

Christmas Lights

written by

Derek Roy

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Gray dull lights and bleak dust particles surround SUZANNE SCOTT (mid 30's) as she sits on her king-sized bed. Christmas music plays quietly on a radio next to the bed. Suzanne listens to a voice message on her phone.

VOICEMAIL

Miss Scott, please get back to me so we can finalize these divorce papers. Mr. Scott and his mistress would like to move on with their lives. Please call me back at--

Suzanne hangs up her phone. She throws it onto the bed and buries her head into her hands. The bleak sunlight dances through the closed blinds and onto her huddled figure.

INT. PERCY'S BEDROOM - DAY

PERCY SCOTT (12 year's old) taps on a controller furiously as he plays a video game on his 21" TV. Suzanne pokes her head into the room. Percy doesn't even notice her.

SUZANNE

Hey. Hey.

PERCY

What do you want, Mom?

SUZANNE

I was thinking we could put up the Christmas lights today. Would you like to help me?

Percy sighs and mutters to himself. He pauses the game, and looks over at her.

PERCY

Do I have to?

SUZANNE

Come on. It'll be fun!

PERCY

No it won't.

SUZANNE

You've been playing those games all day. It'll be good for you to get some sun.

PERCY

But all you'll do is curse a lot.

SUZANNE

What?

PERCY

Every time we try to do anything without Dad, you start cursing a--

SUZANNE

Hey. I promise. I won't cuss at all.

Percy droops his head.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

SUZANNE

Stupid, motherfucking piece-of-shit!

PERCY

Mom!

Suzanne balances above an extended ladder which leans against their two-story house. Percy weighs it down at the bottom.

SUZANNE

Sorry. I'm just trying to get this stupid fucking thing--

She holds up the string of Christmas lights (a mixture of fake, colorful icicles and snowflakes) against the rim of the roof. She presses the staple gun against it and fires.

She misses, and a rogue light bounces off the roof and breaks next to Percy.

PERCY

Be careful!

SUZANNE

It's a lot higher than it looks.

PERCY

(under his breath)
Dad would be able to reach it.

Suzanne hears him. She groans and rests her head against the house. Her eyes flicker to a nearby window. She looks from the window to the higher part of the roof she can't reach.

EXT. SECOND STORY WINDOW - DAY

Percy dangles outside the opened window as Suzanne holds him by his legs. His arms swing wildly, with the lights in one hand and the staple gun in the other.

PERCY

Mom. Mom! MOM! This isn't safe!

SUZANNE

Oh, stop being a baby. It's perfectly safe, I got you. Now just staple the lights to the roof. Go on.

PERCY

Mom, I can't do this.

SUZANNE

Sure you can, just reach.

Percy hesitantly reaches out and tries to staple the lights. Suzanne shuffles and regrips Percy. Percy lunges backwards and almost drops the staple gun.

PERCY

You're going to drop me!

SUZANNE

No I'm not.

PERCY

Yes you are!

SUZANNE

No I'm not, Percy. Now staple the goddamn lights!

Percy, his teeth chattering from fear, reaches up towards the roof.

SUZANNE

Staple it, Percy. Staple it.

PERCY

I'm trying!

SUZANNE

Then do it!

PERCY

Stop yelling at me!

SUZANNE

I'm not fucking yelling!

As Percy tries to crunch up and staple the lights, a GROUP OF KIDS ride by on bikes. They look up at the odd sight: Suzanne's face peeking out between Percy's legs as she holds him from the inside of the house.

The kids begin to laugh. Percy's face goes white as he whips his head around. He stares at them far below.

KID #1

Percy, what you doing?

KID #2

Him and his mom are having fun.

PERCY

Shut up!

The kids race off laughing.

SUZANNE

Come on, Percy. You're almost there.

PERCY

Put me down.

SUZANNE

But--

PERCY

PUT ME DOWN!

Suzanne pulls Percy back into the house.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Percy clamors into the room. Sweat beads down his face. Suzanne puts her hands on her hips and tries to think of something else.

PERCY

What is wrong with you?!

SUZANNE

I'm just trying to get the lights up.

PERCY

We can't do it, all right? We can't do it without Dad.

SUZANNE

Percy. We don't need your father--

PERCY

Yes, we do! I didn't want to put up the lights. This should be Dad's job.

SUZANNE

Well your Dad won't be around any more, so we have to do these things ourselves.

PERCY

Why not! Why won't he come back.

SUZANNE

Percy--

PERCY

Huh?! Answer me.

SUZANNE

You can ask him yourself.

PERCY

All I wanted to do was play fucking video games.

SUZANNE

Hey! Language! You can't talk to me like that.

Percy moans and throws his hands into the air. Suzanne steps up to him.

SUZANNE

I'm so sorry I wanted us to spend time together. My fault! My fault for trying to be a good mother. I forgot you just want to hide from me in your room.

PERCY

I'm not trying to hide. I'm just trying to play games with my friends.

SUZANNE

Then go to your room!

PERCY

Fine!

SUZANNE

Fine!

Percy storms off, muttering something about his father under his breath. Suzanne falls to the ground and holds back tears.

INT. PERCY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Percy punches a pillow on top of his bed. He grips it and tosses it against a picture of his father on the wall. He stands in the middle of the room with clinched fists.

His breaths slowly crawl to a halt. He hears something strange. Percy listens. A faint *BOINK, BONK, BOINK*, sound repeats over and over.

Percy furrows his brow. He crosses the his bedroom window and looks out it. What he sees causes his mouth to drop.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Percy cautiously steps out of the house. He spots his mom jumping on the hood of their car. Suzanne holds the lights in one hand and the staple gun in the other. At the height of her jump, she tries to staple the lights to the roof.

Percy looks around the neighborhood, hoping no one else is watching his crazy mother. Her hair is a wanton mess and she sweats from every pore.

PERCY

What are you doing?

SUZANNE

What's it look like?

Suzanne continues to jump up and down upon the hood of her car. Th hood dents inwards. Suzanne grunts as she tries to get high enough to staple the last part of the house. No success.

Percy sighs.

PERCY

I'm sorry about what I said about Dad. I didn't mean it.

Suzanne drops her head. She sits on top of the hood and looks over at her son.

SUZANNE

Yes you did, but it's not your fault. I really thought we could do it.

PERCY

I just... I don't know.

SUZANNE

It's okay. I don't know what I'm doing either.

Percy stares up at the last portion of undecorated roof. He looks from it, down to his distraught mother, and back up to the roof.

PERCY

I think I thought of something.

Suzanne glances up at him.

EXT. SECOND STORY WINDOW - DAY

Percy gently balances on top of the roof. He gives a nervous grin to Suzanne, who smiles up at him. She tosses up the string of lights. Percy catches it and staples it to the roof.

INT. PERCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Christmas music plays in the background as Suzanne watches Percy play video games. They smile at one another, and a twinkle of vibrant red and green sparkles from the window.

Suzanne hugs her son.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The two-story home of Suzanne and Percy glimmers with all the joy and glee of a very, very messy entanglement of Christmas lights.

But it's beautiful mess. It's *their* mess.

As the first snowfall of winter falls on the house, the lights upon it sparkle with radiance and warmth.

THE END