

John holds up the heavy book that Jessica took out to the shed. The one Prancer tried to eat.

JOHN

Found this when I was out in the shed.

Jessica hesitates, then goes to her father and takes the book. She sits on her bed and opens the book.

JESSICA

Read something to me?

John isn't too sure about that. But he approaches Jessica and sits on the bed.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Just this one part. It's my favorite.

John looks at the passage for long moment.

JOHN

(reading)

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside. But there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man can tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view the beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Virginia, in all the world there is nothing else real and abiding. No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives, and lives forever. A thousand years from now, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

JESSICA

I didn't really want to run away. I just wanted you to find me, and bring me back here and tell me everything was going to be okay. Like it used to be.

JOHN

Aw, Jessie, I can't tell you everything's gonna be all right. I wish I could. But things are always going to be hard around here. Could be I'll lose this farm someday. I could bear that. What I can't bear is the...

John is trying to control his emotions.

JOHN (CONT'D)

When you were in the hospital last night, I saw what it would be like around here not to have you around.

John looks at his daughter.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I love you, Jessie.

Jessica grabs her father and hugs him.

JESSICA

I love you, too, dad.

JOHN

Aw, baby. It's okay. Don't cry. You're home, honey. And that's where you're going to stay.

Cradling Jessica in his arms, John stands.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I have something I want to show you.

John takes Jessica to a window out in the hallway. Jessica sees something the audience can't, but we do hear Prancer's collar bells ring out and a vocal greeting from the deer.

JESSICA

What's Prancer doing in the back of your pickup?

JOHN

I tracked Herb down and gave him back his money. I think we still have time to get him out to Antler ridge. Santa hasn't been to Three Oaks yet.

JESSICA

We don't have to, daddy. I know he's not really Prancer.

JOHN

You're going to have a hard time convincing all those people downstairs of that.