

Jessica runs out of the kitchen. John is about to go after her, but stays where he is.

LIGHTS DOWN.

Then...

WIND BLOWS. Also, a BANGING SOUND. Both sounds are muted at first, but gradually get louder.

SCENE 9 - SHED - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night. The mystery of the banging sound is quickly solved. The door of an old shed on the Riggs' property is open and whipping back and forth in the wind and slamming up against the side of the shed.

A flashlight beam pierces through the darkness. Jessica appears a moment later. She has properly dressed for her excursion into the cold night. Winter jacket, gloves, jeans, boots. When she gets to the shed, she grabs the door to prevent another loud bang and peers cautiously inside the shed.

JESSICA

Anyone in there?

When there is no answer, Jessica steps into the shed and closes the door behind her. Her flashlight reveals a musty, cobwebby place, full of discarded farm equipment. An old-fashioned sleigh is tucked away in one corner, boxes piled high on its seat.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hello? Anyone here?

As if in reply, a stack of old wooden barrels suddenly CRASHES to the floor. Jessica YELPS in surprise and shines her flashlight in the direction of the commotion.

There, in the beam of the flashlight, is the reindeer from the woods!

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's you.

Surprise, wonder and delight all register in Jessica's expression.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You followed me home.

The reindeer hobbles from the corner of the shed, then collapses onto the floor.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No!

Jessica rushes to the deer, then stops when her approach causes the injured animal to try to get back up.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's okay. I'm not gonna hurt you.

The deer settles a bit.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I just want to check out your leg, okay?

Jessica cautiously approaches the deer. Once again the deer struggles to get up, but gives up, instead issuing a plaintive cry.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Awww, you poor thing.

Jessica takes off her scarf and sits next to the deer, which makes no attempt to get away. But when Jessica tries to wrap her scarf around his injured leg, the animal jerks back.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm just gonna wrap this around your leg. It'll make you feel better.

The exhausted deer exhales and lays on its side. This time it doesn't resist as Jessica ties the scarf around his leg.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

That'll have to do for now.

The deer lies still. When Jessica pets the deer, she gets no resistance from the animal. The reindeer HUFFS loudly.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I wish I could stay here with you tonight, but my dad might notice I'm gone. Don't worry, though. First thing tomorrow, I'm going for Dr. Benton. He's our vet. He'll fix you up.

Jessica continues to pet the deer.