

EXT. HOLLY'S BAKERY - DAY

We get a shot of the BAKERY DOOR slamming shut from the outside, a neon red CLOSED sign stuck to the window surrounded by cluttered papers advertising new sales.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Cut to HOLLY, a girl in her mid-20s to 30s who, despite her cheery name, is wearing a SCOWL like she's ready to punch the next smiling face she sees. Appearance wise, she's neat and orderly, in a way that makes it seem like she should be a big businesswoman rather than a bakery owner. She's walking through the town.

We see an unnamed man get down on one knee in front of his girlfriend and hear claps break through the music as the girl nods excitedly. Just before they kiss, Holly BREAKS THROUGH them, rolling her eyes as she pushes them. The man falls to the ground, and the ring rolls into the GUTTER.

We get a quick shot of Holly brushing her shoulder against the large CHRISTMAS TREE in the town center, which knocks a glittery glass ornament with the names "MARK AND ALYSSA" off the tree. We get another shot of said ornament falling to the ground and shattering, Holly's footsteps in the snow right next to it.

We get a close up shot of Holly's profile while she's walking. She's still scowling, but she looks more uncomfortable and out of her element now, like a cat in the ocean. In the background, despite it being blurred, we can see many COUPLES engaging in miscellaneous Christmas cheer. Every other person is wearing a Santa hat.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

We see Holly's hand open the GROCERY STORE DOOR. There's mistletoe hung just above the door and jingle bells that ring when she opens the door.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

We get a couple quick shots of Holly grabbing baking materials-- sugar, flour, eggs, etc.

A longer shot of Holly looking at sprinkles. There's two options in front of her, PLAIN WHITE sprinkles and CHRISTMAS THEMED ones. We get a shot of her conflicted expression. She looks around at the other patrons in the store and, when noticing the obscene amount of SANTA HATS around her, she

sighs and reluctantly grabs the Christmas one.

Cut to the checkout line. We see all of her purchases neatly lined up, then we see her staring holes at the CASHIER who's sweating bullets like she's a lion and he's just a mouse.

When he gets to her sprinkles, we see him SMILE slightly before looking up, still obviously nervous, but much more relaxed.

CASHIER
(slightly stuttering)
I'm surprised, Holly.

He holds up the bag and we see her clench her fist in frustration from behind the counter.

CASHIER
I didn't think you'd ever buy anything festive.

HOLLY
Yes, well, it's good for business.
People buy the festive stuff.

She blows a piece of hair from her face and crosses her arms, clearly defensive.

HOLLY
As soon as December's over, it's gone,
got that?

The Cashier nods, clearly nervous again.

We get a quick shot of Holly walking away.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

We see her close the door again. She slams it so hard the WREATH shakes and becomes crooked.

EXT. HOLLY'S BAKERY - NIGHT

Time skip from the grocery store. We can see that it's the dead of night. We see DECORATED houses next to Holly's bakery with the lights off, save for extravagant Christmas lights. The KITCHEN WINDOW of Holly's bakery has the light still on, and we can see her SILHOUETTE baking.

INT. HOLLY'S BAKERY - KITCHEN - NIGHT

We see Holly BAKING CUPCAKES, wearing a completely plain apron that has a little bit of EDIBLE GLITTER on it from her previous projects.

We hear the sound of the DOOR BEING UNLOCKED. She pauses her work and sighs loudly.

HOLLY

One of these days I'll really call the police on you.

We see JOY, a girl about Holly's age with her hair tied back messily, walk into the kitchen, a big smile on her face. She tilts her head and grins before talking.

JOY

You say that every time.

She extends the last word and walks up behind Holly. She's TALLER than Holly, so she easily looks OVER HER SHOULDER at what she's baking.

JOY

They're cute!

HOLLY

Mhm. I know. Why are you here?

JOY

Can't I visit my friend?

HOLLY

Joy, you broke into my house.

Joy doesn't reply and instead grabs a CUPCAKE from the table, bringing it close to her face to get a good look at it.

JOY

Kinda overkill on the detail, don't you think?

Camera pans over at the rest of the cupcakes showing that all of them are incredibly detailed. We switch the view back to Joy's face, looking at Holly with PITY.

JOY

When are you gonna hire someone else, Holly?

HOLLY

When I need to. Now move, please,
you're in my way.

Joy concedes, putting her HANDS UP with a small smile as Holly grabs more ICING and gets back to work on her cupcakes. Their conversation continues, but Holly doesn't look back at Joy once, too FOCUSED on her work.

JOY

Still, this is a *lot* for one person to
do. You're gonna burn yourself out.

Joy LEANS on the table next to Holly as she responds.

HOLLY

Even so, I can do it better by myself.
I don't trust that anyone else could
make them like I do.

JOY

You could teach them?

HOLLY

Too much work.

JOY

Then what if you got someone *really*
good to help out?

Holly finally turns around, an ANNOYED expression on her face.

HOLLY

What are you getting at? Just say it
already.

JOY

(talking quickly)

Okay, okay, so this guy just recently
moved here, I think his name is Isaac
or something? He's really good at
baking and *such* a sweetheart, and he's
been looking for a job, and I told him
about your bakery, and he really wants
to work here and so I told him I would
get him a job-

Holly slaps a hand over Joy's mouth.

HOLLY
I get the picture.

Joy smiles and tilts her head, waiting for Holly's response. It seems like Holly is really considering it for a moment, before she turns back around and starts working on her cupcakes again, sprinkling WHITE SPRINKLES on top of one.

HOLLY
Guess you'll have to tell him to look somewhere else.

Joy groans exaggeratedly, pouting.

JOY
Come on! It has to be hard doing all this by yourself!

HOLLY
Even if that were the case, which it's not, it's *my* bakery. The whole point is that I run it.

JOY
It'd still be yours! Just-

HOLLY
I've never been great at working with other people.

Joy opens her mouth to speak again, but Holly shoves a HEART-SHAPED CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE in her mouth.

JOY
(still chewing)
You can't silence me with cookies!

HOLLY
I think I just did.

JOY
(jokingly)
You're so mean.

HOLLY
I know.

JOY
Fine, fine, I'll leave you alone. For now. If you change your mind, I've got him, 'kay?

Holly doesn't answer, instead just waving her off. As Joy walks away, we see Holly SMILE a little before she quickly returns to her stoic expression and goes back to her work.

EXT. HOLLY'S BAKERY - DAY

We have a quick shot of Holly shut her door from the outside again. It is the next day.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

The CHATTER in the town is considerably louder than it was before. We see Holly STUMBLING and PUSHING THROUGH people. It's considerably more crowded than before. She's evidently annoyed.

We get what seems to be a short time skip of Holly after she's made it through the hordes of people. She seems EXHAUSTED. Her hair is now messy and her posture is hunched over. It clearly took a lot of effort to push past all those people. We get a quick shot of ADAM, an older man, maybe in his late 40s or early 50s, who is passing out CANDY CANES to the little kids who walk past.

Holly speedwalks over to Adam as he's passing a candy cane over to a little girl. She stands directly in front of him, BLOCKING HIS HAND. The little girl pouts and sadly walks away with her mom.

HOLLY

Adam.

Adam clears his throat before answering.

ADAM

Holly! Hi there. It's nice to see you.

HOLLY

Uh-huh. Why are there so many people here?

We get another shot scanning the streets and see the masses of people. The crowds are akin to those in Times Square, and definitely out of place in the smaller, tight-knit town they live in.

ADAM

Guess it's a lot, huh?

Holly STARES BLANKLY at Adam, waiting for an answer.

ADAM

They're here for the Christmas parade!

HOLLY

Parade?

ADAM

Yep. This year, my daughter's
organizing the parade in our town.
Exciting, right?

HOLLY

We've never done a parade before.

ADAM

Mhm, she's starting it up.

HOLLY

Doesn't this seem like too many
people?

ADAM

Some of 'em are just helping to set up
and are gonna leave. Some people
aren't even here yet. The marching
band is coming closer to the date of
the parade.

HOLLY

(shudders)

A marching band...

ADAM

I know, I know. Seems like a lot. But
after the parade, they're all leaving.

HOLLY

And when is that?

ADAM

Christmas Eve.

HOLLY

That's... twenty two days away...

ADAM

Yep yep. Plenty of time to set up.

Holly's eyes are wide and her skin pale with dread. She
stares off at nothing for a quick second.

ADAM
I'm sure you'll be getting some good
business, too.

HOLLY
Mhm...

Adam laughs at her far-off expression before heartily patting her shoulder.

ADAM
You'll be fine. They'll be gone before
you know it. Think of the money, yeah?

HOLLY
Yeah... okay.

Holly grabs a candy cane from Adam's hand, takes a SMALL BITE of it and throws the rest in a TRASH CAN. She walks away, DRAGGING her feet, but clearly less filled with dread than she was earlier. We get a shot from behind of Adam waving goodbye to Holly and searching in his pocket for more candy canes.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

We get a quick shot of another area of the town. We see a restaurant surrounded by four GOURMET CUPCAKE SHOPS, all decked out in wreaths and Christmas lights. We see Holly walking into the restaurant. As she almost slams the door behind her, SNOW falls off the roof of one of the cupcake shops and KNOCKS DOWN some of the lights.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Quick time skip. We see Holly sitting at an empty table, surrounded by couples and children, eating pancakes DOUSED IN SYRUP.

Joy skips up from behind her and sits in the seat in front of her.

HOLLY
You can't keep crashing my dinners,
either.

JOY
Can you really stop me?

Joy giggles and steals a pancake from Holly's plate.

HOLLY
You seem happy today.

JOY
I *am* happy today!

HOLLY
... And why's that?

JOY
The parade! There's so many people
here, all festive, it's wonderful.

Holly GROANS and puts her head in her hands.

HOLLY
So many people.

JOY
Aw, c'mon, it's not *that* bad. Think of
all the people who are gonna buy from
you!

HOLLY
There's about forty different bakeries
this time. I'm sure it won't be that
much of an increase.

Joy stares at Holly, barely STIFLING A LAUGH.

HOLLY
Joy.

JOY
Holly.

HOLLY
What did you do.

Joy bursts into excitement and GRABS HOLLY'S HANDS from
across the table.

JOY
I've been vouching for you to
everyone! I've been putting up
posters, telling people about how good
your stuff is, I even gave bad reviews
to the other shops!

HOLLY
That's low for you. And dangerous.

JOY

Probably! But it was so worth it. I'm sure I got about twenty people hooked in just the first few hours!

HOLLY

Twenty is... a lot.

JOY

Is it really?

HOLLY

In this town? Yes, definitely. These people never order a normal amount, they always want, like, sixty cupcakes, a three-tiered cake, one hundred and twenty cookies. It's a lot.

JOY

But they aren't from here. Maybe it'll be manageable?

HOLLY

Look at them, Joy. They act the exact same as the people who live here. Plus, it's December. Orders always spike in December.

JOY

I really messed up, huh?

Joy pouts and Holly clearly can't bring herself to scold her.

HOLLY

It's not that bad. It'll be a lot more work, but it'll be a lot more business, too.

JOY

You're not mad?

HOLLY

You gave me free advertising. Why would I be?

HOLLY

But this means that you have to let me work. No more coming over and forcing

me to watch some new show, alright?

JOY

Sir, yes sir!

Joy steals another pancake from Holly's plate.

JOY

You sure you can handle it? I still have Isaac on standby, you know!

HOLLY

You should worry about yourself. Your review bombed people. They're gonna retaliate.

JOY

Come on, you really think they'll do anything? You've met everyone here, they're all way too nice! Plus, I didn't attach my name to it!

HOLLY

Even Noelle?

Joy steals another bite from Holly's pancakes, sighing.

JOY

What is your deal with her, anyway?

HOLLY

Something about her is off. She's menacing.

JOY

She's barely five feet tall. And she has the demeanor of a fawn, might I add!

HOLLY

That's a big word for you.

JOY

Impressed?

HOLLY

Only a little. Anyway, be careful. Don't let anyone figure out it was you. *Especially* not Noelle.

Joy rests her head in her hand, conceding to Holly's stubborn

nature.

JOY

Fine, fine. I'll be careful.

There's a beat, a moment of silent eating before Joy speaks up again.

JOY

You sure you don't want Isaac?

HOLLY

I'm sure.

JOY

Really sure you don't want him?

HOLLY

Positive.

JOY

Not even a little bit?

HOLLY

No. I can do this on my own. I'm sure
he'd just slow me down.

Joy pouts in concern, but decides to give up for now

JOY

Okay, okay, I'll drop it. Just don't
burn yourself out, okay?

HOLLY

Please. When have you ever seen me
burnt out?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOLLY'S BAKERY - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Time skip to the next day. We see the clock reads "3:43 A.M.". Joy walks into the kitchen and sees Holly, covered in FLOUR and panting profusely. There's flour CAKED into her hair and her apron is covered in icing, sprinkles, and dough. The kitchen looks like a mess. Holly is SLUMPED over on the ground. She looks up at Joy through her eyebrows, and is barely able to get her words out.

HOLLY
(hoarsely, urgently)
Give me the boy.

JOY
Yes, ma'am!

EXT. TOWN - EARLY MORNING

Holly, clearly exhausted, trudges her way through the crowd of people gawking at the sunrise. There's an obscene amount of PROPOSALS that she has to DODGE while she walks.

Finally, Holly makes it to her destination: Evie's Baking Supplies One-Stop Shop. The sign is completely decked out, and it's covered in elaborate decorations and a fancy font that's only just legible. Holly tiredly pushes the door open as if it took every ounce of her energy to exert that force. She then drags herself into the shop.

INT. EVIE'S BAKING SUPPLIES ONE-STOP SHOP - MORNING

Holly enters and is immediately bombarded with an excessively bright Christmas tree in the very middle of the store. She squints at the light.

We see EVIE, a girl just a bit older than Holly with a warm demeanor. She's standing behind the counter. She then looks up, sees Holly, and excitedly waves to her like a little girl.

EVIE
(running up to Holly)
Holly! It's been so long since you've
come to my shop!

Holly simply nods, not sparing Evie a second glance. Her GAZE is fixed on the products as she meticulously scans the selection. After a few seconds, she sighs and finally acknowledges Evie.

HOLLY
Evie, which of these mixers would be
easiest for a beginner?

Evie tilts her head in confusion, the way foxes do.

EVIE
Beginner? Holly, honey, why would you
need that? You've been baking ever
since I met you. Unless...

Evie trails off in thought. A sense of dread washes over Holly, anticipating the stories Evie will come up with.

HOLLY

Stop right there. I just had to get a temporary employee. *Temporary.*

NOELLE (O.S.)

Wow, Holly, I'm proud of you.

The voice that replies to Holly is meek and small, yet soft and comforting nonetheless. Holly and Evie look over towards the direction of the voice. Evie looks delighted, while Holly looks slightly irritated.

The camera pans over to NOELLE, a sweet-looking shorter girl with a doe-eyed gaze. She seems only a bit younger than Holly. Her entire demeanor screams "innocent, vulnerable fawn," but something eerie lurks in her gaze. She has a small smile on her face as she looks up at Holly.

NOELLE

I never expected you to be so willing to work with other people.

Holly STARES for a moment, like she's trying to dissect Noelle's words for some hidden meaning.

HOLLY

Noelle. Yes, well, he's not staying long-

EVIE

(interrupting)

HE?!

Holly sighs exasperatedly.

HOLLY

Evie, don't make it weird. He's a temporary employee, that's all. After the Christmas season is over, he'll have to find somewhere else to work.

NOELLE

Huh? You've never had any trouble with keeping up in the past, Holly. What's changed this year?

HOLLY

The parade?

Noelle stares up expectantly. Holly's answer clearly wasn't good enough.

HOLLY

There's more people, and more business than usual. I *physically* can't keep up. Physically. Any human would do the same.

NOELLE

Wow, really? You're quite lucky. My bakery has been losing business this December. I think someone gave me bad reviews on purpose.

EVIE

Oh no, my poor little Noelle!

Evie hugs Noelle like a doting mother. Noelle keeps staring, directly into Holly's eyes. It's a little unnerving.

HOLLY

...Right.

Holly turns away from Noelle, clearly more uncomfortable with her than anyone else she's interacted with throughout the movie. She turns and grabs a handful of random baking supplies behind her from the ornate display.

HOLLY

Would any of these work?

EVIE

Hm? Oh, right, the supplies! You know, he might not need beginner ones. If he's applying for your bakery, I'd assume he's already put the work in.

NOELLE

It's true. No one would dare to work for you without practicing a little.

Noelle laughs innocently, but again, Holly simply gazes at her suspiciously for a moment before turning back to Evie.

HOLLY

That's not what I asked.

EVIE

(sighing exasperatedly)
Oh, Holly... yes, those work just

fine. Not too complicated to figure out, and plenty strong.

HOLLY

Great. Well, when you're done with... whatever this is...

She gestures to Evie and Noelle, who are still hugging.

HOLLY

I'll be waiting at the checkout counter.

Holly walks away off to the checkout counter quickly and IMPATIENTLY. Now Noelle and Evie are the only ones left on screen. Evie SMILES exasperatedly, like Holly is troublesome but still lovable, and lets go of Noelle to follow Holly with a PEP IN HER STEP. The camera stays on Noelle. She CHEWS ON HER LIP, clearly angry, but trying to keep up with her innocent persona.

EXT. HOLLY'S BAKERY - MORNING

We get a quick shot of the outside of Holly's Bakery. The mailbox is stuffed with decorated Christmas letters, many of which are SCATTERED on the floor and seemingly STOMPED ON by a frustrated Holly.

The sign on the door is flipped to "CLOSED." Despite this, we see two people walk up to the door: Joy and a boy we haven't met before. The boy has a small frame, maybe about an inch shorter than Joy, and his posture is nervous. He hesitantly REACHES HIS HAND OUT to open the door, looking to Joy for approval, before mustering his courage and entering.

INT. HOLLY'S BAKERY - KITCHEN - MORNING

We see Holly mixing some ingredients in a mixer. Joy and the mystery boy walk in. Holly doesn't turn around.

JOY

(sing-song voice)

Holly! I brought help for you!

Holly cringes, more out of shame than Joy's actions.

HOLLY

Please don't say it like that...

Holly finally turns around, and we get a clear shot of the boy, who we can now safely assume is ISAAC. He looks

SHEEPISH, like a kid on their first day of Kindergarten. He TWIDDLES HIS THUMBS incessantly.

Holly scrutinizes his appearance for a few moments, clearly making him more nervous. She looks more like she's inspecting the product on a pawn shop show than looking at another human being.

HOLLY

I assume you're Isaac?

Isaac finally meets her eyes, almost surprised she's speaking to him.

ISAAC

(stammering)

Huh? Oh! Oh- um, yes, I am!

JOY

Aw, c'mon, Holly, you're scaring the poor boy!

Joy SQUISHES Isaac's cheeks, the way a grandma would her infant grandchild.

JOY

(baby-talking)

Look how schweet he is!

Holly takes Joy's hands away from Isaac. Isaac lets out a barely audible sigh of relief.

HOLLY

He's a grown man, not a baby. And I don't care about how... sweet he is, I care if he's good.

JOY

Blah, you're no fun. Always all business with you... Fine, fine. He's good. I've had some of his stuff- I swear, it's like he's some angel of baking.

ISAAC

I'm really not all that-

HOLLY

(interrupting, curious)

Is that so?

Holly walks over to the counter, grabs a paper and a handheld mixer that still has the tag on, and throws them over to Isaac. He catches them, though he does fumble with his hands a bit.

HOLLY

Let's see what you can do.

Isaac looks down at the order Holly threw to him.

INSERT Order. It takes up almost the entire page. The designs requested are excessively intricate, and the amount ordered could feed a small country.

BACK TO SCENE Isaac gulps, still staring wide-eyed in shock at the order in front of him. He takes a deep breath, then steels his nerves, giving a SHAKY BUT DETERMINED smile.

CUT TO:

INT. - HOLLY'S BAKERY - KITCHEN - LATER

Holly and Joy walk into the kitchen after some time has passed. The scene is reminiscent of Holly earlier. The kitchen is completely TRASHED. Dough is all over the floor and walls, there's icing dripping from the ceiling, it looks like a glitter bomb went off, and there's faint smoke coming from the oven. In the middle of it all, on the island counter, sits one LONE CUPCAKE.

INSERT Cupcake. It's messy and LOPSIDED, but there was clearly a lot of effort put in.

BACK TO SCENE We get a close-up shot of Holly and Joy's FACES. Holly looks genuinely HORRIFIED. The shock and DREAD in her face is even more intense than when she discovered there would be a parade earlier. Joy laughs nervously, shifting her eyes around the kitchen.

Isaac turns to Holly, frowning PATHETICALLY. He's not in any better shape than the kitchen.

Holly can only stare dumbfounded at the scene in front of her, an open-mouthed state of shock. Joy turns to Holly, WAVING HER HAND in front of her face, and is met with no reaction.

JOY

...Okay, I know it looks bad...

Holly slowly nods, her gaze unmoving.

JOY

Just- trust me here, okay? Taste it.

Isaac opens his mouth, seemingly to utter an apology, but Joy cuts him off with an anticipant smile as Holly drags herself to the cupcake.

Holly hesitantly grabs the cupcake. It becomes more LOPSIDED in her hands, and a dollop of icing DRIPS onto Holly's hand, then the floor. She SCRUTINIZES the product again, a slight pout of DISAPPOINTMENT AND CONFUSION on her lips.

Very, very slowly, she brings the cupcake to her mouth and takes a bite, closing her eyes and wincing as she does so. This reaction only lasts a moment, though, before, her eyes widen again in shock. It's *delicious*. Holly's reaction is reminiscent of that one RATATOULLIE scene where the critic tastes Remy's food for the first time. It's the best thing she's ever tasted.

She hurriedly SHOVELS the rest of the cupcake into her mouth, chewing slowly and humming in utter delight.

The camera pans over to Joy and Isaac again. Holly is no longer the focus, but we can still see her blurred figure DEVOURING the pastry like she doesn't know when she'll eat again. Joy covers her mouth to suppress a smile. Isaac lets out a LONG SIGH of relief, physically HUNCHING over in the process. He's successfully avoided Holly's disapproval.

After devouring the cupcake, she comes back to her senses, CLEARING HER THROAT and straightening her posture back up. She's clearly embarrassed, though Isaac looks overjoyed.

JOY

Sooo?

Holly sighs in defeat.

HOLLY

What do you want me to say, Joy? It's good. You knew that already.

JOY

Mhm, didn't I do a good job?

HOLLY

What part of this was your doing, exactly?

JOY

(pouting)

Hey! I brought him here, that counts
for something, doesn't it?

Holly rolls her eyes, though she's unable to hide the
AFFECTIONATE SMILE that shines through.

Holly attempts to walk over to Joy, MANUEVERING her way
through the extravagant mess that clutters every surface.
Every ounce of her focus has to be shifted to getting through
her kitchen without breaking a bone. When she finally makes
it, the affectionate smile is gone. Her expression is now an
odd concoction of annoyance and brutal determination.

HOLLY

Your name is Isaac, right?

Isaac simply nods.

ISAAC

I'm sorry about... all this, Miss
Holly, I really didn't try to-

HOLLY

(interrupting with a groan)

Don't apologize now, it's already
done. That's not what I'm talking to
you for.

Isaac doesn't reply, nervously waiting for her to continue.

HOLLY

How did you get it to taste like *that*?

ISAAC

Is... "that" good or bad?

HOLLY

Are you serious?

Holly aggressively SLAPS her hands on Isaac's shoulders,
pulling his face closer to hers in dire seriousness.

HOLLY

It was *delicious*.

Joy whistles in amusement, gently pushing Holly backwards.
When we finally get another shot of Isaac's face, he's
blushing so hard it seems like he might pass out. From
embarrassment, shock, or just a deep sense of admiration,

it's not yet clear.

JOY

Wow! That's high praise coming from Holly! Seriously, in the entire time I've known her, I've never heard her compliment someone that enthusiastically!

ISAAC

That was enthusiastic..?

Holly PUSHES Joy back impatiently, again getting closer to Isaac, but not as close as last time.

HOLLY

Still, *this*...

She gestures to the destroyed mess of a kitchen, and we get a quick shot of the scene again. The oven makes a pathetic huff before the door falls off. A large glob of icing plops down from the ceiling.

Holly shudders before continuing her speech.

HOLLY

This can't happen.

Isaac frowns in disappointment for a moment.

ISAAC

I understand, Miss. I'm sorry-

HOLLY

So we'll fix it.

Isaac's face transforms into surprised excitement again. Holly's however, looks much more sinister. She's determined, she has a plan, and unfortunately for Isaac, she's going to work him to the bone until he's molded into the perfect assistant. Her smile sends shivers down Isaac's spine.

Joy can sense this dangerous determination, and she's not planning to get caught in the crossfire.

JOY

(laughing nervously)

Ah... haha... I'm gonna go... okay?
Isaac... good luck.

Joy bolts out of the house. Isaac turns to watch her leave,

but Holly grips his arm firmly, staring at him with that same crazed smile on her face.

HOLLY

Where do you think you're going? We have work to do, assistant.

We get a shot of Isaac's face. All he's thinking is "I'm so screwed."

MONTAGE:

- Holly and Isaac cleaning the kitchen. Isaac is barely done with one counter when he turns around and sees Holly, who has cleaned almost the ENTIRE kitchen. She's huffing in exhaustion, but also exhilarating enthusiasm: she's being productive, she's in control, she's IN HER ELEMENT.

- Holly sitting up on the now-clean island counter, barking orders silently at Isaac. He sweats over on the main kitchen counter, SLOWLY AND PAINSTAKINGLY icing a cookie, crumbl-cookie style. Holly looks over his shoulder, seemingly reprimands him, and he flinches, completely RUINING the design. Holly sighs heavily, pinching the bridge of her nose with her index and thumb.

- Flash forward to later, Isaac and Holly wait ANXIOUSLY in front of the oven. It dings and Isaac hastily opens the oven to reveal... half of a cake. The other half somehow EXPLODED. We get a quick shot of the inside of the oven. Half of it is covered in exploded icing, the other half is perfectly pristine. Isaac sheepishly laughs. Holly sticks her finger in the oven, licking the exploded icing off- and REMEMBERS why she's working this hard to train him. They continue their painstaking training arc.

- We see Holly and Isaac standing over the counter again. We can't see what they're working on, but they both have an INTENSE look of focus.

- Isaac smiling VICTORIOUSLY down at something that we can't see. The camera pans down, and we see another crumbl-cookie esque cookie. Just one. It's not as bad as the cupcake from earlier! Still, it's just okay- not horrifically ugly, but nothing to be all that happy about either. The camera goes back to Isaac, and we see Holly approach him from behind, a PROUD, "I-taught-him-that" smile on her face. She gives him a reassuring pat on the head, before whisking away the cookie and SLAMMING a stack of order papers in front of him. His victorious mood is crushed yet again.

- Outside of the bakery. It is now NIGHT. All the adjacent building's lights are shut off, and the once bustling town outside is quiet and asleep. The only lights on come from Holly's KITCHEN. We can see Isaac and Holly's SILHOUETTES through the window working vigorously.

- We come back to the inside of the kitchen. Holly and Isaac are EXHAUSTED. Both are panting. Isaac slumps down onto the floor. Finally, we look at the fruits of their labor: a HALF-DECENT tray of cupcakes, covered in copious amounts of edible GLITTER and fondant sculpted to look like a Christmas tree, snowflakes, a Santa hat, etc. etc.. The fondant looks amateur at best, but at least it's staying intact.

END MONTAGE