

Bethany, Claire

1.3 Foster Home

What Do You Want for Christmas?

As the holidays draw closer, Claire finds herself watching the bustling pedestrians below with their groceries and gifts (imagining particular ones as her family). She spends many hours in front of the window this way.

I just don't understand.

Claire

What? What don't you understand?

Bethany

There are so many people down there.

Claire

So! There's always people down there.

Bethany

No, that's not what I mean. Eh . . . there's so many people down there and nobody needs us.

Claire

So nobody wants us. So!

Bethany

So? Doesn't that bother you?

Claire

Nope!

Bethany

Not even a little?

Claire

No. Well maybe a little, but when you've been here as long as I have, it's just the way it is. You live with it.

Bethany

I don't believe that. There's gotta be someone out there who thinks we're worth something. Someone who needs a kid. Someone who needs *me . . . and* you.

Claire

Eww, you're making me sick. Stop talking like that!

Bethany

Bethany! C'mon, there's got to be at least one family out there.

Claire

Maybe you should ask Santa for one! (Claire does not answer right away.) That was a joke, Claire! Just a joke!

Bethany

Well, what do you want for Christmas?

Claire

Bethany

Me? I want a brand new dress, some shoes—some nice shoes—with no scuff. And a box of Philton’s Chocolates. Mmm, wouldn’t that be awesome?

Claire

That’s all?

Bethany

Well. A bicycle would be nice. Or, maybe some roller skates.

Claire gestures, as in “What else?”

. . . and a record player. Oh, and a new dress. Wait, did I already say that? Now I’m done! What do you want?

Claire turns and moves back toward the window. Slight pause.

Claire

Somewhat under her breath> A last name. I want a last name.

Bethany joins her at the window.

Bethany

Aw, c’mon Claire. Snap out of it. I know how much you want a family, and you’ll get one someday. But you can’t just mope around your whole life.

Claire doesn’t respond to Bethany’s attempted encouragement. After receiving no response, Bethany sits down behind her, wraps her arms around Claire, and begins swaying her side to side.

Besides, at least you’re not out on the street, and I can be could be your sister.

Still nothing from Claire, so Bethany squeezes her harder and sways a bit more.

I love you.

Even harder.

Claire

You can stop now. **(Bethany does not stop but gets more aggressive.)**

I said you can stop. **(Bethany continues her swaying and begins laughing.)**

All right that’s it. Get off me!

Claire breaks loose from Bethany’s hug and shoves her.

Claire

Hopefully, my new sister won’t be such a pest!

Bethany laughing, regains her balance and shoves Claire clean off the bed onto the floor.

Claire

Hey!

As Bethany grabs her gut in full laughter, Claire gets up and shoves her off the bed also. They both laugh as Bethany pulls herself up to the window and glances through it. She sees a bright red balloon down in the city street that suddenly catches her attention.

Bethany

Maybe you will end up out on the street because you're such a brat, and nobody wants a little . . . Hey, what's that?

Claire quickly gets up to take a look.

Claire

What? Where? **(She looks around.)**

Bethany

It's a balloon or something. A red one.

Claire

Hey, that's him.

She perks up with great excitement.

Claire

Bethany! There he is!

Bethany

There who is?

Claire

The man.

Bethany

You mean that old grumpy guy?

Claire

Yeah. That's him.

Bethany

Why are you interested in him? Let it go already!

Claire

You think he's got kids?

Bethany

Why should I care? Why do you care? He's a crunchy old man.

Claire

Don't you want a family?

Bethany

Yes, but not some dried up old guy man from off the street! You're not serious are you?

Claire simply smiles at her.

Bethany

You can't just go up to a stranger and ask him to be your father!

Claire

Well, he needs somebody, and I need a family. So, what's the big deal if I help things along a little?

Bethany, a bit confused, stops in her tracks and stares at Claire.

I've been watching him for a while. [**Bethany:** "What?"] Every week he goes to Miller's Market, gets French bread and white grapes. Then he goes to Philton's Candy shop for a red balloon. And then a single red rose at Chiffaun's Flowers.

Bethany

What are you talking about?

Claire

He does the same thing *every week*.

Bethany

So!

Claire

Well, why? Who's he getting them for? I never see him with anyone. He's always by himself.

Bethany

He sounds crazy to me.

Claire

C'mon Beth, can you imagine getting roses and red balloons every week.

Bethany

Claire, (**Looking at him**) he's weird, he's mean, and he's old. He probably lives under a bridge.

Claire

Well, I'm going to find out.

Bethany

Okay, now I *know* you've lost your mind.

Claire

C'mon, go with me.

Bethany

No way! He's probably got a dungeon full of kids that he's fattening up to go with the French bread. Are you kidding?!

Bethany, makes monster gestures with her arms. Claire makes a "stop being silly" face back.

. . . Besides, how are you gonna going to get out of here?

Claire

I don't know yet, but something will come up. You'll see.

Cynthia Applegate enters.

. . . .

All settle and bow their heads. Thoman follows suit.

Most gracious and precious Lord, we thank you for your many blessings and provision for our every need. We thank you for our very special guest, Mr. Baker, and pray that you would bless him with the desires of his heart, especially this holiday season. We also give thanks for this meal and ask that you would bless it. In your name. Amen.

All

Amen.

Thoman is moved by the prayer and unsettled at the same time. Hands start moving about the table, grabbing plates and bowls, and passing dishes. Thoman watches the frenzy as he contemplates the barrage of questions that will come.

Ms. Applegate

So, Mr. Baker, what do you do?

Thoman

I make toys; well I used to make toys.

Bethany

Excitedly>You're a toymaker?!

Thoman

I used to be.

Claire

Do you have a toyshop?

Thoman

Yes, I do.

Claire

Wow. I've never seen a real toyshop before. What kind of toys do you make?

Thoman

Toy soldiers, stuffed animals, games, planes, automobiles, boats, castles, balls, dolls—all kinds, really. But like I said, I haven't for quite some time now.

Bethany

Sarcastically, with food in her mouth>Did you have elves?

Ms. Applegate

Bethany, mind your manners.

Thoman

That's quite all right, Ms. Applegate. All my workers were people like me. We all loved making toys.

Claire

That must be amazing. I think I would like to work in a toy shop. Could I work for you someday?

Thoman

Well, like I said, I'm retired.

It gets a bit quiet. They look around at each other, as they all take several bites of food.

Bethany

So you stopped making toys. Why would you do that?

Ms. Applegate

Bethany! Would you pass the Bratwurst, please?

Bethany

Uh . . . which one is that?

Ms. Applegate

The one that looks like a hotdog.

Bethany

Oh. Here you go. <Hesitant and amused at the strange hotdog

Ms. Applegate

Mr. Baker, do you have any family around?

Thoman

No. I live by myself.

Bethany

Styly>You're *not* married?

Thoman

Not now. I used to be.

Bethany

You mean, you're divorced?

The sweat on Thoman's brow builds, and he pats it with his napkin.

Ms. Applegate

Bethany!

Thoman

No. My wife died ten years ago.

Claire's head snaps up from a mouthful of food. She quickly looks into Thoman's eyes, as her own heart grips her chest.

Ms. Applegate

Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Baker.

Bethany

How did she die?

Ms. Applegate and Claire

Bethany!

The room gets deafly quite. Claire lowers her head in sympathy. Ms. Applegate facially expresses her disapproval of Bethany's grilling. Bethany shrugs her shoulders apologetically.

Thoman

Listen. I . . . uh . . . I better go. I don't think I'm quite ready for this yet.

He gets up and gets his coat, heading towards the front door. The others also get up, trying to stop him.

Claire

Please, Mr. Baker, don't listen to Bethany. Sometimes she doesn't know when to stop talking.

Claire punches Bethany in the shoulder.

Bethany

Oh! Uh, I'm sorry, Mr. Baker. I didn't mean to be so nosy.

Ms. Applegate

Yes, Mr. Baker, please do stay. I apologize for all the questions.

Thoman

No, I think it's best if I go now. I do appreciate your hospitality. And Claire, I'll show you my shop sometime. Thank you all. Good evening.

Thoman exits and the others look at each other a bit shocked and confused. Claire gives Bethany a hard shove.

Claire

Thanks a lot, Bethany!

Bethany

I told you he was weird.

Ms. Applegate

All right ladies, back to the table.

They go back to the table. Claire punches Bethany in the shoulder again.

Bethany

Hey!

Ms. Applegate

Girls, that's enough. Mr. Baker could be dealing with something we don't know about. We shouldn't be judging him; we should be praying for him.

Claire

Or maybe we should be praying for me not to sock Bethany right in the mouth.

Bethany gives Claire a snarling look.

Ms. Applegate

That's quite enough ladies. Finish your dinner.

Lights out.

Bethany, Claire

1.14

Foster Home

Vanilla Ice Cream

Claire is sitting on a chair looking downhearted, twiddling with an old worn out rag doll (Mr. Roosevelt from the opening scene). Bethany enters.

Bethany

Claire, Ms. Applegate just got a call from Miss Tilbert. She says it looks like the couple's application is going to be accepted. They just have a few more items to check, and it will be official.

No response from Claire.

Claire? You remember the couple that's going to adopt you? Claire?

Claire

Melancholy>Yes, I remember.

Bethany

C'mon, Claire, snap out of it. Miss Tilbert says they're really excited. Aren't you?

Claire

Yeah . . . I suppose.

Bethany

Are you still thinking about old man Baker? Claire, that's so messed up. He's messed up. Every time you see him, he freaks out and ends up leaving or asking you to leave.

Claire

That's not true.

Bethany, his wife died. He really loved her, and now he's all alone. It's just not right.

Bethany

But Claire, you've been moping around for the last two days. You know how Ms. Applegate says, "Everybody has challenges and tests to face in life"? Well, you can't save everybody else's life and forget about yours.

Claire

(Flustered and continuing from before) And think about all those toys, just lying there covered with dust and . . . spiders. (I hate spiders.) I don't know. You're right, but he just keeps coming back to . . . I . . . I don't know why, but I can't just ignore it.

Bethany

So what are you gonna do?

Claire

I don't know. Pray. I'm gonna pray.

Bethany

Do you think that will work?

Claire

I don't know. I'm gonna pray that God will not forget about him.

Bethany

Well, while you're waiting, you want some vanilla ice cream?

Claire

(Still thoughtful) Is that all you think about?

Bethany gives puppy dog eyes, but still no movement from Claire. Bethany picks up Mr. Roosevelt and speaks for him (like a ventriloquist, but not trying to hide her own speaking), as if he were God.

Bethany

(In her best God voice) Okay, Claire. This is God. I give up. I won't forget about Mr. Baker. Now, please go and have some vanilla ice cream with Bethany.

Claire

Okay, okay. I give up.

Bethany perks up and heads to the kitchen. As she does, she tosses the doll onto the chair, with the following:

Bethany

Boy that's a dilapidated, old doll. Why do you keep that thing around? It's totally worthless.

Claire stops in her tracks as if she's tired of that question.

Pause.

Claire

You really don't know? [**Bethany:** "No, I guess not."] Let me see if I can explain it to you. **Pause.** ^{Deliberative}>Some things are *loved* . . . because . . . they are *valuable*. Right? (**Bethany shrugs her shoulders while shaking her head yes.**) *But* . . . some things . . . are *valuable* . . . because they're *loved*. Get it?

Bethany looks at Claire, shrugs, and shakes her head no.

Bethany

I love ice cream. Does that count?

Claire

U-h-h-h-h-h! (**Claire groans/growls and shakes her head no.**)

They go to the kitchen as Ms. Applegate enters the room.

Ms. Applegate

What are you two up to?

Bethany

We're just getting some ice cream.

Ms. Applegate

Please don't make a mess. I just finished cleaning up.

Claire & Bethany

Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Applegate

And don't be up too late!

Lights fade out and back up on the next scene.