazement.

DAY TURNS TO NIGHT as they drive down that highway.

Tim takes in the stars. One shoots across the skyline toward the FULL MOON. Unobstructed.

The lumberjack tunes the radio to *CHRISTMAS MUSIC*.

They pass a BILLBOARD of SANTA waving.

TIM  
 Santa!  
 (sees Santa's **hand**)  
 No claws?

Tim cranes his neck, watching that hand as they pass.

The truck speeds toward a CITY of lights ahead.

**NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT**

The truck drives through the urban landscape. Tim's eyes light up with wonder as they pass...

**CENTRAL PARK**, each tree wrapped in lights.

**TIME SQUARE**. Digital billboards shine with holiday ads.

Cars HONK as they slow to standstill traffic near

**THE ROCKEFELLER CENTER**

Tim looks up... his jaw drops.

TIM (CONT'D)  
 You're...

THE ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE, definitely not voiced by Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE  
 (confident laugh)  
 Merry Christmas. What's your name?

TIM  
 I- I'm Tim Timbers, Mr Rockefeller!

ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE  
 Call me Rock.

TIM  
 Yes sir, Mr Rock!

The traffic light turns green- Tim rides away.

ROCK  
 Hey, Tim.

Tim looks back.

Rock tosses a RED ORNAMENT- it lands on Tim's branch.

ROCK (CONT'D)  
 Good luck!

Tim can't believe it. His smile reflects in the ornament.

The ornament's eyes burst open. Tim screams!

RED ORNAMENT  
Nice to meet you too.

TIM  
I'm sorry, I didn't know-

RED ORNAMENT  
Ornaments could talk?

TIM  
I'm pretty new to all this.

RED ORNAMENT  
I could tell. All bright-eyed and-  
(judges Tim's size)  
Bushy.  
(then)  
Names Mint. Orny Mint.

TIM  
Okay, Mr Mint. Well-

RED ORNAMENT  
Call me Orny.

TIM  
Okay Orny... what now? Meet Santa?  
Did you know he doesn't have claws?

The festive lights shrink in the truck's rearview mirror...  
as they roll into the

**UNDERBELLY OF THE CITY.** All shadows and steam. A "DEAD END"  
sign glows a yellow iridescent through the fog.

A RAT darts through the headlights as the truck turns into a

**DINGY, ABANDONED LOT**

Tim is stood up in an aisle of WILTED CHRISTMAS TREES.

He takes in the gloom- a sign rimmed with busted bulbs  
flickers: "SKINNY JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM" ZAP!

TIM (CONT'D)  
What is this place?

Orny looks around, dumbfounded. He shouts to a DROOPY TREE.

ORNY  
Droopy! How long you been here?

Droopy looks up, barely.

DROOPY TREE  
... Three. Four.

ORNY  
Three or four what?

DROOPY TREE  
Maybe five.

ORNY  
Hours? Days? Weeks?!

The Droopy tree ominously droops lower. Ignoring Orny.

ORNY (CONT'D)  
Un-droop! I'm talkin' to you!  
(it's no use)  
I didn't work my way to the top, to  
be sent back down to the gutter!

TIM  
But I got picked... Didn't I?

ORNY  
You got drafted.  
Now you gotta make the roster.

A WOMAN peruses the aisle, clutching her purse.

The remaining trees erupt into a clumsy scramble- shoving for position before she gets to them.

Tim copies. He lightly bumps Droopy, knocking him even lower.

ORNY (CONT'D)  
Sharpen your pine needles!

The woman eyes Tim, very interested. Orny smirks.

But Tim notices Droopy- he droops even sadder.

The lumberjack approaches.

LUMBERJACK  
Need any help, miss- *Jill*?!

JILL perks up.

JILL

Jack? From Small Town High?! What are you doing here?

LUMBERJACK

This is my Christmas tree farm.

The humans stare longingly into each other's eyes.

ORNY

Wrap it up Hallmark.

While those two catch up- Tim gets under Droopy's branch and strains, lifting him up to help Droopy stand taller.

ORNY (CONT'D)

(clenched teeth)

What are you doing?!

TIM

He's been here longer.

The humans turn their attention back to-

Droopy standing a little prouder (supported by Tim).

Jill points to the droopy tree. Jack hoists Droopy away.

TIM (CONT'D)

Congratulations!

DROOPY TREE

(deadpan)

Yay.

Tim is happy for him. Orny is mad.

TIM

We'll get the next one!

Orny holds his rage...

TINK! A hairline crack splinters across Orny's shine.

ORNY

There may not be a next one!  
Christmas is in two weeks!

TIM

Sorry.

ORNY

Straighten your trunk, have some  
self respect.

All the lights go out, leaving Tim and Orny in the dark.

The city sounds scary at night: SIRENS WAIL and STRAY DOGS BARK... Tim hears SOBS. It's Orny.

TIM  
You okay, Orny?

ORNY  
I usually sleep with night lights  
on my tree is all.

TIM  
... I'll get us out of here.

The magic fades. Tim looks up above a brownstone at the moon. He SIGHS. The moon looks farther away than ever.

**EXT. WOODS, ABOVE THE TREE LINE - NIGHT**

The full moon. We hear CRYING below.

Brittany and Baxter sob in the empty space where Tim stood.

STUMP  
(sincere)  
We can help you build a new nest.

ROOTIE  
Dude.

Brittany looks up with a mother's determination.

BRITTANY  
What color truck?

Stump and Rootie look to each other.

ROOTIE  
Red!

Brittany launches into the air. Baxter follows.

**EXT. SKINNY JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - MORNING**

Orny yanks on Tim's branch. He bursts awake!

TIM  
I overslept?! Is Christmas over?!

ORNY  
No. But we got new competition.

Tim's eyes widen at-

A restocked Christmas tree farm. Hundreds of new trees.

Tim GULPS.

TIM

Fraser?!

A TALL JOCK TREE turns around, it's not Fraser, but looks like him. MORE JOCK TREES turn to Tim.

ALL THE JOCK TREES

WWhhaattss uupp lliittllee mmaann?

Tim sullens, realizing the stiff competition.

ORNY

Trunk up kid. We're not in your little woods anymore-

TIM

(shyly corrects)

-Great Big Forest actually.

ORNY

Ya need a gimmick. Something that says: "Pick me." Got anything?

TIM

Umm...Oh! I have this bark-mark in the shape of an arrow on my-

ORNY

Anything else?

TIM

.. I can whistle!

Orny's intrigued. He nods, *show me*.

Tim licks his lips. Takes a deep breath and... BLOWS A RASPBERRY! Like a sad balloon deflating.

Orny looks confused.

Tim INHALES like he's summoning his soul and RASPBERRYYYYY!

He nearly passes out, taking ragged breaths.

TIM (CONT'D)

I'm dried out. Just need to wet my whistle.

Orny looks down at a gross black mud puddle- nods, *drink up*.  
 Tim shudders, *ew*. THUNK-THUNK-THUNK! They look to the sound-  
 The lumberjack hammers in a sign:

"LAST DAY FOR CHRISTMAS TREES"

**MONTAGE OF "TIM NOT GETTING PICKED" INTERCUT WITH  
 "BIRDS SEARCHING FOR THEIR EGGS"**

- Tim WHISTLES at a COUPLE, they consider Tim, but a LOUDER WHISTLE steals them away.

- On the HIGHWAY Baxter asks a BIRD on the Santa Claus billboard if he's seen anything. They point at the city.

- A CUSTOMER approaches. Tim stretches to be the tallest-topples, dominoing the entire row of trees.

- In the city, Brittany talks to BIRDS on a power line... under an overpass... by the fountain at the park... *no luck*.

**END OF MONTAGE.**

**EXT. SKINNY JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY**

Tim watches as one of the last trees is carried off.

ORN  
 ORNY  
 If we're gonna stand out, we need  
 to branch out.

Orny eyes a STRAY DOG and RAT drinking from the gross puddle.

**EXT. NYC AIRSPACE - DAY**

Brittany and Baxter fly above the busy street, eyes peeled.

Unbeknownst to them, a LARGE SILHOUETTE soars above them... The looming figure disappears into the flare of the sun...

Baxter sees CITY BIRDS perched on a **BROWNSTONE ROOF**.

BAXTER  
 Either of you seen a tree?

The city birds share look.

CITY BIRD #1  
 Check the park?

The city birds CACKLE.

Brittany sees red, but Baxter pulls his wife to the side.

BAXTER  
C'mon, babe.

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)  
His name "Tim"?

A glimmer of hope. They turn to that voice.

The Rockefeller Christmas Tree.

**EXT. SKINNY JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY**

Orny has the dog and the rat huddled up.

RAT  
But what's in it for us?

Orny smirks.

ORNY  
You boys ever heard of The Rock?

The dog and rat look to each other, intrigued.

DOG  
Yeah. They get stuck in between my  
paws when I run in the road.

RAT  
No. He's talking about that famous  
tree down on 48th.  
(off the dog's nod)  
We're listening.

The dog and rat smirk devilishly... Tim is concerned.

ORNY  
Rock and I go way back. If ya help  
us, I'll make it worth your while.

RAT  
How do we know you're legit?

Orny spins, showing his sticker "Rockefeller Center".

RAT (CONT'D)  
Nice ink. Deal.

TIM  
 Hey Orny, can I talk to you for a  
 second- in private?

ORNY  
 (to the rat and dog)  
 Quick word with my associate.

The dog and rat back off, respect. Orny huddles with Tim.

TIM  
 Are you sure about these two?

The dog GROWLS- chasing his own tail. The rat slicks back his  
 hair with a rusted screw.

ORNY  
 You country folk are so fragile.  
 (off Tim's look)  
 Relax, they're just gonna scare- I  
 mean- funnel customers towards you.

TIM  
 I think I'd rather get picked on my  
 own merit. I've made it this far.

Orny holds his temper with a deep breath.

TIM (CONT'D)  
 You okay? You're lookin' more red  
 than usual.

ORNY  
 (clenched teeth)  
 Just jolly.  
 (to the rat and dog)  
 Deal's off. Gonna test our luck the  
 old-fashioned way.

The rat and the dog ease toward Tim...

RAT  
 So ya like wasting our time,  
 Mr Christmas tree?

TIM  
 Well I'm technically not a  
 Christmas tree yet. But once-

Orny yanks on Tim's branch to *shut up*.

ORNY  
 Fellas, I'll talk to Rock and-

RAT

I bet Rock dumped ya with the bush  
cuz he was tired of ya dead weight.

ORNY

No! This is more of a mentor-  
mentree situation.

The rat and dog lurk dangerously close.

RAT

Ya know what tree branches and  
ornaments have in common?

DOG

They create a joyful atmosphere?

RAT

No... They break easy.

The rat and dog leap at Tim when-

KEEER! The screech of a HAWK- it swoops down for the rat!

At the last second- Tim shields the rat with his branches,  
taking the hit- the Hawk's TALONS slash Tim's fronds.

Tim winces. Then a part of his frond drops to the ground.

The hawk soars high into the sky, circling the area.

The rat clings to Tim's branch. Hyperventilating.

RAT (CONT'D)

Quit waggin' ya tail- do something!

The dog BARKS at the hawk, forcing its retreat.

The rat climbs down from Tim's branches. Shellshocked.

RAT (CONT'D)

I-I-I saw Mother Nature... and she  
looked mad at me.

(beat)

How can we help?

Tim and Orny share a look.

#### **MOMENTS LATER**

In walks a DAD(40s), TEEN DAUGHTER and YOUNG SON. *No mom.*

DAD

Ahh, smell that, kids?

The kids smell something gross.

TEEN DAUGHTER

The sewer?

Brian sniffs, *ew - she's not wrong.*

DAD

That is strong.. but no.  
(inhales - exhales)  
Fresh pine!

Wide on all the trees.

DAD (CONT'D)

This was *her* favorite part.

On the daughter- she keeps the mask on... but that lands.

YOUNG SON

Look! A puppy!

The boy runs out of sight.

The dog walks up to the teen daughter. He gives her puppy-dog-eyes, but she's on her phone. She puts in her headphones.

The dad pets the dog.

DAD

Good boy.

YOUNG SON (O.S.)

Dad, can we keep him, pleaaase?!

The dad looks up to see his son holding another "puppy"...

DAD

RJ, put that down!!

The daughter realizes something is off.

TEENAGE DAUGHTER

That's a rat. *Idiot.*

The boy looks down. It's in fact the rat, putting on his best puppy performance.

RJ (YOUNG SON)

Are you sure?

The Rat's eyes are bulged, they twinkle. He pretends to RUFF.

Tim and Orny look to each other, *not bad.*

RJ (CONT'D)  
He's cute. Please, Dad?

RJ hugs him tighter. The Rat can't breathe.

The teenage daughter could puke. The dad looks on cross-eyed.

DAD  
Princess would try to eat him.

The rat shimmies out of RJ's grip and scurries off to Tim.

RJ  
Come back!

RJ chases after- checks under Tim, but the rat is gone.

A WHISTLE makes RJ look up and see-

Tim and Orny.

RJ is mesmerized.

RJ (CONT'D)  
Woah, look at this one!

DAD  
Perfect size for the apartment.  
(re: Orny)  
And it's already got a head start  
on decorating. Like it, Cindy?

Cindy (the daughter) shrugs.

The dad motions to the lumberjack.

DAD (CONT'D)  
We're gonna pick this one.

Tim's eyes light up, it's really happening!

The rat and dog fist bump each other.

Orny whispers to Tim-

ORNY  
You earned it.

Tim smiles.

**WHOOSH!** Tim is sent through a TABLE TOP BALER. He's constricted in netting. SNIP of scissors.

TIM  
*Little tight.*

The family pulls out of Skinny Jack's Christmas tree farm and onto the road. Tim is tied down to the top, he shouts back.

TIM (CONT'D)  
 Thanks guys!

DOG & RAT  
 Merry Christmas, Tim!

**SKY**

Baxter and Brittany fly above.. *Did they just say "Tim"?!?*

Baxter hovers in place, looking around. He shouts-

BAXTER  
 Tim!? TIM!?

BRITTANY  
 There!

The car speeds Tim away. The birds give chase.

BAXTER  
 Where's traffic when ya need it?!

**ROOF OF CAR (DRIVING)**

Tim faintly hears something, but it just sounds like distant CHIRPS. The netting constricts his ability to look around.

Baxter and Brittany fly as fast as they can.

BAXTER & BRITTANY  
 Tim!

But the car is too fast, driving over the BROOKLYN BRIDGE.

BAXTER  
 Wait. *Wait.*

**EXT. APARTMENT - DAY**

The family's car pulls into an average apartment complex. PRE-LAP DING of the elevator.

**INT. ELEVATOR - DAY**

The dad crams Tim into the elevator. Orny looks sick.

TIM  
You okay, Orny?

ORNY  
I get claustrophobic.  
(off Tim's look)  
Nothing to do with Santa Claus.

RJ rushes to press the button for their floor, but Cindy is quicker. Purposely instigating.

RJ  
Hey! It was my tuuurn! Dad, she  
always gets to-

The door closes on him whining. They ascend, Orny could puke.

DING. The doors open, revealing an OLD MAN. Tim's branches pop out. The kids argue. The Dad fights to hold Tim. Chaos.

DAD  
Ope, going up? We can squeeze.

The old man just stares. The door closes automatically.

DAD (CONT'D)  
(sorry)  
Merry Christmas!

**31ST FLOOR ELEVATOR BAY**

DING! The door opens. Tim spills half out, his trunk stuck.

Cindy, still on her phone, walks off. RJ chases after.

The elevator doors begin to close on Tim.

ORNY  
Watch out, Tim!

Tim squints his eyes shut, bracing for-

BUMP. The doors gently nudge him. They try again. BUMP.

Tim opens one eye. Relief.

Brian grabs Tim and strains.

BRIAN  
Kids? ...Hello?

Nothing. The kids are gone. The elevator ALARM BLARES.

A door down the hall opens. A WOMAN(40s) steps out.

WOMAN  
Need some help, Brian?

BRIAN  
I got it. Thanks.

The ALARM BLASTS. Brian smiles. He does not, "got it".

**INT. DAWSON FAMILY APARTMENT - DAY**

Brian and the woman carry Tim into the apartment. It's crowded but has a nice city view.

Tim and Orny look around, nodding, *we could get used to this.*

Cindy slumps on the couch, nose in her phone. The cat rubs up- Cindy shoos her off.

CINDY  
What is *she* doing here?

BRIAN  
Mrs Pierce, was kind enough to help.

WOMAN  
Felton now. Jeff and I aren't together anymore. But call me Beth.

Brian takes a long pause, staring intensely at Beth.

BETH  
Where do you want this?

BRIAN  
Right. Sorry, over here.

Brian and Beth scoot Tim into the corner of the room by the window. They set him down. Orny looks out to the city.

ORNY  
(sweet view)  
*Jingle. Bells.*

TIM  
*Woah. I don't even think Dad's been this high up before.*

BRIAN

Beth. Would you like a drink? Glass of water?... Wine?

Beth makes her way to the door.

BETH

Perhaps another time.

BRIAN

Well if you need anything, some help moving things out. I owe ya.  
*Will you be moving?*

Beth catches the tell: he's hopeful.

BETH

Harold kept secrets. I kept the apartment. Seeya around.

Beth, embarrassed, hurries out.

Brian stares at the door. The kids stare at their father.

RJ

She's pretty.

Cindy rolls her eyes and heads for her room.

BRIAN

Cindy? We're gonna decorate?

Cindy SLAMS her door! The quake knocks over a framed photo. Tim and Orny shake too.

ORNY

Earthquake!

Brian picks the photo up and sets it back up on the mantle.

Tim clocks the family photo of Brian, Cindy, RJ and A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. Clearly their mom.

In the big window, the city day turns to night.

**MONTAGE of "DECORATING" BEGINS.**

A needle is set on a record player, Christmas MUZAK plays.

Brian flicks on a light in the crawl space. Revealing BINS.

Tim watches with wonder.

Brian lassos Tim with STRING LIGHTS.

RJ eagerly places a CANDY CANE on Tim's branch.

A NUTCRACKER on the mantle.

A TRAIN SET around Tim's base. Tim watches it circle him.

Brian holds MISTLETOE. He puts it in the box, *not this year*. In the box there's a VHS TAPE LABELED: "Princess"

Brian hands Cindy an ORNAMENT. She reluctantly hangs it.

TIME-LAPSE as Tim gets decorated. Tim loves every second.

Everyone's having fun, even Cindy, but she does remind herself to frown every once in a while.

**END OF MONTAGE.**

BRIAN

And the pièce de résistance.

Brian carefully pulls out an ornate box.

He sets it on the table. RJ and Cindy huddle closer.

Brian opens it.

Inside- something glows mystically.

He lifts out the STAR.

A fine shimmer of glittering dust floats around it.

The kids watch, spellbound.

Tim takes a deep breath. This is it. This will officially make him a Christmas Tree.

Brian looks to RJ-

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Little help, bud?

Brian hoists RJ up to place the star on top of Tim.

FLASH! A burst of mystical energy pulses through the room.

The family steps back and admires their tree together.

Tim stands tall, shining bright and proud.

ORNY

*You clean up nice, kid.*

Tim catches his reflection in the window. His moment.

TIM  
I did it.

He tears up... spots a stocking labeled "DAD".

The joy drains.

ORNY  
What's wrong?

TIM  
I just- I thought I'd feel taller.

**EXT. TALL BUILDING - NYC - NIGHT**

Wind HOWLS as Baxter and Brittany perch high above the city, dwarfed by the endless lights below. Hope fades.

**INT. APARTMENT - MORNING**

Tim wakes, catching the end of the Dawson's morning routine.

Brian in a work suit while RJ and Cindy tote backpacks.

BRIAN  
Let's roll, kiddos.

SLAM. Tim's branches shake, the decorations rattle.

ORNY  
First day as a big city Christmas tree. Feel any different?

TIM  
A little- heavier.

STRING LIGHTS shine to life, they speak all at once.

LIGHTS  
Calling us fat?

TIM  
What? No, I-

A (British) CANDY CANE speaks up.

CANDY CANE  
That's no way to talk to our guest.

TIM

*Guest?*

CANDY CANE (TO TIM)

They put the "light" in impolite.

The string light shine red with anger. They thrash, yanking at the branch to shake Cane loose.

CANDY CANE (CONT'D)

Dimwits. You'll knock us all off!

ORNY

Hey, watch it!

TIM

Careful!

Tim WINCES, steadying his branches to keep them safe.

A gentle glow settles over everyone.

The STAR.

All the decorations calm down.

STAR

And who do I have the honor to rest atop this year?

TIM

Me? Oh. Hello, Ma'am. I'm Timothy Timbers. At your service.

He salutes. Star chuckles.

STAR

It's nice to meet you Timothy Timbers. I'm Star.

ORNY

Orny Mint. Probably recognize me. Rockefeller Tree. Past few years.

There's a collective, "No, Nope, never seen him before".

Orny shrinks in himself.

STAR

You met some of the fab decor. Cane, the lights and Sarge.

The nutcracker salutes.

ALL THE DECOR  
Merry Christmas!

TIM  
It's nice to meet everyone.  
I just have one question, Mr Cane  
earlier you said "guest"?

The decorations fall quiet.

**EXT. NYC AIRSPACE - MORNING**

Brittany and Baxter fly through the city, back on the hunt.

BAXTER  
We're like vultures flying in  
circles.

Brittany flies off.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
Where ya going?

**SIDEWALK**

The rat and dog walk together.

RAT  
I miss that Tim, kid. These new  
trees are a bunch of stuck up-

HONK! A TAXI drives by censoring that dialogue.

DOG  
Tim and that apple were cool.

RAT  
It felt good to help them, ya know?

DOG  
Way better than feeling bad.

RAT  
Ya know what? From now on. We're  
good. Sound good?

DOG  
Great!

RAT  
Don't get ahead of yourself.

The birds fly in.

The rat screams and hides under the dog.

BRITTANY

Sorry, didn't mean to scare ya, but  
you two know Tim, right?

The rat and dog share a grin.

**INT. APARTMENT - DAY**

Tim looks frail- his branches droop.

There's a hush over the room. Cane and the lights look to  
each other, at a loss for words.

LIGHTS

Well we're not gonna tell him.

CANDY CANE

Surely it's not my place.

TIM

Tell me what?

Orny tucks his chin, he has to be the one.

ORNY

Listen, kid. Being a Christmas  
tree, as wonderful as it is, it  
comes with a price.

TIM

Price? What price?

ORNY

You were picked. But now it's your  
turn to choose. Stay until December  
25th and truly become a Christmas  
tree or...

Orny tries to find the words, but can't. Star steps up.

STAR

Tim... I've been the Dawsons' star  
for generations. Each year, I've  
sat atop a new evergreen. Watched  
first Christmases... and lasts.  
Laughter and tears. Surprises and  
disappointments. And every year,  
when the lights come down... we go  
back in our boxes. But the tree...

Even star can't put it all together. A SLOW CLAP echoes.

A RASPY VOICE (O.S.)  
 What a speech.

All the decorations GASP and look to...

PRINCESS THE CAT. Mischievous and dangerously unpredictable.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
 Maybe even better than last year's.  
 You deserve a gold star, Star.

STAR  
 Hello, Princess. Looking *fluffier*.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
 All the prison food.

Princess jumps up on the mantle with a THUD and tip toes around the decorations.

CANDY CANE  
 (through a nervous smile)  
 Light on your feet as ever Your  
 Highness.

They're all scared of her.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
 Surprised they decorated this year.

Tim leans in and listens.

STAR  
 Best not dwell on the past. There's  
 always a brighter tomorrow.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
 Coming from the star that spends 11  
 months trapped in a dark musty box.

Princess jumps down near the base of Tim, she trots to the lights plugged into the wall.

STAR  
 It's not about the number of days  
 in the light, it's how you-

Princess yanks the cord out. Star and the lights power down.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
 Did you blow a fuse? Terrible luck.

Orny speaks up.

ORNY  
Whatcha do that for?!

Candy Cane nudges Orny, *don't*.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
Who said that?

All the ornaments go silent. Princess jumps up on the windowsill, interrogating the ornaments.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)  
Was it you?

An ORANGE ORNAMENT shakes its head, *no*.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)  
Do you know who it was?

Orange shakes, *I don't know*.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)  
You're more of a Fall color.

Princess swats the ornament off the tree.

Everyone GASPS!

The ornament falls like a tragedy that absolutely does not need this much gravity.

We wait for a crash, but none comes.

ORANGE ORNAMENT (O.S.)  
Shatterproof!

Princess rears back to knock off another when-

TIM  
Leave them alone!

PRINCESS THE CAT  
Well hello there Timothy.  
It's nice to meet this year's  
victim- I mean victor.

TIM  
What do you mean?

PRINCESS THE CAT  
You won. Picked out of all the  
pretty pines to be strung up in the  
corner of this apartment.  
Congratulations.

TIM

Thanks?

Princess jumps down and prances to her water bowl.

PRINCESS THE CAT

All this chitchat has me parched.

She laps up her water.

Tim watches each sip intensely. Realizing... he's so thirsty.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)

Would you like some, friend?

Tim nods desperately, *yes*.

Princess picks up her bowl and walks it over to Tim. She slowly drips some into his stand...

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)

Good.. drink up.

Tim soaks up every last ounce of water he can.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)

Enjoy this while it lasts.

Princess cuts him off, dragging her bowl away, even carelessly spilling some on the floor as she prances away.

Tim catches his reflection in the spilled water on the ground. A few needles fall from his branches.

TIM

How long?

PRINCESS THE CAT

Check the calendar.

Tim looks to the ADVENT CALENDAR- 7 DAYS until Christmas.

TIM

Okay. That's no so bad.

**EXT. SKINNY JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY**

The rat sees **Tim's frond** lying in the snow. He picks it up.

RAT

This is where he saved my tail.

The dog SNIFFS the frond and jolts to alert position, pointing in the direction the family went.

BAXTER  
Can you can track him?!

DOG  
What's in it for-

The rat elbows the dog.

DOG (CONT'D)  
Sorry, forgot. Good is new.

RAT  
Follow us.

**INT. APARTMENT - DAY**

Tim's looking even more frail and thirsty.

He clocks Princess's water bowl all the way across the room.

TIM  
Princess!? I need more water.

CANDY CANE  
I wouldn't interrupt her cat nap.

Princess sleeps. Her claws unsheathe—retract—each SNORE.

PRINCESS (SLEEP TALKING)  
World.. (SNORE) Domination. (SNORE)

Tim SIGHS, sees the nutcracker standing at attention.

TIM  
Mr Nutcracker? Little help?

NUTCRACKER  
I would Tim, but I don't want to be the next scratching post.

Brian's wooden desk—shredded with claw marks.

Tim looks for help. He eyes a CHRISTMAS TREE in the kitchen.

TIM  
Excuse me! Got any extra water?

The small kitchen tree looks to Tim, his eyes are extra wide and his smile is very stiff, like he has something to hide.

KITCHEN TREE

I do not require its nectar.

Without losing his smile, the tree turns away.

ORNY

*His trunk a lil crooked?*

CANDY CANE

*Artificial tree.*

Ahhh. Orny and Cane jerk violently as the branch lurches.

It's Tim, scooting himself across the room to the water bowl.

He's almost there when-

The string lights snap taut, tripping him-

Tim slams down-THUD!

TIM

Ouuuch.

He looks back to Princess- still asleep.

Tim stretches his lips, only an inch from the water.

CREAK! The door opens, it's Brian and the kids.

BRIAN

What happened to you!?

Brian lifts Tim back up.. Noticing Tim's fronds.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Huh, looking a little dull? Here-

Brian waters Tim's basin. Instant relief.

RJ

Is the tree sick?

BRIAN

No, bud. Trees just get tired once they're inside.

Brian sweeps up Tim's fronds into a dustpan.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

But he should make it to Christmas.

Tim watches as the needles go into the trash.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
 Or I'll have a chat with that  
 lumberjack.

RJ plops a chocolate out of the advent calendar. Eats it. Tim  
 clocks the calendar- 5 DAYS until Christmas.

TIM  
 Just make it to Christmas.  
 Then you can go home.

Orny hears this... he drops his head.

ORNY  
 (quietly)  
*Star, should we tell him?*

STAR  
*You know the rules.*

Orny SIGHS. He knows she's right.

**LATER THAT NIGHT**

On the coffee table- Brian and RJ make GINGERBREAD HOUSES.

BRIAN  
 C'mon Cindy! Make a gingerbread  
 house, we need a new neighbor!

The doorbell RINGS! Cindy answers, it's Beth.

CINDY  
 We really do.

Brian gives Cindy a look, *be nice*.

BRIAN  
 Beth!

BETH  
 I made too many.

Beth hands Cindy a platter of cookies. She slyly tosses them  
 to the trash, but Brian catches them.

BRIAN  
 Yum. What do we say kids?

RJ  
 Thank you!

Cindy stays silent.

BRIAN  
Come on in, we're finishing up  
construction on Gingerbread Lane.

BETH  
I'd love to, but I was just heading  
out. Unless- How's your singing?

She holds up sheet music.

Cindy slips on her headphones and heads for her room.

CINDY  
I have- school stuff.

**EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT**

The dog sniffs a REGULAR TREE.

The birds shake their heads, "No".

The rat looks the tree up and down. Clearly not Tim.

REGULAR TREE  
Sorry.

The rat clicks his tongue and pulls on the dog's collar like  
the reigns of a horse. They continue searching.

The birds are getting impatient.

The dog's nose gets a hit- bolts, nearly bucking the rat off.

RAT  
Woah!

Baxter and Brittany fly after them.

**EXT. NEW YORK CITY AIRSPACE - NIGHT**

Flurries float past as we soar above the city.

Baxter and Brittany fly up to us.

BAXTER & BRITTANY  
We've been looking for you.

Reveal Tim is flying through the sky with the birds.

BAXTER  
Get out before it's-

Baxter keeps speaking, but his audio melts- becoming CHIRPS.

TIM  
Baxter?

CHIRPITY-CHIRP-CHIRP-CHIRP! Like an alarm clock.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Tim GASPS awake, soaked in sweat- more frail than before.

ORNY  
Bad dream?

TIM  
Thought I heard chirping.

CHIRP.

ORNY  
Like that?

TIM  
Yeah- WAIT, WHAT?!

CHIRP! CHIRP!

Tim's jaw drops.

TIM  
The eggs-

**IN THE NEST:** TWO BABY BIRDS hatch. Stretch. Yawn. TWEET.

Orny watches, despite himself- softened.

The birds' big blue eyes blink open. Their first sight: ORNY.

The tweets start to sound like "mama."

ORNY  
Huh? Me?! No- I'm not your mama!

The chicks wobble out of the nest.

ORNY (CONT'D)  
Stop. Heel. Stay. Bad birds!

They totter along a thin branch toward him.

ORNY (CONT'D)

Kid- we got a problem. Two  
actually. Back in the nest!

They keep going.

Like stepping off a cliff.

TWEEEEET!

Both birds FALL.

The decorations GASP- Star, Candy Cane, the lights.

TIM

Positions!

Tim SNAPS his branches into place- ornaments and candy canes  
transforming into ramps and chutes. A living RUBE GOLDBERG.

Bird #1 slides down Candy Cane- Tim subtly ANGLES the branch-  
LAUNCHING the bird INTO THE AIR.

But Bird #2 MISSES THE CANE.

Tim drops a LOW BRANCH- nudging the TOY TRAIN into place.

Bird #2 lands safely in the CABOOSE. CHOO-CHOO!

**EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT**

The rat flips a notepad sketch of a tree- FLIP- red circle.  
Brittany SIGHS.

BAXTER

I'm sure Uncle Tim's got them.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Bird #1's arc peaks- then PLUMMETS.

TIM

I gotcha!

Tim catches it- but the branch SPRINGS BACK.

The bird FLOATS.

TIM (CONT'D)

Wait- come back!

Princess the cat LOCKS ON. Eyes blown wide. Instinct ignited.

TIM (CONT'D)  
Princess?

STAR  
Her animal instinct!

Princess POUNCES- jaws open.

SARGE steps forward on Tim's branch. LOCKS eyes with Tim.

A beat.

Sarge SALUTES.

Tim WHIPS the branch-

SARGE LAUNCHES- takes the hit- shielding Bird #1.

They land on the **MANTLE**.

STAR (CONT'D)  
Nice throw, Tim. Catch, Sarge!

Bird #1 is safe in Sarge's arms.

Tim EXHALES.

Then- GASPS.

Below, Princess crouches- mouth OPEN- on the TRAIN TRACK.

Bird #2 circles toward her.

Tim clocks the chick. Then Princess.

A choice.

Tim DROPS a heavy branch- he REELS IN PAIN.

The log SLAMS onto the track- stopping the train, but LAUNCHING Bird #2 free.

The chick SKIDS across the floor- straight toward the-

**FIREPLACE**

Tim LASSOS the STRING LIGHTS- ANCHORING to the mantle.

TIM  
Sarge!

Without hesitation, Sarge LEAPS- sliding down the lights- CATCHES Bird #2 inches from the flames.

Everyone EXHALES.

Above- Bird #1 wobbles on the mantle's edge.

SLIPS.

TIM (CONT'D)

No-

Tim STRETCHES a STOCKING- his branch screams in pain-  
SNAGS the bird.

Inside the stocking- Bird #1 FUSSES.

Tim Looks inside the stocking- empty!

IT PECKED THROUGH. DROPS.

Princess is already below- JAWS OPEN.

The decorations freeze.

Tim rears back a branch- Orny cradled like a slingshot stone.

Orny nods. *Do it.* SNAP!

Orny ROCKETS forward-

WHAM! Straight into Princess's gut.

The bird POPS free.

Tim SNAGS the chick midair.

Princess retreats, HACKING.

Orny rolls to a stop- dazed but proud.

ORNY

Somebody order takeout?

Tim smiles- then wilts. His breath shallow. Branches sagging.

Needles carpet the floor.

The toy train's wheels SPIN, but it just bumps against the  
fallen branch. Going nowhere.

**EXT. NYC ALLEY - NIGHT**

Baxter, the rat and dog eat from a pizza box by a dumpster.

Brittany isn't hungry- she hears faint CAROLING.

She looks up. Takes off toward the music.

**EXT. BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS**

Brittany perches on a windowsill above. CAROLERS sing below.

She hesitates... joins in. Her voice weaves through the carol- quiet, aching.

Baxter, the rat, and the dog have emerged from the alley, listening as the song comes to an end.

APPLAUSE. For the first time in a while- still.

RAT

Bravo! (WHISTLES) Sono fiero di te!

The DOG'S nose twitches. He locks onto the carolers. It's Brian, Beth and RJ.

RAT (CONT'D)

There's the tree-nappers!

**EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT**

Brian, Beth and the kids enter their building. The birds, rat and dog trail behind.

BAXTER & BRITTANY

Thanks, fellas!

RAT

Don't mention it!

The birds fly up the side of the building.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT**

All the decorations are asleep. Including Tim, his once-rich green now dulled, his breaths slow and shallow.

SOMBER SINGING stirs Tim awake.

The window is open.

On the **FIRE ESCAPE**, Cindy sings with the carolers below- she looks at her phone:

A photo of her hugging her mom- she wears a **police uniform**.

A tear falls down Cindy's cheek and splashes on her phone. She wipes it.

Tim takes this in. He notices the folded American flag displayed proudly on the mantle.

Cindy steps in, eyes red- heads to her room.

A familiar voice calls from the window:

BAXTER (O.S.)

Tim!

It's the birds. They fly in through the window.

Brittany races to her nest! She embraces her sleeping chicks.

TIM

How'd you find me?

BAXTER

You? Easy. You're a VIP.  
(off Tim's look)  
Very. Important. Pine.

They share a smile.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Ya did it, you're a Christmas tree!  
Really spruce up the place!

TIM

Thanks. I'm so sorry about your  
eggs- well- chicks now. I just-

BAXTER

Thanks for egg-sitting.  
(winks)  
Weren't too much trouble were they?

All the decorations MURMUR...

ORNY

No trouble at all.

TIM

I want you to meet my new-

The door bursts open - Brian, Beth, and RJ mid-carol.

BRIAN

Fa la la la la la la la la!

RJ plugs his ears laughing. Beth chuckles.

Cindy emerges from her room.

BETH

On that note, I think I'll have to  
call it a night.

But hanging on the door is.. MISTLETOE.

BETH (CONT'D)

What's this?

BRIAN

I didn't--

RJ sheepishly turns away, it was him.

Beth looks at Brian. He looks for a way out of this, but  
before the moment passes- Beth pecks him on the cheek.

The adults blush.

BETH

And to all a goodnight.

Beth leaves. Brian shuts the door behind her.

RJ smiles. Cindy breaks down and bolts for her room.

BRIAN

Sweetheart, wait!

She stops at her door.

CINDY

*This* isn't Christmas.  
Not without mom.

SLAM! That echoes. Princess claws at the door.

Brian lowers his head. RJ tries to comfort his dad, but Brian  
just grins.

BRIAN

Get ready for bed, bud.

RJ rushes off, leaving Brian alone.

He stares at Tim...

BRIAN (CONT'D)

She's right. This isn't Christmas.

When Brian turns away. Tim lowers his head.

BAXTER  
It's not your fault, kid.

Brian turns back- from his perspective, all he hears is CHIRPING... He clocks Baxter..

On Baxter, *uh oh*.

BRIAN  
OUT! OUT! OUT!

Princess. Animal instinct activated. POUNCES at Baxter- REAR!

Tim drops the branch. Baxter dips out of the way.

Princess NAILS Tim. She fusses. Her CLAWS rip through Tim's fronds almost scraping Brittany and the eggs inside.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
Princess, no!

Brian reaches for Princess, he grabs her, she flails accidentally SCRAPES Brian.

He reels back in pain, drops princess.

She lands perfectly on her feet.

Brian stumbles into Tim- his trunk CREAKS. He WINCES. Knocks some of the decorations off Tim.

Tim stretches out his branches, catching his friends. Each effort straining him.

Needles cascade to the floor.

Princess locks onto Baxter. She parkours around the room to try and catch him. Brian gives chase.

The kids come out of their rooms.. they SCREAM at the chaos.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
Go back to sleep! Whoa-

THUD! Brian trips over the decorations box. Stuff spills out, including the VHS tape.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
FLY OUT!

Baxter shoots out the window. Brian slams it.

Princess face plants into the glass and skiiiids down.

Brian Locks it.

Princess shakes it off. Back to cuteness.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
What happened?

Brian puts Princess into a PET CARRIER. Closes the metal bars. She looks out like a sad prisoner.

TAP-TAP on the glass. Baxter is stuck out in the cold.

Sarge tries to open the window, but it won't budge.

TIM  
Everyone okay?

The decorations all GROAN "Mhm" "We're good" "Thanks"

### **IN THE NEST**

Brittany notices Tim's needles sprinkling like green snow.

BRITTANY  
What about you, Tim? Are you okay?

Tim takes ragged breaths.

TIM  
Yes, Ma'am.

BRITTANY  
Tim...

Tim SIGHS.

TIM  
Being a Christmas tree is a lot harder than I thought.

Brittany holds her babies, worried.

BRITTANY  
We won't add to your strain.  
We'll be gone as soon as they soar.

TIM  
(beat)  
Part of me wishes I could go back.

BRITTANY  
Maybe you can.

TIM  
That's impossible.

BRITTANY  
"Impossible"? Coming from you?

Brittany flies over to the window to have a conversation with Baxter through the glass. We don't hear what she's saying.

Baxter nods, determined. He takes off for the night sky.

**EXT. WOODS - MORNING**

The sun peers over the mountains. A drumroll score plays like a military scene.

Baxter paces in front of his "soldiers".

He speaks with conviction, doing his best drill sergeant.

BAXTER  
This may require a Christmas  
miracle, but we can do it.

Baxter has a crude map laid out in the dirt and snow. He draws with a stick, explaining the plan to the animals.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
Reggie scouts the cabin.

Reggie the Squirrel nods, *got it*.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
Beavers secure the truck.

The beavers slap their tails on the ground, THUD, got it.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
Army ants, you're with-  
(looks around)  
Army Ants? Where are the ants?

The animals all look around, *haven't seen em?* From somewhere low out of frame, basically invisible:

ARMY ANTS  
What are our marching orders?

BAXTER  
Infiltrate and secure the keys.

ARMY ANTS  
Bird, yes bird.

BAXTER  
Fraser, you're the tallest, you'll  
provide overwatch.

Fraser nods.

BAXTER (CONT'D)  
Once we reach the city. We'll  
distract the feline and extract the  
birds and tree. Alright, let's get-

STUMP  
Uh- Baxter what should we do?

Stump, Rootie and the little squirrel smile eagerly.

BAXTER  
Uhh- You three can...  
Encourage the rest of the team.

ROOTIE  
Like cheerleaders?

STUMP (*CHANTING*)  
*STICK! TOGETHER!*  
*STICK-STICK! TOGETHER!*

Stump and Rootie, salute with their branches.

**INT. APARTMENT - DAY**

Brian opens the pet carrier. And sets Princess's water bowl  
down for her. But she stays inside.

Brian has a fresh claw mark on his face. He looks to Tim-  
He's looking rough from yesterday's chaos.

BRIAN  
About ready, RJ?

RJ  
Yeah, dad.

Brian crosses to the kitchen.

Princess lumbers out of her cage and laps up some water.

Tim hears that water and wakes. His speech even sounds dry.

TIM  
You okay, Princess?

Princess stops drinking. She doesn't look up.

PRINCESS THE CAT  
You're a good Tree Tim. But some  
families aren't worth protecting.

Princess pours some of her water in Tim's basin.

She walks off, stepping over the pile from the decorations box. Her fluffy tail rakes across the VHS tape.

"PRINCESS"

Tim clocks this.

TIM  
Sarge.  
(re: the tape)  
Can you get that off the floor?

**INT. CINDY'S ROOM - DAY**

The room is dark, but Cindy's phone shines under the sheets.

Brian enters.

BRIAN  
Sweetie, you're not up yet?

CINDY  
(COUGHS)  
I'm sick.

Brian checks her temperature.

BRIAN  
Get some rest.

Brian kisses her forehead and closes the door.

**KITCHEN**

BEEP. Cindy takes a hot cup of cocoa out of the microwave.

**LIVING ROOM**

Cindy sits on the couch sipping her drink. She points the remote at the TV and turns on a show.

She sets her drink down on the coffee table- also resting on the table is-

THE VHS TAPE.

Cindy timidly picks up it up, she stares at it.

"PRINCESS"

A beat.

Cindy inserts it into the VCR.

BZZZZZ. The TV flickers on-

*Shaky home video footage plays of Cindy as a young child held by her MOM. They smile and laugh.*

**MOM**

*You wanna do it?*

**YOUNG CINDY**

*Yeah!*

Tim watches this memory.

Cindy sits on the couch, eyes glued to the TV.

*Brian films, he hands young Cindy the star tree topper.*

**BRIAN (O.S.)**

*Careful, hold it tight.*

*Her mother raises Cindy up to put Star on the tree.*

*The lights on the tree burst on.*

A smile forms on Cindy's face.

Tim watches too, reminding him of his mom.

*Young Cindy sits on her mom's lap. She's handed a present.*

**MOTHER**

*Go ahead. Open it, Cindy!*

*Cindy rips open her gift and its... a KITTEN. The kitten MEOWS and licks Cindy's face.*

**MOTHER (CONT'D)**

*She likes you, what do you want to name her?*

**CINDY**

*Princess.*

**MOTHER**

*Welcome home, Princess!*

Cindy wipes away a tear.

Princess jumps up on the ledge and watches too.

Tim eyes Princess, *go over to her.*

Princess timidly jumps onto the couch... Cindy grabs Princess and holds her close.

**MOTHER (HEARD ON THE TV) (CONT'D)**  
***Merry Christmas, sweetheart.***

CINDY  
(to herself)  
Merry Christmas, mom.

Cindy turns off the home movie and takes princess into her room to rest. Over Cindy's shoulder, Princess smiles to Tim.

Tim smiles back.

**EXT. WOODS - DAY**

Baxter is camouflaged in the branches, peering down at

**RANGER NED'S CABIN**

The **truck** sits unattended- a flare glimmers off it.

Reggie scampers up to the cabin like a spy. He peers inside-

Ranger Ned, oblivious, makes himself a sandwich.

Reggie signals.

Benny and the beavers advance on the truck. They stack atop one another, pop the door. Unlocked. They climb in.

Benny shrugs. *No keys.*

Baxter nods- then signals.

Army ants march beneath the cabin door.

**INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS**

The ants scale the counter, snaking around condiments. They swarm the keys.

Out the window they go-

Baxter flies in, snatches the keys, and tosses them to Benny.

**TRUCK**

Reggie hops to the floor, observing the gas and brake pedals.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL  
You can drive?

Benny grips the wheel.

BENNY THE BEAVER  
Leave it to beaver.

He turns the key. The truck REVS.

**I./E. CABIN**

Ranger Ned freezes. Looks out the window, locking eyes with-  
Benny- He waves at Ned.

Ned bolts for the door- stops short.

Mr Deer blocks the exit, pointed antlers low. *Not this way.*

**TRUCK**

Reggie floors it. The truck lurches- BACKWARDS!

WHAM! A tire lodges in a muddy ditch.

The tire spins, flinging mud on Baxter.

**EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - SAME TIME**

Rootie, Stump, Fraser, and the little squirrel wait.

ROOTIE  
We can't just stand here.

STUMP  
We have orders.  
Great lookout work, Fraser.  
(CHANTING)  
LOOKOUT, FRASER! LOOKOUT!

Fraser doesn't look away from the cabin.

FRASER  
I'm trying to focus.

STUMP  
(whisper chants)  
LOOKOUT, FRASER! LOOKOUT!

FRASER

This is serious, Stump.

(beat)

Maybe now I can look out for Tim.  
Like I should have been all along.

Fraser starts to cry.

Stump and Rootie are shocked. Rootie goes to make a comment..

Fraser stops him with a look.

ROOTIE

Don't chop yourself down, Fraser.

STUMP

If anything, you being so awful  
prepared Tim for real life.

ROOTIE

What he means is- Tim's strong  
because he had someone sturdy to  
look up to.

Fraser smiles. Then- Baxter's SHOUTS echo in the distance.

**EXT. CABIN - SAME TIME**

Ned slams the door in Mr Deer's face, opting for another way.

Mr Deer rushes to the stuck tire to help lift.

BAXTER

One, two, three-!

They strain, almost setting it free when-

Ned rounds the corner, loading a TRANQ DART into a BLOWGUN.

He takes aim at Mr Deer-

**WITH THE TREES.** Fraser strains, wrenching against the earth.

FRASER

They're gonna get caught!

The little squirrel scampers up Fraser's trunk, wearing an acorn-shell helmet.

LITTLE SQUIRREL

Send me.

The trees share a look.

CUT TO:

Stump and Rootie bend Fraser back like a catapult—

The little squirrel gives a thumbs up.

FRASER  
Good luck, little squirrel.

LITTLE SQUIRREL  
Flying squirrel.

WHOOSH! He's FLUNG through the forest.

Trees blur past. Wind rips at his face.

The squirrel spreads his limbs and—

POOF! Skin stretches. He GLIDES in locked on—

**RANGER NED.** Who trains his blowgun on Mr Deer—

WHAM! The flying squirrel slams into Ned's gut.

POOF! Inadvertently firing the trang dart straight down.

The little squirrel scrambles inside Ned's shirt, scurrying around, tickling him furiously.

Ned flails.

During the chaos—

BAXTER  
Now!

The animals heave.

**TRUCK**

Reggie hits the gas. VROOM!

The truck breaks free!

**EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS**

The animals CHEER as the truck speeds off—

The tranquilizer dart is lodged in Ned's foot.

THUD. Ranger Ned collapses.

The little squirrel pops free out of Ned's sleeve.

Silence.

The animals erupt! They chant: "FLYING SQUIRREL! FLYING SQUIRREL!"

**WITH THE TREES**

Fraser, Rootie and Stump cheer—

STUMP & ROOTIE  
LOOKOUT, FRASER! LOOKOUT!

Their chant turns into a warning!

STUMP & ROOTIE (CONT'D)  
LOOK OUT, FRASER! LOOK OUT!

The runaway truck barrels toward them. Baxter flies alongside—

BAXTER  
LOOK OUT!

BENNY swerves.

The truck goes up on two tires— Missing Fraser by an inch—  
SLAMS back down.

The trees exhale.

FRASER  
Almost pruned us.

**BY THE LAKE**

BEAVERS relax in the new jacuzzi. They hear something—

A LOUNGING BEAVER lifts a cucumber off its eye—

Sees the incoming truck! He jumps out of the way.

BOOM! The jacuzzi EXPLODES!

CUCUMBER BEAVER (O.S.)  
Not the jets?!

**IN THE TRUCK**

Cucumbers, splinters and mud land on the windshield, it looks like a frowning face. The wind blows it off.

BAXTER

Dam!

BENNY THE BEAVER

I can fix it!

BAXTER

Nowatchout!

The Beaver's dam is getting closer!

BENNY THE BEAVER

Reggie! BRAKE!

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Phew, I was getting tired of holding down this lever.

BENNY THE BEAVER

Not take a break! THE BRAKE!

Benny closes his eyes. Baxter can't watch.

**ON THE DAM,** BEAVERS drop their wood and dive in the water.

They brake, skidding to a halt. The bumper's tailgate centimeters from the dam.

Benny exhales.

**INT. APARTMENT - DAY**

The apartment is quiet. Princess and Cindy nap in her room.

Tim is the frailest we've seen him yet. He rests.

The nutcracker fills Tim's water basin. Tim wakes up.

TIM

Oh- Thanks.

Sarge salutes- gets picked up by bird #1 and flown around the room low to the floor.

BRITTANY

Not too high, Dee Dee!

Tim perks up.

TIM

"Dee Dee". Like-

BRITTANY  
Your mother. Always loved the name  
Dorothy.

Tim smiles.

TIM  
(re: flying)  
She's getting the hang of it.

BRITTANY  
Not ready for a long journey yet-  
but she did skydive off your  
tallest branch while you slept.

TIM  
Fearless.

BRITTANY  
Just like your mom.

ORNY (O.S.)  
No-no! I'm fine watching.

Bird #2 grabs Orny and jumps with him off Tim's branch,  
forcing Orny into the fun.

ORNY (CONT'D)  
This is ornamendangerment!

A RACE: The Christmas lights cycle colors, red, yellow,  
green: GO! The birds take off!

#1 takes off with Sarge. #2 and Orny give chase.

Tim, Brittany and the other decorations laugh.

Star announces the play-by-play.

THE STAR  
And with the inside move, Orny  
takes the lead!

ORNY  
I'm winning? We're winning! Go kid!

Everyone is laughing watching the race.

Tim melts into the moment. Laughter fades to a warm echo- but  
his smile softens.

He looks up to the Advent calendar. Only **3 days** until  
Christmas. He can't help but hear Princess's voice in his ear-

PRINCESS THE CAT (V.O.)  
*Enjoy this while it lasts.*

Tim snaps out of it.

BRITTANY  
 And by the tip of a beak, the  
 winner is.. Dee Dee and Uncle Orny!

Everyone CHEERS! Tim puts on a smile.

The baby bird returns Orny to his branch and picks up Candy Cane for the next race.

ORNY  
 See me flying, kid?

Orny realizes Tim seems off.

TAP TAP TAP! On the window. It's Baxter.

Brittany flies over to the window.

BRITTANY  
 But what about the mission?

BAXTER (BEHIND GLASS)  
 We're in it!

**EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX, STREET - SAME TIME**

Baxter flies down to the truck- parked crookedly on the sidewalk.. COMMUTERS walk around it with disdain.

The animals stream into the apartment complex.

**INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Reggie the squirrel scales the wall and uses his fluffy tail to cover a surveillance camera.

The rest of the beavers and squirrels move in, scurrying low beneath the front desk where a SECURITY OFFICER sits aloof.

Baxter flies in low, undetected, to the elevator bank. He presses the "up" button.

**INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY**

The door unlocks from the inside by no one.

SMASH ZOOM in to reveal army ants picked the lock.

DOOSH! The door flings open. The animals breach the room.

BAXTER

Go go go!

Reggie scurries up to Tim.

Tim's eyes blink open, exhausted.

TIM

Reggie? Is that - really you?

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

We're bustin' you outa here!  
Benny's outside with the truck!

TIM

Truck?

Tim looks out the window and sees Ranger Ned's truck.

TIM (CONT'D)

*Balsam.*

Reggie climbs Tim and speaks to the decorations.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Closin' time folks. You don't gotta  
go home, but ya can't hang here.

Reggie removes some of the decorations with lightning speed.

He scurries to the top to remove Star, but she stops him.

STAR

Now hold on a Chris-minute. Tim, is  
this true?

The decorations all murmur "Tim, you're leaving?" "Are you  
really, Tim?" "But what about Christmas?"

All the decorations look to Tim.

Orny on the brink of tears.

Tim doesn't know what to do.

TIM

I- I don't-

BRITTANY  
Sweetie, you've completely lost  
your color.

BAXTER  
It's for the best, kid.

CANDY CANE  
How do you know?

The decor and animals argue over each other- voices blurring  
into noise.

Tim winces. It's too much. He tries to speak-

TIM  
Everyone, please...  
Hey everyone..

Orny WHISTLES!

Everyone halts.

ORNY  
Let the kid talk!

TIM  
Thanks Orny. Nice whistle.

ORNY  
Learned from the best.

Tim musters up the strength to speak.

TIM  
I want to thank you. All of you...  
for trying. But look at us. You're  
fighting because of me.  
(beat)  
Taking time away from your families  
during the holidays. To rescue a  
kid in way over his head.  
(beat)  
And I'm so tired. I don't know if I  
can make it to Christmas. I don't  
even know if I can make it home.  
(beat)  
All I wanted was to lift you up  
this season. But I'm Sorry- I just  
can't.

Tim cries. He's physically and emotionally spent.

Nobody knows what to say.

STAR

You have nothing to be sorry about.  
We support you no matter what.

All the decorations agree.

Tim turns to Baxter and Brittany.

TIM

Let's go home.

The baby birds jump out of the nest— wobbly, but airborne.

Reggie climbs up to Orny.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Last call.

ORNY

I'm with Tim.

Tim looks to Orny awestruck.

Benny's team of Beavers surround Tim.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Timber!

Tim falls, but is caught by the beavers. They carry him out.

### **HALLWAY**

The beavers lug Tim to the elevator bank.

BAXTER

Everyone can't wait to see you!

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Your dad's gonna go nuts!

The animals laugh in good spirits.

Tim looks back to the apartment door.

The decorations peek around the door and wave.

Sarge, Cane, the lights and Star.

Tim and Orny grin as Tim waves a branch.

Baxter hits the elevator button. DING.

**INT. APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

Cindy's bedroom door CREAKS open. She rubs her tired eyes.

CINDY

Dad?

After no response she looks around the apartment and realizes... The tree is gone!

Her eyes burst open! She turns to the door- wide open! And all the decorations scattered on the floor.

She rushes to the door and looks down the hallway to find a trail of Tim's dead pine needles leading to the elevators.

She watches with fear as Tim is forced inside.

Tim sees the disappointment in Cindy's eyes as he's pulled into the elevator.

**HALLWAY, ELEVATOR BANK**

Cindy rushes to the elevator, but the door shuts on her. She bangs on the metal.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Hey! What are you doing?! Help!

She calls her dad. Straight to voicemail.

Down the hallway Beth opens her door to a crying Cindy.

BETH

Cindy?! What's wrong?

CINDY

Someone stole our Christmas tree!

**ELEVATOR**

Tim and all the animals are piled into the elevator going down. Tim looks depressed.

BAXTER

You're like a bump on a log, pal.  
Ya okay? You're going home!

TIM

Did you see the look on their faces? No matter what choice I make. I'm letting someone down.

BAXTER

Listen, kid. Christmas comes and goes. This is your life we're talkin' about. And you're gonna get to see your family and pals! It'll be just like the good ol' days.

Tim sees *FLASHES* of the forest.

*Standing in WINTER... SPRING... SUMMER... FALL...  
WINTER. SPRING. SUMMER. FALL. WINTER-SPRING-SUMMER-FALL...*

*Imagining himself growing older with his friends. With his Dad and Fraser. He's the tallest tree in the forest.*

*He's happy, but something is missing.*

DING! He snaps out of it, the elevator opens. They're Caught!

Waiting is the old man from earlier. Unfazed by the zoo he's witnessing. He lets the elevator door close.

OLD MAN

Time to move.

**STAIRWELL.** Cindy and Beth sprint down the stairs to the-

**LOBBY.** Cindy rushes up to the lobby security officer.

CINDY

Someone stole my Christmas tree!

SECURITY OFFICER

Nothing gets past me.

On the security monitor, Tim and the animals descend in the elevator- unnoticed.

The security officer goes back to scrolling on their phone.

BETH

Can't you check the cameras?

Cindy appreciates Beth standing up for her.

The officer looks at the security monitor, but it's blocked.

**INT. ELEVATOR - SAME TIME**

Reggie's tale covers the camera.

DING. Tim watches the elevator descend.

ORNY  
 You should be proud.  
 We gave it a good run.

DING. Floor after floor.

ORNY (CONT'D)  
 As far as I'm concerned.  
 Best. Christmas. Ever.

DING. All sound begins to melt.

As they descend, those elevator floor DINGS start to sound a lot like heartbeat monitor BEEPS.

Tim's heartbeat. It's slowing.

BEEP. His mother's voice echoes in like a memory.

DOROTHY (V.O.)  
 The best trees don't always...

B E E P.  
 Tim sees **FLASHES** of...  
**The Rockefeller Christmas Tree and Orny.**

DOROTHY  
 ... stand the tallest or brightest.

B E E P.  
**Skinny Jack's Christmas tree farm. The rat and dog.**

DOROTHY (V.O.)  
 They stand where they're needed.

B E E P.  
**The Dawson family and the decorations.**

DOROTHY (V.O.)  
 They stand... for...

B E E P.  
**RJ putting Star on top of the tree.**

DOROTHY (V.O.)  
 ...others.

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP.

All sound drops out.

**Cindy's smile as she puts Star on the tree with her mom.**

But Tim's eyes remain shut..



Cindy rushes in to the

**APARTMENT**

Her jaw is on the floor, her face bathed in a gold glow.

Tim is back, standing proud, like he never left, redecorated.

CINDY (CONT'D)

*But. I saw. I- didn't. I-*

Beth rests her hand on Cindy's shoulder. Smiles.

Cindy stares at Tim, enamored, that sparkle in her eye like she's a little kid again.

Behind her, all the animals scurry out.

Beth notices something is missing...

BETH

Oh no.

She picks Star up off the floor, and hands it to Cindy.

Cindy smiles, stands on her tip toes and places the star on Tim. His lights burst back on!

Cindy and Beth admire the Christmas tree together.

Brian and RJ rush in.

BRIAN

Sorry, sweetheart! I was in a meeting, RJ's rehearsal ran late and the traffic-

Cindy hugs her Dad.

He's shocked at first, but settles in, and hugs her back.

Brian realizes-

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Beth?

CINDY

Oh- I invited her over- for dinner.  
I hope that's okay.

Cindy smiles at Beth, who grins back unopposed to the ruse.

**LATER THAT NIGHT**

The Dawson family plus Beth eat dinner together laughing.

Tim and the decorations watch on.

STAR

So what made you change your mind?

Tim steals Star's line from earlier.

TIM

Not about the number of days in the light, it's how ya spend them.

Star twinkles, glad her message hit home.

From the shadows- Princess emerges.

STAR

We can see you, Princess.

PRINCESS

I know. I'm dieting after the holidays.

Princess trots her water bowl over to Tim and pours the entire tray in.

PRINCESS (CONT'D)

Truce, spruce?

Tim smiles.

Princess grins and trots away to her family in the kitchen. She leaps in Cindy's lap, their love rekindled.

ORNY

I don't know.

(off Tim's look)

One good deed and y'all actin' like she's a career nice lister.

Everyone laughs. The jovial feeling fades to...

"25" on the Advent calendar. Brian opens the door and takes the last candy. We enter the door, turning the screen BLACK.

#### **INT. APARTMENT - CHRISTMAS MORNING**

Tim's eyes blink open.

ORNY

Kid, it's happening! You're not gonna wanna miss this!

Orny nudges Tim awake- he's spry, yet aged a lifetime.

TIM (V.O.)  
 Oh. You're still here?  
 (soft smile)  
 We made it. Orny says I'm  
 officially a Christmas tree now.

Orny and Tim watch the kids laugh.

TIM (V.O.)  
*This* is balsam.

RJ opens an electric keyboard.

Cindy snaps a photo with her new Polaroid camera.

TIM (V.O.)  
 Well not *this*.  
 I mean presents are balsam, but  
 it's not about them.  
 (beat)  
 It's not about the lights...  
 it's not about the attention...  
 It's not about me.

Tim looks at his friends- Orny, Cane, Lights, Sarge, Star.

TIM (V.O.)  
 It's about who you stand for.  
 (beat)  
 They hang on my branches, but  
 they're the ones that lift me up.

Cindy sets up her camera, gathers Brian and RJ and..

FLASH! They take a timed photo in front of the Tim.

The photo spits out. They all look at it- so does Tim.

BEEEEEP! The smoke detector blares! Brian burnt the breakfast.  
 He hurries to open the window before smoke engulfs the room.

A calm cool breeze rushes in. Tim feels it in his fronds,  
 sending shivers down his trunk. Reminding him of home.

BRIAN  
 Who wants to go get breakfast?

CINDY  
 Let's ask Beth if she's hungry.

They rush out the door.

Once the coast is clear, Baxter flies in through the window.

BAXTER  
Merry Christmas, Tim.

TIM  
Baxter!? What are you doing here?

BAXTER  
Returning the twigs you lent me.  
(winks)  
Kids made this for ya.

Baxter hangs a twig-ornament in the shape of a shield on Tim.

TIM  
(holds back tears)  
Thanks.

BAXTER  
Well Sheriff, Can't leave Brit  
alone too long- kids are already a  
shoo-in for the naughty list.

TIM  
Have a safe flight.  
Give everyone my best.

Baxter smiles- crouches about to take off when-

BAXTER  
Oh and by the way, guess who we  
moved in with?

TIM  
Hmmm... Stump?  
(no)  
Rootie..?  
(not him)  
Fraser?!

BAXTER  
Think taller.

TIM  
... Dad?!

Baxter gives Tim a wink as he flies off.

Tim watches him go. He summons every last bit of energy left  
in his trunk... and WHISTLES.

It's weak, but it carries. Clear and true.



Tim clocks- Brian and the kids asleep on the couch.

TIM  
We did it, partner.

Tim is losing steam, but hanging on.

ORNY  
(quietly)  
Get some rest. You deserve it.

TIM  
Merry... Christmas.

Tim shuts his eyes.

Orny sheds a tear.

ORNY  
*Merry Christmas, kid.*

The room falls silent. Still... Until-

Star atop Tim begins to pulse. Not a battery pulse. Something ancient. Magical.

STAR  
You did well, Timothy. You gave them your season. Now, it's time for yours.

Star glows brighter and brighter until she's blinded us.

CUT TO WHITE:

The white speckles into a **BLIZZARD**. We push through to find-

Tim standing proud, but he's not brown. Not brittle. He's vibrant. He's green and a hundred feet tall.

TIM  
Uh... Hello?

A DEEP VOICE speaks through the cold wind.

DEEP VOICE (O.C.)  
Timothy Timbers, I presume?

TIM  
Uh- yes..? Who said that? Is that you, Mr Rock?

The deep voice laughs HO HO HO! *We know who this guy is.*

SANTA'S VOICE (O.C.)  
 Call me, Nick. I wanted to thank  
 you for protecting the Dawson  
 family this Christmas.

TIM  
 Course, they're balsam!  
 (then)  
 Mr Nick. Where am I?

The aurora borealis dances behind Tim.

SANTA'S VOICE (O.C.)  
 A place where the best and  
 brightest keep growing. And-  
 Well- Sorry Tim, I need to get back  
 to the workshop, lots to prep for  
 next year! I'll just let a familiar  
 face fill in the rest.

And with that the fog dissipates revealing..

TIM  
 Mom?!

DOROTHY  
 Welcome home, sweetheart.

They lean on each other.

WE WIDEN to an aerial shot of where we are...

The FOREST surrounding Santa's Village at the NORTH POLE.

TIM (V.O.)  
 See? You can do or be anything you  
 want... Ya just gotta be-leaf.

## **THE END**

CREDITS ROLL with CHRISTMAS CARD PHOTOS from our FRIENDS:

- The beavers relaxing in their new rebuilt jacuzzi.
- Reggie and Penelope Squirrel with their kids in a hollow.
- Lumberjack and his hallmark girlfriend in front of Droopy.
- Star kisses Orny on the cheek.
- Princess surrounded by all the decorations.
- The Rat and Dog in front of The Rockefeller Christmas Tree.
- The city birds got coal.
- Stump and Rootie grew and are as tall as Fraser.
- Baxter, Brittany and the birds pose next to Grandpa Doug.
- Ranger Ned outside his Cabin lit with Christmas lights.
- The Dawson Family and Beth posed in front of Tim.