

THE SIXTH SURPRISE

By

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CHARACTERS:

EMMA - ANGIE ROBBINS

MARCUS - MICHAEL VERT

TERRY - JOHN WALLIS

INT. LIVING ROOM - EMMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lights up on EMMA, a reserved, motherly type. She seems short-tempered, pained and hardened by life, but you can tell she cares deeply and is devoted and loving. At lights up, she is silent and staring straight into the camera. The living room of her house is completely decked out for Christmas. The final version of the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" plays in the background, starting from the twelfth day and going down to "Six Geese A Laying." Then it abruptly stops.

EMMA

(addressing audience) I hate Christmas.
(beat) I hate the noise, the lights, the movies, the season, the pressure, the chaos, the songs, especially THAT song. I hate the memories it forces... you to..
(trailing off) Ahh, but mainly I hate it because...

Suddenly two other Zoom screens pop up and we see MARCUS and TERRY. They are both dressed as holiday versions of circus clowns (imagine gaudy walking Christmas trees!). Both have big broad personalities, very loud, boisterous. Total goofballs who love every minute of life. Nothing gets them down and they take nothing too serious. They're also both rather dim, oblivious. They love to pick on Emma. They're always "on." Their respective backgrounds are houses that look like Christmas on steroids, super festive. They make big entrances, jumping right into a routine.

MARCUS

HEEEEEEEEEYYYYY!!!!

TERRY

YOU HEEYYYYYYYY!!!!

MARCUS

NO, YOU HEEYYYYYYYYY!!!

TERRY

WE ALL HEEYYYYYYYYY!!!!

They both yell "Hey" again and then Marcus picks up a saxophone and plays a note or two of "Jingle Bells" while Terry juggles some items with bells in them and sings along. In the middle of it, EMMA mutes them.

EMMA

...because these two are my brothers, and they're all the family I have left.

She unmutes them as they're finishing up their grand entrance, both doing a little choreographed dance and yelling/singing.

MARCUS/TERRY

Ooooooppppeeeennn Sleeeeeiiiiiggghh! Tada!

EMMA

Hello idiots, Merry Christmas.

MARCUS

Good morning, Ebenezer.

TERRY

No ghosts visited last night, I see.

MARCUS

Ooh, we should work in a Scrooge routine!

TERRY

That might work, we could have--

EMMA

So you guys are still performing, huh?

MARCUS

Yes ma'am. For your holiday cheer, the circus is still here!

TERRY

The show must go on *(beat)* line.

MARCUS

So how have you been, sis? Oh, look at the house!

TERRY

Looks like you've been getting into the holiday spirit after all.

Emma hits a button and the backdrop goes away to reveal a very stark, boring living room with no decorations.

MARCUS/TERRY

Okey dokey then.

EMMA

Let's just get this over with, shall we?

MARCUS

Okay, Emma, jeez. Where are we at again?

TERRY

Yeah, what year?

EMMA

(annoyed) Six. It's been six years. How could you not remember...

MARCUS

So that would be *(singing)* "Six Geese a Laying."

Emma holds a small box in front of her with the number 6 written all over it. Marcus and Terry are rummaging around through other numbered boxes and other junk, trying to find theirs. As they look...

TERRY

Remember how she would mess up all the lyrics to this song?

MARCUS

(singing) Nine babies dancing.

TERRY

(singing) Two turtle dumps.

EMMA

(quietly) She always got this one right, though.

MARCUS

Hey, did you know that if you actually bought your true love all the stuff in this song, it would cost \$170,609.46?

TERRY

How do you know this stuff?

MARCUS

I read.

TERRY

Oh. I should try that sometime.

EMMA

(getting a little upset) Did you find your boxes yet?

They both pull up boxes with the number 6 all over them.

MARCUS

Yes, mother.

TERRY

Yes, Mother...Goose!

MARCUS

Ahhhh! Hahaha!

EMMA

(more upset) Please...don't...

TERRY

Wait! Didn't she used to call you that?

MARCUS

Oh my God, she did!

EMMA

(very upset) Yes, but, please stop.

TERRY

Right! Because of the whole overprotective thing.

MARCUS

And the honking.

Emma is near tears but they're oblivious to it.

EMMA

No...

MARCUS

Geese are terrifying.

TERRY

Emma was terrifying.

EMMA

Please...

MARCUS

Still is.

They both laugh, until Emma explodes.

EMMA

WILL YOU TWO SHUT UP!! STOP IT. JUST STOP IT!

This catches them both offguard.

TERRY

Uhh, sorry, I was just—

EMMA

Can we please just get this over with?

MARCUS

Emma...

Emma lets it all out, builds to crying.

EMMA

Yes, she did call me Mother Goose! Why? Because she didn't like me very much. And I was Mother Goose. At least I was supposed to be. I was her older sister and I was supposed to take care of her. That was my one job, and I couldn't do it. And she's gone. Six years now. And all we have is this stupid holiday tradition, this stupid game she's making us do. It's all that's left of her. And all it does every year is remind me of what we lost, how she's not here, how I couldn't...how...how...much I miss her.

Emma cries and there is a long beat before the next line.

TERRY

Hey Emma, I think you were on your mute. We didn't get any of that.

EMMA

(laughing) Oh my God, I hate you both so much.

They all start laughing, the tension gone.

MARCUS

We know. But you're wrong about her. She loved you most of all.

TERRY

It's true. She just...well, Emma, you're just really, really fun to mess with.

EMMA

Thanks.

MARCUS

And don't think for a minute you didn't protect her. You know Dr. Kim told us once she probably lived another three years because of the love and care she got. That was you.

TERRY

Yeah, also, she put you in charge of this tradition because it was important to her for us to have something after she was gone.

MARCUS

She couldn't trust us.

TERRY

We're idiots!

EMMA

Well, that's true.

MARCUS

Speaking of, should we do this?

They both hold up their boxes.

TERRY

Yeah, let's do it. Read the note.

EMMA

We don't have to read it again.

MARCUS

It's your favorite part.

EMMA

It's okay, it's just--

TERRY

(softly) Emma, read it.

Emma unfurls a rough and worn letter, takes a big breath and reads.

EMMA

"Hey losers. Merry Christmas. First of all, let me just say, dying of cancer? Overrated. Wouldn't recommend. Second, as I approach the end--ooh, how dark--I've begun to focus on what's important, and there is nothing more important than family and tradition. I can't stress that enough. It's what I'll miss most when I, well, I don't know what comes next. Anyway, my glam fam, here's a new holiday tradition, one to help you remember your little Tiny Tim of a sis and get past her tragedy. Sorry, feeling wonderfully morbid today. For my two knucklehead brothers, I think twelve years should be enough time for you to mourn. Seems appropriate and I have deemed it so. Mother Goose, might take you a little longer. Anyway, I've made twelve boxes for each of you, each one representing a line from the greatest Christmas song of all time. Hopefully one day, you'll all actually get the lyrics right. Each year, I want you to open the box and incorporate what's inside into your circus act, preferably juggling. I always loved the juggling. Sis, I'm giving you your own special item and I'm still holding out hope that one day you'll get in on the act. Cherish them and each other. And remember me so I don't have to come back and haunt you buttheads. Okay, my hand hurts, stupid IV. So that's enough. Make this entertaining! I'll be watching from...wherever. Love you all, Lilly."

They're all quiet for a second, melancholy but smiling.

EMMA

Well, you heard her, clown boys. Open 'em up.

They start tearing open the boxes that are taped super tight. Except Emma's. She opens it up to reveal a weird-looking whistle. They continue to struggle.

MARCUS

What did you get?

EMMA

Some kind of whistle.

TERRY

Why are ours so tight?!

MARCUS

What do you think is in here?

TERRY

Well, it's always something to juggle, so maybe stuffed geese toys?

Emma continues to stare at the whistle, puzzled. Marcus and Terry both get their boxes open at the same time and they jump back in disgust. The contents of the box reek!!! But they take a second and then peak back in.

MARCUS

Oh my God!

TERRY

What the hell?

EMMA

What's in there?

MARCUS

Eggs. Why eggs?

EMMA

Eggs? Wait, six geese a laying...

Emma busts out laughing, the hardest she's laughed in years.

TERRY

So these eggs are six years old?!

MARCUS

This is disgusting!

EMMA

HEY! *(beat)* They're not gonna juggle themselves.

TERRY

You don't really expect us to do this?

EMMA

No, I mean, it's only your dead sister's wish, but whatever.

Marcus and Terry gingerly grab the eggs out of the box, trying hard not to gag. They are very nervous as they start juggling, terrified of dropping them.

Emma suddenly has a realization. Mid routine, she blows the whistle. It sounds like a goose honk. Marcus and Terry get startled and drop the eggs, some on the floor, some on their heads, wherever. They both freak out in disgust.

Emma turns to the camera.

EMMA

I love Christmas.

LIGHTS.