

It's a Squirrely Life

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INT. BANK HEIST OPENING

GEORGE, a squirrel wearing a suit jacket, puts his hands up with fear in his eyes.

GEORGE
Please don't hurt me!

Two YOUNG SQUIRRELS with ski-masks over their faces point sticks at George. One of the robbers hands him a burlap sack.

ROBBER #1
Gimme all your nuts.

George takes the sack and stuffs it full.

A female squirrel, MARY, clutches a BABY to her chest.

MARY
You won't get away with this. Bad guys never win.

GEORGE
Please, Mary. Don't make them mad.

George hands the sack to the robbers.

ROBBER #2
Let's go!

The robbers back away, laughing.

MARY
(to George)
You can't let them get away with this.

GEORGE
No one needs to lose a life today, dear.

Mary rolls her eyes at George and hands him the baby.

MARY
If you won't stop them, I will.

Mary pursues the robbers. They look back and see her coming.

ROBBER #2
Run!

The robbers pick up their pace. One runs into a Christmas tree and falls. Mary tackles him and rips off his ski mask.

MARY
Hey, I know you!

The other robber looks back and trips over a toy on the floor. Mary grabs the sack from him as he pulls off his mask.

ROBBER #1
No fair, Mama.

MARY
I told you. Bad guys never win.

Mary empties the sack. Wooden blocks fall out onto the floor.

ROBBER #2
Okay, I'm banker now!

Pull back to reveal they're not in a bank, they're in the living room of a small tree house. The bank robbers are TODDLER squirrels.

TODDLER SQUIRREL
Dada, you be bad guy this time.

GEORGE
Um, I'm not sure how good I'd be at that.

GRETA, George's old mother-in-law, stands behind him with the help of a walker.

GRETA
I'm not sure how good you are at a lot of things.

George turns around and sees Greta so close behind him.

GEORGE
Ah!

MARY
Oh, mother. Leave him alone.

Greta bites into an apple loudly, leaving only the core. She tosses it on the floor. George recoils.

George hands the baby back to Mary. She sighs and passes the baby to Greta.

GEORGE
I'd love to play more, but Dada has to go to work to protect the real bank. Let the countdown to Christmas begin!

MARY

You'll be ready in time. You
always are.

George kisses Mary and then the baby, who SPITS UP on his jacket. He moans while Mary, Greta, and the toddlers snicker.

EXT. GEORGE'S TREE HOUSE - OAK CREEK - MORNING COMMUTE

George walks out into the bustling city of Oak Creek. ANIMALS hustle through the trees; SQUIRRELS, BIRDS, ANTS, CHIPMUNKS, RABBITS, and MICE.

Two COMMUTER SQUIRRELS from different directions SMASH into each other, causing a line of squirrels waiting to climb down the tree.

GEORGE

(moans)

Looks like a 30 squirrel pile up!
I think I'll take the track.

INT. SUBWAY - MOMENTS LATER

George joins a group of animals on a subway-like platform. A BADGER pulls the long plank through the tree trunk, down an underground tunnel.

A RAT next to George whips his tail around as he holds a pair of seashells up to his ears like headphones. His tail hits George in the face. George patiently moves it aside, but it whips him again. He politely endures the non-stop whipping.

The platform bursts out of the ground and onto grass. It stops, and George jumps off. New animals huddle on.

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

George passes an "Oak Creek" SIGN that marks the TOWN CENTER. He breaks into the song "Oak Creek Has Heart" as he enthusiastically greets all the animals he meets.

Tall trees protect the open square where a Christmas tree stands in the middle. MICE decorate the tree with berries, ants carry garland, and birds hang mistletoe.

The townspeople join George in his song. The town comes to life with spectacle as they commute. Shops line the center in the bases of the surrounding trees. Squirrels sell goods from stalls and enjoy cafes. At the gym, animals run on treadmills made of wood and rocks with nuts hanging over their heads to motivate them. A flock of BUTTERFLIES fly overhead.

A RABBIT with a fake leg, carrying groceries, struggles to open the door of a shop. George runs over to hold the door for him.

RABBIT
Thanks, George!

GEORGE
My pleasure.

George carries on and waves hello to a few animals that pass. An OLD SQUIRREL walking in front of him drops a seed. George picks it up.

GEORGE
Excuse me, Stewart. You dropped your seed.

OLD SQUIRREL
What's that George? I peed? Aw, not again!

The deaf old squirrel checks his pants for a wet spot.

GEORGE
(loudly)
Your seed. You dropped your seed.

OLD SQUIRREL
Stampede? Where?!

Old Squirrel looks around scared.

OLD SQUIRREL
Now I really do need to pee.

George hands the seed back to him and walks away smiling.

OLD SQUIRREL
Ah, a banker without greed!

EXT. TREE ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

George takes an elevator up a massive tree and gets off on the 10th floor, home to the OAK CREEK BANK.

A butterfly emerges from a cocoon hanging from a nearby branch as George unlocks the front door.

INT. OAK CREEK BANK - MOMENTS LATER

George opens the teller window and organizes nuts and seeds into a wooden cash register. Then he opens the vault.

INT. VAULT - OAK CREEK BANK - CONTINUOUS

Piles of nuts, seeds, sticks, and berries. Markings on the wall indicate the vault is 4/5ths full.

George pulls out a LEDGER book with all the bank's transactions. He reviews it.

GEORGE
 (to himself)
 You can, and will, fill this vault
 before the first big storm.
 Cutting it close this year...
 Christmas is coming.

MADDY (O.S.)
 Good morning, George!

INT. OAK CREEK BANK - MORNING

George walks to the teller station where MADDY, the well-dressed Queen of the ant colony stands.

GEORGE
 Maddy! Just the ant I wanted to
 see. Ready to deposit the colony's
 weekly stash?

MADDY
 Yes, darling.

Maddy snaps her fingers, and SOLDIER ANTS bring their stash in like an assembly line.

NOEL, a flying squirrel with cape-like wings, glides through the door with her son, JUNIOR, as the ants toil.

GEORGE
 Good morning, Noel. Making a
 deposit today?

NOEL
 (whispers)
 Withdraw I'm afraid.
 (louder)
 Junior lost his first tooth and
 we'll be leaving it for the
 Squirrel Fairy.

Junior gives George a grin, showing off his missing tooth.

GEORGE
 How exciting!
 (MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)
(whispers to Noel)
But Noel, your account has a
negative balance already.

Maddy eavesdrops as the ants compile her deposit.

NOEL
(whispers)
This foraging season has been so
dangerous. It's not easy being a
single mom.

GEORGE
I know.

Noel deflates. George softens.

Maddy looks on with raised antenna.

GEORGE
(whispers)
What's one more seed going to
hurt? You'll pay it back soon
enough. We're in this together.

George takes a seed out and hands it to Noel.

NOEL
Oh, George. You're the best!

GEORGE
Losing a front tooth is a really
big deal.
(to Junior)
Congratulations.

Junior smiles, showing his missing tooth. Noel and Junior leave
the bank elated.

George makes a note of the lost seed in his ledger.

A BIG BURLY squirrel enters.

GEORGE
There's a sight for sore eyes.
How'd the foraging go last night,
Burly?

Big Burly drops a few nuts, seeds, and berries onto the table.

BIG BURLY
I had to make a run for my life!

GEORGE

Not again...

BIG BURLY

That's right. The bear! Its growls were louder than the waterfall.

Maddy gasps. George becomes aware of her again.

BIG BURLY

I've got a family of twenty at home. I can't be a hero.

GEORGE

Sure. Of course. Not to worry, we're in this together.

George puts on a brave face as Big Burly leaves solemnly. He marks Burly's small deposit in the ledger and turns his attention to Maddy.

GEORGE

All set with your deposit, Maddy?

MADDY

I'm afraid we won't be making a deposit today after all, George.

GEORGE

But --

MADDY

I have thousands of constituents to consider. If the bank is struggling, we must reconsider our options. I'm sure you understand.

Maddy snaps her fingers twice. The assembly line reverses.

A bumbling ant, TONY, doesn't hear the command and passes his nut forward while the next ant passes one back. Tony juggles two nuts as more come and crash down onto his head.

Maddy rolls her eyes at Tony's incompetence.

George catches four nuts before they fall on Tony, two in his paws and two with his feet. He supports himself with his tail, balancing the nuts as he speaks with Maddy.

GEORGE

There's still another week before Christmas. We always have enough before then.

George tosses the nuts back to Tony.

Tony juggles the nuts confidently, but soon loses control, sending them toppling onto him.

MADDY

I know when Christmas is. I can't have my workers breaking their backs for the benefit of other animals. I'm afraid we must pull our entire inventory.

GEORGE

Please, I'm begging you.

Maddy smiles sympathetically.

MADDY

Please know it is with a heavy heart that we must take our business elsewhere. I'll send some of my workers over to collect the rest later. Do take care, George.

Maddy walks out with her head held high. George deflates.

Tony scrambles to pick up as many nuts as he can carry.

TONY

(to another ant)

What's going on? What are we doing?

Tony bumps into ants as the assembly line reverses out of the bank. He drops another nut.

TONY

Okay, I see. We're taking everything... back?

(moans)

But it was so much work getting it here.

The other ants remain stoic, sticking to the task at hand. They pick up the remaining stash and march toward the door.

Tony picks up the nut he dropped. His back CRACKS under the weight of it. He forces a smile.

TONY

The Queen knows best!

George looks at his ledger, distraught.

GEORGE

Oh dear...

EXT. OAK CREEK BANK - NIGHT

George closes the bank's window shutters. ÁNGEL, a silly squirrel with a hispanic accent, hops over to George.

ÁNGEL

Hey, amigo! How's your tail hanging?

GEORGE

Hey Ángel.

ÁNGEL

What's wrong?

George shrugs his shoulders as he pulls out his keys.

ÁNGEL

Let's go get some almond milk at Nick's. That'll make you feel better.

GEORGE

I can't. Mary's working late tonight so I better get home to help my mother-in-law.

ÁNGEL

I swore an oath to the forest gods to never let a friend go home with a bad attitude.

GEORGE

What? Why?

ÁNGEL

You could wind up in the nut house.

Ángel laughs. George rolls his eyes and moves toward the door to lock it. Ángel steals his keys.

ÁNGEL

Yoink!

GEORGE

Hey, give 'em back!

Ángel throws the keys and then races to catch them, playing keep away with himself. His agility is impressive. George is too tired to play along.

GEORGE

Come on, Ángel. This isn't funny.

Ángel catches the keys again and leaps into a football victory stance.

GEORGE
Fine, one drink.

ÁNGEL
You won't regret it, amigo.

Ángel throws the keys back to George and escorts him toward the tree elevator. George leaves without locking the door.

The bank door creaks open a crack. Maddy steps out of the shadows with an evil look in her eyes. A small army of ants stand behind her.

MADDY
Alright troops, get in there and
take what's ours.

Tony steps forward and points to the CLOSED sign.

TONY
Shouldn't we come back tomorrow?

MADDY
Ants wait for no one.

Tony stiffens. Maddy pushes the unlocked door open.

TONY
Of course, my Queen.

The ants file inside.

EXT. TREE BRANCH LANE - NIGHT

George and Ángel walk toward a bar called Nick's. A neon sign hangs up ahead, lighting the way.

ÁNGEL
You're working way too hard. You
deserve a little fun.

Noel the flying squirrel jumps from branch to branch, gliding on her wings with Christmas garland in one paw.

Ángel stops and stares at Noel with hearts in his eyes. She glides gracefully and hangs her garland on the tree. She backflips and nails the landing. Noel sees Ángel staring and smiles coyly.

Ángel leans toward the tree to act cool, but misses and face plants.

Noel's garland falls off the tree. Ángel scrambles to catch it.

ÁNGEL
Can I help, Noel?

NOEL
(to Ángel, shy)
Sure.

Ángel grabs the garland and tries to hang it on the branch above. George and Noel watch him fail miserably.

NOEL
(to George)
Junior was so excited about the
tooth fairy.

GEORGE
I'm so glad.

CHASE, a bird with a red racing stripe down his back, flies over.

CHASE
What are you doing, Noel? This
isn't a job for a basic squirrel.

ÁNGEL
I'm nut basic. I'm Ángel.

CHASE
I don't have time for the flying
impaired.

Ángel puffs out his chest and climbs the tree with garland in hand.

ÁNGEL
Hey, check me out. Woo hoo!

Ángel jumps with arms outstretched, but instead of gliding, he bellyflops at George's feet.

CHASE
You call that flying?

Chase picks up the garland and soars over a branch. He flies circles around Ángel, causing the squirrel to spin out and fall. Chase laughs.

CHASE
Gotta jet. See you later, George.
(to Noel)
Try to keep up, Noel.

Chase flies off.

GEORGE
Bye Chase!

NOEL
Gotta fly. I'm helping Chase
decorate in exchange for free
babysitting.

Chase sticks his head back in from out of nowhere.

CHASE
For the record, I am not a
babysitter. Pft! Junior looks up
to me so I hang with the little
guy. Okay?

Chase zips away as fast as he came. Noel rolls her eyes.

ÁNGEL
(to Noel)
I'll babysit for you!

Noel smiles and follows Chase.

Ángel watches Noel glide away. George grabs his shoulder and
walks him to the bar just up ahead.

ÁNGEL
I didn't come on too strong, did
I?

GEORGE
No, you've got the art of subtlety
down. Come on, Romeo. First round
is on me.

INT. OAK CREEK BANK - VAULT - NIGHT

The line of ants pass nuts, seeds, berries, and sticks out the
door. Maddy supervises with a smug smile.

TONY
(to Maddy)
Ma'am, how much of the inventory
is ours?

Maddy laughs.

MADDY
All of it!

TONY
Yes, my Queen.

Tony picks up a large nut, and his back CRACKS. He hides his pain as he passes the nut and picks up another one.

INT. NICK'S BAR - NIGHT

George and Ángel walk into the rustic hole-in-the-tree. A giant spider, NICK, bartends.

The place is covered in spider webs. George's feet stick to the floor.

GEORGE
Someone forgot to take down their
Halloween decorations.

NICK
Who?

Nick looks at George blankly.

George pulls at his stuck foot. He stumbles backward.

Ángel sits at the bar next to a WOODPECKER with wild eyes.

WOODPECKER
Another, Nick. Make it a double.

Nick slides a piece of wood in front of the Woodpecker.

George pulls webbing from his foot and sits next to Ángel.

Woodpecker licks his beak and pecks the wood to bits in seconds. He sighs with relief.

ÁNGEL
(to Woodpecker)
Rough day, amigo?

WOODPECKER
I'm stressing! All this talk about
that bear really has me shook.

GEORGE
How bad could he be?

WOODPECKER
He's a hundred feet tall with
fangs that can break rock. He's so
hungry, he'd eat another bear!
(MORE)

WOODPECKER (CONT'D)
 But mostly, he settles for nuts,
 seeds, wood, and squirrels.
 Succulent, juicy squirrels.

George winces.

GEORGE
 Better make mine a double too,
 Nick. I need some liquid courage.

NICK
 Want some venom? That'll really
 give you a kick in the nuts.

GEORGE
 Does it do anything for stress?

NICK
 No, but it'll grow legs on your
 chest.

GEORGE
 Just the milk please.

Nick serves almond milk out of acorn cups.

ÁNGEL
 Sounds like this bear could ruin
 Christmas.

WOODPECKER
 We need the bear gone or we're all
 doomed! Doomed, I tell ya!

Woodpecker goes in on another piece of wood. George checks the ledger. He holds it close to his chest.

GEORGE
 (to himself)
 Yes... Doomed!

Ángel walks to a pool table and grabs a stick. He hits the "balls" which are actually curled up beetles.

ÁNGEL
 I wish I could fly off with Noel.

George grabs a stick and joins Ángel.

GEORGE
 That sounds nice, Ángel.

ÁNGEL

What can I do to get her to notice me?

George takes a turn hitting the beetle balls. He misses his shot.

GEORGE

I could put in a good word.

ÁNGEL

You'd do that for me?

GEORGE

Of course!

Ángel gives George a high-five.

Ángel hits a beetle with his stick, and it rolls around the table. The beetle uncurls and waddles into the corner pocket, scoring one for Ángel. George does a double take, but lets it slide.

GEORGE

You and Noel would make a great couple. Get ready for all the demands that come with that though.

ÁNGEL

¿Cómo? [What?]

George's turn. His stick misses the ball completely.

GEORGE

Everything will be going great until she bugs you to take her white water rafting. Who the heck wants to do something dangerous like that?

ÁNGEL

That sounds okay...

George tries again. Another miss.

GEORGE

Then the next thing you know, you're living with your annoying mother-in-law, you've got a baby who spits up on you all the time, and a nagging suspicion that no matter what you do, you'll never be good enough.

George hits the beetle this time, but it barely moves.

ÁNGEL

Hmmmm. I never thought about it
like that.

The beetle that George hit uncurls.

BEEBLE

(whispers to another beetle)
It's amateur hour, huh?

George sighs. Ángel puts his paw on his friend's shoulder.

WOODPECKER

(slurs from across the room)
If the bear doesn't get dealt
with, no one will have a family to
complain about!

George nods, downs his drink, and walks to the door.

ÁNGEL

Hey, where you going?

GEORGE

I've got something to do.

ÁNGEL

(to George)
Sounds mysterious. Cashew later
amigo!

George leaves.

ÁNGEL

(to Woodpecker)
You got him all riled up. Tu eres
un chismoso. [You're a gossip.]

Woodpecker demolishes more wood. Ángel miraculously sinks the rest of the beetles into the pockets in a surprise trick shot.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

George rubs his tired eyes as he walks through the dark woods. He checks his ledger and looks back toward town. He closes the book, nods, and proceeds.

He sniffs the ground and digs. He pulls up a moldy apple core. He recoils and looks up to see his mother-in-law, Greta, suddenly standing in front of him.

GEORGE

Ah!

GRETA

Get your lazy tail home.

Greta signs that she's watching him as she backs away ever so slowly with the help of her walker.

George sighs and continues on. He climbs a tree, loses his grip, and slides down to the ground leaving claw marks in the bark.

GEORGE

(to himself)

I'm not lazy, I'm just unlucky.

George scales the tree and sniffs his way down a branch. He loses his balance and falls. He catches the branch and holds on for dear life, struggling to pull himself back up.

GEORGE

(to himself)

Just wait until they see how much
I forage.

He falls to the ground and lands in a bush. The leaves shake. He runs out covered in TICKS so he frantically drops and rolls.

GEORGE

(to himself)

I don't have anything to prove!
Especially not to my silly old
mother-in-law.

In the distance, he hears a ROAR that startles him.

GEORGE

The bear!

He turns ninety degrees and scurries back toward town.

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - DAWN

As the sun rises, George stumbles into the town center with a few seeds in his arms. Not a great forage, but it's something. He climbs up a tree.

INT. GEORGE'S TREE HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

George takes off his jacket and lies down next to his sleeping wife, Mary. He kisses her on the forehead.

She rolls over, taking all the covers with her.

Just as George closes his eyes, the baby cries. He moans and sits up, ready to start again.

INT. GEORGE'S TREE HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Mary fries almonds on a fire stove while she holds the baby. George falls asleep at the table as their two toddlers run around the room.

Greta eats apples at rapid speed; they go in her mouth whole and come out cored. She throws the cores in a pile on the floor.

MARY

It'd be great to get away on a little vacation. Have you thought any more about that white water rafting trip? George, are you listening?

Greta throws an apple core at George to wake him up.

GEORGE

Huh?!

Mary hands the baby to Greta.

MARY

I just think a little excitement could be good for us.

Greta passes the baby to George.

GEORGE

Our lives are plenty exciting.

The baby SPITS UP on George. He sighs.

EXT. GEORGE'S TREE HOUSE - MORNING COMMUTE

George leaves home with tired eyes. He runs into a big pile up on the tree route caused by Old Squirrel.

CHIPMUNK

(high voice)

Hey old man, get off the tree!

OLD SQUIRREL

Did I pee? Not again...

George takes the subway instead.

INT. SUBWAY - MOMENTS LATER

George falls asleep standing as the platform makes its way downtown. The same music-loving rat whips George in the face. George wakes up, but then falls right back to sleep. Wake, sleep, repeat to the beat of the music.

EXT. OAK CREEK BANK - MORNING

George walks to the front door like a zombie, keys in hand. The front door is already open a crack.

George jolts awake and cautiously enters.

INT. OAK CREEK BANK - CONTINUOUS

The vault is open and empty, ransacked. Standing in the center of the chaos is Maddy. She turns around.

MADDY

Oh, George! What's happened?

GEORGE

I... I don't know. I...

MADDY

I found the bank like this. Who could have broken into a locked bank?

George looks at the keys in his hand. His eyes grow the size of saucers as he realizes what's happened.

MADDY

It must have been that bear! It's a menace! We must tell the town.

GEORGE

Wait, let me think. I --

MADDY

George, I know you're concerned about paying us back what is owed, but we can worry about that later. For now, we must warn the others.

George is speechless.

Maddy peels an apple core off the back of George's jacket.

MADDY

How uncivilized, George.

Maddy throws the core as she exits. George follows, still processing what's happened.

EXT. OAK CREEK BANK/MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Maddy walks out of the bank and leans over the tree branch.

MADDY
(yells)
Ants! We need you.

Maddy snaps her fingers. From the town center below, Tony and the soldier ants look up at their queen. They link arms, forming a ladder up to her.

Maddy walks onto Tony's head at the top of the ladder. He smiles up at her, despite her foot in his eye.

She's carried down gently. One more snap of her fingers and the ants form into a raised platform for Maddy to stand on.
NOTE: This scene can be composed into a song, "Maddy's Mob." The ants move in formation to the beat, an ominous dance of tension.

MADDY
Attention Oak Creek! There has
been a robbery.

The town's animals stop in their tracks and turn to Maddy.

ÁNGEL
Whoa, what happened?

MADDY
There's a big bad bear on the
prowl, and its taken everything
from the bank. Everything!

Everyone gasps at the news. Woodpecker goes crazy and bores his head into a tree.

Tony, breaking his back to hold the ant formation, looks up confused.

TONY
Oh no! A bear broke into the bank?
Wow! That's scary.

Panic moves through town. George makes his way to the center amongst the chaos. Greta pops up out of nowhere in her walker, holding the baby.

GEORGE
Ah!

GRETA

What did you do, George? Tsk tsk.

Greta hands the baby to George. Mary finds them in the crowd.

MARY

Honey, there you are. Are you alright? What are we going to do?

Maddy turns to George.

MADDY

Yes, George. What is the bank going to do?

The crowd turns their attention to George. He clutches the baby to his chest.

GEORGE

Well, um...

MADDY

How will we bring the guilty party to justice?

All eyes on George.

GEORGE

I... I'm not sure. I...

MADDY

How will we survive the winter?

GEORGE

I don't know yet, but we're in this togeth --

MADDY

Have no fear Oak Creek! Luckily we made the wise decision to keep the colony's stash separate this year. We will share. After all, we're in this together.

Maddy smiles slyly as the animals collectively sigh with relief.

MADDY

We will accept the deeds to your homes as collateral for each loan.

Shock and horror from the crowd.

GEORGE

Maddy, that would mean you'd own
all of Oak Creek.

MADDY

Only if the loans aren't paid
back. We'll be fair and give
everyone until New Year.

BIG BURLY

New Year? We can't forage in
winter!

CHIPMUNK

(high voice)

What are we going to do?

Chipmunk #2 chimes in with a surprisingly deep baritone voice.

CHIPMUNK #2

(deep voice)

Yeah!

MADDY

The new Ant Creek Bank will open
tomorrow, ready to service all of
your holiday needs. Merry
Christmas everyone!

Maddy jumps off her platform. The soldier ants reform as a
security perimeter around her, moving Maddy through the crowd
like a celebrity. Townspeople talk all at once.

George follows the ants.

GEORGE

Maddy! Please, let's talk about
this.

MADDY

Don't worry, George. We'll gladly
accept your loan application
tomorrow as well. Toodles!

Maddy's soldier ants whisk her away, leaving George in their
dust.

George tries to hand the baby to Greta, but she refuses.

GRETA

Not yet...

The baby SPITS UP on George's shoulder. Greta smiles and grabs
the baby.

George sighs.

INT. OAK CREEK BANK - LATER

Mary and George stand behind the teller station amongst the rubble.

MARY
Oh George, what are we going to do?

George licks his finger and lifts it to the air.

GEORGE
The storm is getting closer.

Noel flies into the bank.

NOEL
Tails up! They're on their way to--

Angry townspeople fill the bank. They brandish receipts with panic on their faces. Angel pops in after them.

GEORGE
I'm glad you're here. I have some news for you, folks. We've got a strong community and if we work together, we can replenish before the first snow falls.

CHIPMUNK
(high voice)
But, George, we've been struggling all season.

CHIPMUNK #2
(deep voice)
Yeah!

BIG BURLY
It could snow any minute!

CHIPMUNK #2
(deep voice)
Yeah!

RABBIT
And there's a bear on the loose!

CHIPMUNK #2
(deep voice)
Yeah!

GEORGE
You're thinking about this all
wrong. We're in this together.

BIG BURLY
That's what Maddy said too.

CHIPMUNK
(high voice)
I had ten nuts, twenty-one seeds,
and a berry in this bank. And it's
all gone.

George pulls out the ledger.

GEORGE
I know. It's all in here.

CHIPMUNK
(high voice)
Maddy will loan us what we need
for Christmas. We're better off at
the ant bank!

CHIPMUNK #2
(deep voice)
Yeah!

A few customers move toward the door with chatter about going
to the ant hill.

GEORGE
If you can't pay her loan back by
New Year, the ants will take over
your home. If you stick with Oak
Creek Bank, we'll --

BIG BURLY
Her loan will buy us time.

CHASE
There's not much time before the
storms start.

GEORGE
Come on, gang. We can do this. But
we have to stick together.

BIG BURLY
I've got mouths to feed. I'm
sorry, George. I have to go with
Maddy on this one.

Customers leave one by one.

The rabbit with the fake leg walks up to George.

RABBIT

Here, you might need this.

He takes off his fake foot and hands it to George.

RABBIT

For good luck.

GEORGE

Thanks, but you can keep it.

Rabbit shrugs, pops his leg back on, and leaves.

Noel lingers.

CHASE

Come on, Noel. Let's jet.

NOEL

I'm sorry, George. I have to think about Junior.

George nods solemnly as the last customers leave. Ángel and Mary are the only ones left.

ÁNGEL

Hey amigo.

GEORGE

Not now, Ángel.

ÁNGEL

But we're in this togeth --

GEORGE

I said not now.

ÁNGEL

(downtrodden)

Okay, amigo. Cashew later.

Ángel leaves with a sad, limp tail.

INT. GEORGE'S TREE HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

George and Mary lie in bed.

MARY

If we take Maddy's loan --

GEORGE

We can't!

MARY
But everyone else --

GEORGE
We're not everyone else, okay?

MARY
I know it's not ideal, but --

GEORGE
If we borrow anything under her terms, we'd lose our home. And so will everyone else if they turn to her.

MARY
But --

GEORGE
I don't want to talk about it any more tonight, okay?

Mary huffs and turns her back to George, taking the covers with her. He lies on his back clutching his ledger to his chest.

INT. GEORGE'S TREE HOUSE - RUN AWAY GOODBYE MONTAGE

George kisses Mary's forehead as she sleeps. He kisses his two sleeping toddlers goodbye, then stops at the baby's wooden crib.

He bends down to kiss the baby - who wakes up!

BABY
Da!

GEORGE
Shhhhhh! Don't wake mama.

BABY
Da! Da!

George picks up the baby and it SPITS UP all over him. He sighs. The baby rests its head on his shoulder and falls asleep. George hugs him tight.

EXT. TREE BRANCH LANE - NIGHT

George closes his front door quietly. He turns around and runs into Greta.

GEORGE
Ah!

GRETA
Where do you think you're going?

GEORGE
I have to fix this.

GRETA
You better, you lazy --

George pushes past his mother-in-law. She follows him with her walker, painfully slow.

GRETA
(calls after him)
Don't mess this up!

She throws an apple core at his head. He ignores her and keeps on walking.

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

George runs through town. He hears voices up ahead so he ducks for cover. He stumbles, trips, and falls. He dives behind the center Christmas tree just as the two chipmunks walk by.

CHIPMUNK
(high voice)
George really messed everything up
big time.

CHIPMUNK #2
(deep voice)
Yeah.

George peeks his head out as they clear frame. He makes a run for it, but trips and falls again.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Ángel and Noel laugh in the woods. Nearby leaves rustle.

ÁNGEL
Who's there?

NOEL
I better go.

She sneaks into the trees and runs right into George.

GEORGE
What are you two doing out here?

ÁNGEL
I could ask you the same thing.

NOEL
I was just leaving.

ÁNGEL
(to Noel)
Cashew later!

She disappears through the trees.

ÁNGEL
Hey amigo. You okay?

GEORGE
The bank is empty. The ants will
own the town. Christmas is ruined.
(sarcastic)
But I'm doing great. Thanks for
asking.

George jumps onto a tree and scurries up the trunk. Ángel
follows.

ÁNGEL
I know this is scary, but we'll be
okay. Let's go back and work it
out.

GEORGE
I can't go back.

They jump from one tree to another.

ÁNGEL
Why nut?

GEORGE
It's all my fault, Ángel.

ÁNGEL
It's nut your fault the bear broke
into the bank.

George stops at the edge of a branch.

GEORGE
But I left the...

The truth about the door being unlocked gets stuck in George's
throat.

GEORGE
I... I'm leaving town. I give up.

George jumps to the next branch with Ángel right behind. He sings a heart breaking song, "Better Off Without Me."

ÁNGEL

You can't! We can figure something out. We can save Christmas.

George scurries down a tree trunk and lands on the ground.

GEORGE

There's nothing we can do.

Ángel jumps off and falls into George, toppling him.

ÁNGEL

There must be some solution, amigo.

The first SNOW of the season begins to fall. George makes a note of it in his ledger.

GEORGE

How could we ever forage enough so quickly? We'd need an amazing plan.

ÁNGEL

I know someone who can set our minds right.

Ángel marches through two bushes, and George follows.

EXT. CHASE'S NEST - NIGHT

Noel glides over to Chase's nest, nestled in a tree. Junior, still missing a tooth, smiles at his mom.

NOEL

Hey you two.

CHASE

How'd foraging go?

NOEL

Nada. It's starting to snow.

CHASE

You could fly south with me for the winter.

NOEL

That's too far for Junior and I to travel. We'd hold you back.

CHASE

I am super fast, but I could slow down a bit for you guys.

NOEL

(to Junior)

Come on, let's get you to bed.

(to Chase)

Thanks for babysitting again.

CHASE

Don't. Tell. Anyone!

Noel smiles.

EXT. FOREST HUT - DAWN

George follows Ángel toward a valley filled with beautiful BUTTERFLIES.

GEORGE

Where are we going? We don't have time --

ÁNGEL

Shhhh. We're here.

As they approach, the butterflies disperse around them, revealing the entrance to a kooky little hut made of cocoon shells.

INT. CP'S FOREST HUT - MOMENTS LATER

A furry caterpillar shaman, CP, sits on a chair made of green leaves. An apothecary wall behind him is full of beakers and vials.

CP

Ángel! It's been way too long. I miss playing chess and musing on life together.

GEORGE

Musing on life?

CP

What can I do for ya?

ÁNGEL

We've got a bear problem.

Ángel sits cross-legged around a fire in the middle of the hut. George sniffs a CALDRON that bubbles, unable to relax.

GEORGE
Time is of the essence.

George clutches the ledger to his chest, and starts pacing. CP nods, listening.

GEORGE
(to Ángel)
I don't see how a caterpillar can help us restock the bank.
(to CP)
No offense.

CP
Bias is always offensive.

ÁNGEL
That's true.

George throws his head in his hands.

GEORGE
I'm a terrible squirrel!

ÁNGEL
Come on, you're the best. You've just had a really nutty day.

CP
Looks like someone needs a swaddle.

CP dips an acorn cup into the steamy caldron and hands the drink to George.

GEORGE
Smells... oaky?

CP
Hints of cinnamon with a bold after taste. I've searched the forest for that perfect zest. The lemon trees that mark the path toward the waterfall were the missing ingredient to make the recipe really sing.

George takes a sip. He looks pleasantly surprised and drinks the rest of the glass in one gulp.

GEORGE
Thanks. I needed that.

CP
Let's start over. What happened?

GEORGE

I went back to the bank after a night of foraging. It was emptied. Everything was... gone. It's my responsibility to keep it stocked for winter. Christmas is almost here, and I've let the entire town down... Oak Creek would be better off without me.

ÁNGEL

(to CP)

How do you zest a lemon?

CP

Here, I'll show you.

GEORGE

(annoyed)

Can we stay focused?

Panic sweeps over George. His pupils grow large, and his body sways.

From GEORGE's POV, Ángel's head expands and contracts like a fisheye lens.

ÁNGEL

(in slow motion)

Dude, it's not your fault.

George looks suspiciously at Ángel.

GEORGE

(drunk)

You're right, amigo. It could be your fault! You took my keys away and distracted me. Now everything is ruined.

ÁNGEL

I was just trying to help.

George's eyes get heavy.

GEORGE

I don't need your help.

(sleepy)

I have to...

ÁNGEL

(in slow motion)

Yo, are you okay? You look kind of funny.

George struggles to keep his eyes open.

ÁNGEL

What's going on with him, CP?

CP

Your friend needs to open his heart. His brain will follow.

ÁNGEL

Okay? Speaking of opening hearts, can you make someone fall in love with me with one of your crazy concoctions?

CP

I got you, dude.

CP dips another acorn cup into the steamy caldron and hands the drink to Ángel.

ÁNGEL

Cool!

Ángel downs the drink.

ÁNGEL

She's way out of my league.

CP

Just like your friend, you must make the ultimate sacrifice. Only then will you be able to bridge the gap between you and the people you love.

ÁNGEL

Sure, amigo. Whatever you say.

Ángel laughs. From ÁNGEL's POV: George's head balloons as he tries to stay awake. Kaleidoscope zoom into a MOSAIC of images; George struggling to keep his eyes open, CP, and Noel smiling coyly.

Ángel passes out.

GEORGE

(sleepy)

Don't fall asleep. We've got to... well, maybe just for a minute...

George finally succumbs to the drink and lays down to sleep.

CP spins a COCOON around George's sleeping body, working quickly from his feet up to his head.

DREAM TRANSITION: Reprise of George's song, "Better Off Without Me" as butterflies flutter and land on George's cocoon. Zoom into the cocoon to see George sleeping inside. His face breaks into a MOSAIC of Mary holding the baby, Greta coring apples, Ángel taking his keys away, the empty vault, and a growling bear.

GEORGE (V.O.)
 (reverberates)
 Oak Creek would be better off
 without me...

Butterflies fill the frame.

EXT. FOREST - GEORGE'S DREAM - DAY

The burst of butterflies disperse, revealing George floating over the forest. From his bird's eye view, the stunning landscape boasts a creek and a waterfall just outside the tree line.

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - GEORGE'S DREAM - CONTINUOUS

George dives down and soars over the town center. It's a ghost town - no shops, cafes, or gyms.

GEORGE
 What happened? Where is everyone?

A flurry of butterflies swirl next to George. When they disperse, Ángel stands in their place.

GEORGE
 Ah! Where did you come from?

Ángel speaks in a shaky "ghost voice."

ÁNGEL
 I come from the oaky drink with
 the zesty after taste.

GEORGE
 Why are you talking like that?

Ángel drops the voice.

ÁNGEL
 I'm trying to make an impression
 on your subconscious. Is it
 working?

GEORGE

No.

ÁNGEL

Maybe this will make an
impression.

Butterflies encase them, transporting them to:

INT. TREE HOUSE - GEORGE'S DREAM - FLASHBACK

The butterflies disperse, leaving George and Ángel floating above a scene of GEORGE'S FATHER lying in bed with a YOUNG GEORGE sat beside him.

GEORGE

(to Ángel)

Is that...?

ÁNGEL

Your papi, yes.

George's father leans over to Young George with the ledger in hand.

FATHER

George, there's something I want
you to have.

YOUNG GEORGE

Your ledger? But it's so
important. How will you run the
bank without it?

FATHER

You must protect it at all costs.
I need you to run the bank now.

YOUNG GEORGE

I don't know how. Only you can...

His father smiles.

FATHER

We're all in this together,
George.

Young George clutches the ledger to his chest.

George and Ángel watch the memory unfold.

GEORGE

I took over the bank the very next day.

ÁNGEL

But what if you hadn't? Would Oak Creek be better off without you?

The butterflies encase them.

BACK TO:

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - GEORGE'S DREAM - DAY

George and Ángel find themselves back in the empty town center. A nut falls from a tree and lands nearby.

Mary, dressed in tribal clothes, pierces the nut with a spear while she carries the baby.

GEORGE

Mary!

George tries to hug Mary, but falls straight through her, creating a few butterflies that fly away.

ÁNGEL

She can't hear you.

GEORGE

Why not? What is she doing?

An army of ants swarm Mary from all sides. She thrusts her spear to keep them at bay. They link arms to create an adversary Mary's size, a phantom squirrel made of ants.

ÁNGEL

If you had never taken over the bank, there wouldn't be a way for everyone to work together to build up the community. It'd be every animal for themselves.

Mary throws her spear into the ants. A few pop out of formation leaving a hole in its wake.

The phantom ant squirrel pushes Mary. She falls back, clutching the baby. They break formation to swarm the nut.

Mary throws the baby in the air, does a backflip, and smashes her spear into the nut, dispersing the ants. The baby falls back down, and she catches it.

GEORGE
Whoa, she's good.

Every ant turns toward Mary and leaps. She and the baby are completely covered in them.

GEORGE
Mary!

GRETA
Haza!

Greta appears out of nowhere with her walker, tribal paint on her face. She throws apple cores at Mary to get the ants off. One hits Mary in the face.

MARY
Ow!

As Mary shakes ants off, Noel flies down and steals the nut. She jumps up and glides between trees.

Chase swoops down and steals the nut from Noel's paws, in mid-air. Noel falls, hitting each tree branch on her way down.

ÁNGEL
Savage!

GEORGE
But I did open the bank. So that means this isn't real. Take me back to the Oak Creek I know and love.

ÁNGEL
You're the boss.

Everything turns into butterflies that fill the frame.

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - GEORGE'S DREAM - EVENING

The butterflies disperse, leaving George and Ángel in the Oak Creek of today. The city looks bleak and without color. Christmas cheer is non-existent.

The town animals wait in line for rations. The scene looks militarized with the ants on guard. Under Maddy's watchful eye, Tony gives each animal the bare minimum ration.

Mary, carrying the baby, steps up to receive her portion. Maddy grabs the nuts from Tony and addresses Mary.

MADDY

Dear Mary, welcome to the Ant Creek Bank. I'm so glad you're with us.

MARY

Oh! Well, um... I'm still with George and the Oak Creek Bank.

MADDY

Standing by him even after he abandoned you? How embarrassing.

George floats overhead, watching. He struggles to glide to the ground. As soon as his feet touch down, he floats back up.

GEORGE

Mary! I'm here! Don't take that deal.

No one hears George.

Instead of handing the rations to Mary, Maddy skips her and gives them to Rabbit.

MADDY

I'm terribly sorry everyone, but the Ant Bank is now closed for the day.

Maddy snaps her fingers, and the ants remove the stash in an instant. Mary is left empty handed.

MARY

Maddy, please! My children need --

The ants whisk Maddy away. Animals who didn't get a ration GROAN.

GEORGE

Don't worry, Mary. I'll make everything right.

Mary walks away, downtrodden. She passes Noel and Junior.

NOEL

I'm sorry, Junior. There won't be a Christmas this year. We barely have enough for dinner.

Junior cries, exposing his missing tooth. George watches on with sadness.

The woodpecker sits on a branch up above.

WOODPECKER
 Breaking news. Worst Christmas
 ever!

Woodpecker drills into the side of the tree, creating a huge hole. Chipmunk #2 pops out of the hole.

CHIPMUNK #2
 (deep voice)
 Hey!

The ANT POLICE intervene and arrest Woodpecker.

George balls up his fists in frustration. Big Burly leaves with his ration.

GEORGE
 (to Big Burly)
 We've got to do something before
 Christmas comes. Maybe we can
 organize a team forage or --

Big Burly walks away without hearing George. He meets up with his TWENTY squirrel children. He breaks one seed into twenty tiny little pieces.

Chase jets past, flying directly through George. A few butterflies disperse.

CHASE
 This sucks. What ever happened to
 treat yo self? Especially during
 the holidays.

GEORGE
 Hey! Why can't anyone see or hear
 me? Make them hear me!

ÁNGEL
 No can do. You left Oak Creek. You
 no longer have a care in the
 world. No nuts to forage. No bank
 to save. This is what it's like
 without you watching out for
 everyone.

GEORGE
 I don't like it.

ÁNGEL
 It's loco how many lives one
 squirrel touches. When he's nut
 around he leaves an awful hole.

GEORGE
Get me out of here.

A swarm of butterflies engulf George.

EXT. ANT CREEK MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Butterflies disperse, revealing Ángel and George in the town center. A million ants crawl over everything.

GEORGE
Why are we still here?

ÁNGEL
We're in the future, amigo. We're time traveling squirrels! How cool is that?

GEORGE
I hope things are better in this timeline.

ÁNGEL
Define better.

George looks around the town overrun with ants. They burrow tunnels into the trees, causing extreme decay. The Oak Creek sign now reads "ANT CREEK."

GEORGE
Where's Mary?

Ángel nods, and the butterflies take us to:

EXT. ANT HILL - GEORGE'S DREAM - NIGHT

George and Ángel float over the scene. Maddy stands outside her palace, protected by guards.

Mary approaches with baby. Her toddlers trail behind, tired and dragging their feet. Their clothes are tattered.

MADDY
You're late.

MARY
I traveled far to forage enough for this month's payment.

Mary lays several berries, nuts, and seeds at Maddy's feet. She bows before the queen.

MADDY

I'm afraid we must impose a late fee.

MARY

Please.

MADDY

We sympathize with your plight. We do. Therefore, your late fee will be added to next month's rent.

MARY

I can't keep up.

MADDY

Oh dear. Then we must seize your home. There are many ants ready to take your place.

TODDLER SQUIRREL

Mama no!

MARY

(to Maddy)

How many more of us will be left homeless this month?

Maddy's eyes light up with anger.

MADDY

(screams)

How dare you speak to your Queen that way! Take your petty forage and go. You're no longer welcome here.

Mary cries.

MARY

I'm sorry, my Queen.

GEORGE

It's okay, Mary. I'm here.

ÁNGEL

You're nut here. You left, remember?

Mary runs into the forest with the kids.

George, floating, turns to follow Mary. He's suddenly faced with Greta in her walker.

GEORGE

Ah!

Greta turns and ever so slowly follows Mary.

BUTTERFLY TRANSITION TO:

EXT. FOREST - GEORGE'S DREAM - MOMENTS LATER

Mary burrows underground with kids and Greta in tow.

TODDLER SQUIRREL

Can we go home Mama?

MARY

We'll make a new home here,
together.

GRETA

How am I supposed to crawl down
there with my bad back? Pft.

A MOLE pops out of the ground.

MOLE

This spot's taken!

The baby cries. Mary clutches her children.

ÁNGEL

(to George)

You really had a wonderful life.
Don't you see what a mistake it
would be to throw it all away?

Ángel sings the song "You Matter" to George. George interjects with a short reprise of "Better Off Without Me" which morphs into "They Need Me."

GEORGE

Get me back! Oak Creek needs me.
Mary, I'm coming back! I'll make
everything right again, I promise!

ÁNGEL

Very well then. Cashew later!

Ángel turns into a swarm of butterflies. Kaleidoscope zoom into a MOSAIC of images; Mary and the children, the vault, Maddy's evil smile, and a growling bear.

INT. CP'S FOREST HUT - MORNING

The caterpillar does yoga. Two large cocoons hang overhead. One of them stirs.

CP goes into downward facing dog. One of the cocoons falls from the ceiling and lands on his ANTENNA. CP tries to move, but is stuck under the weight of the cocoon.

CP

Gah!

GEORGE

(from inside cocoon)

Get me back! I need to make it better.

George nibbles a hole in the cocoon. He wiggles his way out, leaving the wrap on CP's antenna.

GEORGE

Ángel? CP? Where is everyone?

From CP's POV: Everything is dark with a faint echo within a deep quiet.

CP

It's the booming silence of the Universe! My years of meditation have finally paid off. Auuum.

George peeks over the cocoon and sees CP. He removes the cocoon from CP's antenna.

GEORGE

Hey CP.

CP

Gah! Oh hey. I was having an amazing cosmic moment that cannot be explained.

GEORGE

I could offer one explanation.

CP

You're still pragmatic I see. How ya feeling?

GEORGE

That drink of yours should come with a warning label.

CP

Do you still think Oak Creek is better off without you?

GEORGE

No, Oak Creek needs me. I know what I have to do now. I have to confront the bear!

George walks to the door with purpose.

CP

You seem ready to slay! Get it, George!

George nods and opens the door. He pauses, then turns around with a nervous look.

GEORGE

Maybe I should use the bathroom before I go...

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

A light snow dusts the ground. George licks his finger and tests the air.

GEORGE

(to himself)

If I were a bear, where would I live?

He looks left, right, back, then walks forward through the brush.

CHASE (O.S.)

George, is that you?

Chase flies down from the sky to greet George.

GEORGE

Chase! You can see me? You can hear me?

George shakes Chase and hugs him a little too tightly.

CHASE

You okay? You've been gone for two days. Mary's looking for you.

GEORGE

Two days?! That drink was something else!

CHASE
What drink?

GEORGE
Never mind that. Do you know where
the big bad bear lives?

CHASE
Why? What are you planning to do?

GEORGE
I'm going to confront the bear.

CHASE
That's a suicide mission!

GEORGE
I don't have a choice.

CHASE
Things have gotten pretty bleak. I
might relocate for the winter.

GEORGE
But you always spend Christmas in
Oak Creek.

CHASE
I think you should head home,
George. They need you there.

George clutches his ledger to his chest.

GEORGE
I know.

Chase nods and flies away.

GEORGE
That's why I have to confront the
bear.

George carries on with intent.

Through the next tree line, George hears the roar of a
waterfall. He stops and thinks.

INSERT MEMORY: George recalls Big Burly talking to him in the
bank.

BIG BURLY
Its growls were louder than the
waterfall.

BACK TO:

George listens to the waterfall echoing from the forest.

GEORGE
(to himself)
It must live by the waterfall!

He carries on with determination and scurries through the forest.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

George hits a fork in the road. He sniffs the air. On the left, lemon trees line a dark path. On the right, thick thorny bushes.

GEORGE
Those lemons sure smell zesty.
Aha!

INSERT MEMORY: George recalls CP talking in his hut.

CP
I've searched the forest for that perfect zest. The lemon trees that mark the path toward the waterfall were the missing ingredient to make the recipe really sing.

BACK TO:

George nods his head, knowing.

GEORGE
The lemon trees mark the path toward the waterfall. Big bad bear, here I come!

George takes the tree-lined path.

The terrain grows rocky. He loses his footing on a rock and falls back. He clutches the ledger to his chest, takes a deep breath, and carries on.

The sound of the waterfall grows closer.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

The tree line breaks, revealing a clear blue river. At the mouth, an epic waterfall crashes down.

GEORGE
Beautiful!

George walks down the creek toward the waterfall.

GEORGE

Now if I were a bear, where would
I be?

Up ahead, a FROG sits on a rock.

GEORGE

Excuse me, do you know where I can
find a bear around here?

The frog looks blankly at George.

FROG

Ribbit.

GEORGE

Ribbit? Is that a town near here?

FROG

Ribbit.

GEORGE

I don't speak your native tongue.
Do you understand me? I'm looking
for a bear.

FROG

Ribbit. Ribbit.

GEORGE

Okay. Thanks any way.

George walks away. A second FROG joins the first.

FROG #2

What did he want?

FROG

He's looking for the bear.

FROG #2

Did you tell him where to go?

FROG

I played dumb. Didn't want to see
a good squirrel get hurt.

FROG #2

Good man!

FROG

Ribbit!

The frogs laugh.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

George stumbles over rocks near the mouth of the creek.

GEORGE
 (to himself)
 Silly frog. So uncivilized. I'm
 definitely not in Oak Creek
 anymore. Stay sharp, George.

George slips and falls. His face lands next to a big rock with
 GASHES in it. He thinks.

INSERT MEMORY: George recalls Woodpecker talking about the bear
 at the bar.

WOODPECKER
 It's a hundred feet tall with
 fangs that can break rock.

BACK TO:

George looks at the rock with realization. He picks himself up
 and walks up a rocky ravine.

GEORGE
 A bet the bear lives in a rocky
 cave. If he can eat rocks, he
 should leave our nuts alone. How
 will I convince him of that?

George practices his pitch as he climbs the rocks.

GEORGE
 Excuse me bear, may I interest you
 in some rocks? I'll trade you...

He shakes his head.

GEORGE
 Dear bear, if you give me the nuts
 back, I won't report you to the
 forest gods. You don't want to
 wind up in the nut house.

George rolls his eyes.

GEORGE
 (to the sky)
 Ángel, you're rubbing off on me!
 Dear bear --

George walks up to the opening of a deep, dark cave. A loud GROWL greets him from within. Fear takes over.

GEORGE
(whispers)
Please don't eat me.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

George cautiously enters the dark den. He gulps as he passes the skeleton of a small animal.

He kicks a rock which tumbles down deeper into the shadows. The sound reverberates. He pauses and winces. No response.

George continues with caution.

GEORGE
Maybe the bear will be sleeping,
and I can take the nuts back. It's
not stealing if they were ours to
begin with.

A GROWL trembles from deep within the cave, stopping George in his tracks.

GEORGE
Definitely not asleep.

George turns on his heels to leave.

GEORGE
Pull yourself together. They need
you.

He takes a deep breath and keeps going. Each step slow and calculated. There's light up ahead.

George finds a few nuts near a big rock. He hides behind the rock to survey the scene.

A huge brown bear, BETTY, sits next to a fire. A few nuts litter the ground.

GEORGE
Here goes nothing.

Determination takes over George's fearful face.

GEORGE
Hey you!

George's SHADOW plays across the cave's wall, making him appear much bigger.

Betty GROWLS at the shadow.

BETTY

Ah! Who are you? What do you want?

The shadow speaks.

GEORGE

I'm here to collect.

BETTY

Collect? Do you collect rocks or something?

Betty scratches at the shadow and realizes she's touching the wall. She turns around and sees George as he really is.

BETTY

Ah!

George protects his head with his paws.

GEORGE

Please don't hurt me.

Betty leans down to check him out. Her breath blows through his fur.

BETTY

(beat)

Aw, you're so cute!

GEORGE

Cute?

George slowly lowers his arms.

GEORGE

Why thank you.

BETTY

I'm Betty. What's your name?

GEORGE

I'm George, and I'm here to collect.

George puffs his chest out assertively.

BETTY

Yeah you said that already. You must have a pretty extensive rock collection if you've got to come here to find new ones.

GEORGE

Don't play dumb with me. How dare you steal from us! Just because you're bigger?

BETTY

Excuse me?

GEORGE

(softer)

You have to consider the rest of the forest animals! We're in this together.

BETTY

What do you mean? I would never steal from anyone.

GEORGE

You stole nuts from the Oak Creek bank.

He picks up a nut from the ground and shows her.

GEORGE

See?

Betty leans down toward the nut and sneezes, which comes with an epic GROWL.

George flies back from the sheer velocity of the sneeze. He hits his head on a rock.

GEORGE

Ow!

BETTY

Whoops. My bad.

Betty snuffles and wipes her nose with her arm.

BETTY

I can't shake this cold. It's so annoying. I've had it ever since I moved into my new cave.

George picks himself up and walks back toward Betty.

GEORGE

I like what you've done with the place.

BETTY

Yay! Thanks.

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

I still have some decor ideas, but it works for now.

GEORGE

My wife is always proposing new ways to brighten up our tree house.

BETTY

Is it a real fixer upper like this place?

GEORGE

Sort of... So you didn't steal our nut stash?

BETTY

I don't even like nuts. Hurts my tummy, if you know what I mean.

GEORGE

Then why have you been antagonizing our foraging missions?

Betty lays back with her paw over her forehead like a damsel in distress.

BETTY

Ug! First my fellow bears and now this?

George comes closer.

GEORGE

What's wrong?

BETTY

I usually hibernate for the winter, but I'm suffering from insomnia cause of this cold. My constant sneezing drove all my friends away. Sounds like I'm scaring the whole forest.

GEORGE

So you're all alone?

BETTY

Yeah...

GEORGE

No one should be alone for
Christmas.

BETTY

I usually sleep through Christmas.

GEORGE

Well now that you're up, you have
to experience the best holiday of
the year. The streets of Oak Creek
are always so beautifully
decorated. We have a big feast, we
sing, we open presents. It's the
best day of the year!

BETTY

That sounds really nice. Let me
check my calendar. Guess what? I'm
free! Let's go! I could so use a
party right about now.

GEORGE

If you didn't steal the nuts,
then...

(to himself)

It really is my fault.

George looks up at Betty with guilty eyes.

BETTY

What's wrong little fella?

GEORGE

I can't face everyone after what
I've done.

BETTY

Who wouldn't forgive a cute little
squirrel like you?

GEORGE

I'm not so sure.

Betty nudges George to cheer him up.

BETTY

You're pretty brave, you know
that?

George smiles.

GEORGE

No one's ever said that to me
before.

BETTY

It took a lot of guts to come in
here. You'll need a lot of bravery
to admit to your friends that you
messed up. But you can do it.

Betty gets up and walks toward the cave opening. George doesn't
stir.

BETTY

Come on, let's go clear my name. I
can't have the whole forest
thinking I'm some raging lunatic!

George hesitates.

BETTY

What are you waiting for? Isn't it
almost Christmas?

George checks his ledger and holds it close to his chest. He
reluctantly follows Betty out of the cave.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

George covers Betty with bushes.

GEORGE

Once I give the signal, you can
come out to meet everyone.

BETTY

Right, I'll pop out when you say
Merry Christmas!

Betty pops her head out from behind the leaves with a toothy
grin.

GEORGE

Maybe with a little less fang
exposed.

BETTY

Resting bear face?

Betty purses her lips.

GEORGE

A little more friendly though.

Betty gives a strained smile without showing teeth.

GEORGE
That's... good. Great. Everyone's
going to love you.

BETTY
(through tight smile)
I sure hope so!

George laughs nervously and runs through the trees.

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

George walks through the empty town center. He passes the Oak Creek sign and hugs it.

GEORGE
There's still time!

Onward toward the ant hill.

EXT. ANT HILL - MOMENTS LATER

George runs up to the elaborate palace to find Maddy passing out rations to the town. Everyone's in attendance.

MADDY
Well, well, well. Look who the
bear dragged in.

MARY
George!

TODDLER SQUIRREL
Dada!

George hugs Mary and the kids. He even hugs Greta! They're both quite surprised about it.

GRETA
Where have you been?

GEORGE
I've been to see the bear.

A collective gasp from the town. George addresses everyone.

GEORGE
I have good news folks! Betty is
really nice.

MADDY

Betty?

GEORGE

The bear. She's not out to get us
or our nuts! She didn't --

MADDY

Fake news! That bear is a menace!
She's ruined the foraging season
and robbed the bank.

Confusion amongst the townspeople.

GEORGE

No she didn't! It's all a big
misunderstanding.

MADDY

Tell that to the bank customers
who have nothing left!

George pulls out his ledger.

GEORGE

I know. But with the bear threat
gone, we still have a little time
to forage before Christmas!

Betty leaps out from the trees, half covered in leaves.

BETTY

Merry Christmas!

Shock sweeps over the town.

MADDY

George, what have you done?
Bringing this beast to our
doorstep!

From BETTY'S POV, Maddy's yells sound small and distant. Betty
leans over to get a better look at the queen ant. She sniffs
Maddy's ant hill and immediately sneezes!

From the animal's POV, the sneeze is loud, aggressive, and
comes with an echoing GROWL.

MADDY

Everyone, run for your lives!

The townspeople scream and run in every direction.

CHIPMUNK
 (high voice)
 Ah! Ah! Ah!

CHIPMUNK #2
 (deep voice)
 Oh my!

GEORGE
 (yells)
 Please, wait! You don't
 understand!

No one can hear George amongst the chaos. Mary protects the kids from the stampede of animals running.

OLD SQUIRREL
 Stampede?!

The old squirrel pees his pants.

BETTY
 George, what's going on? They
 don't like me, do they?

Betty jumps up and down scared. She shakes the ground, causing animals to fall and cry out in terror.

Greta falls onto her back with her walker on top of her. Her legs run in place.

George drops his ledger. Betty accidentally SMASHES it with her feet. Pages from the ledger explode into the air and fly away.

GEORGE
 Oh no!

George scrambles after the lost pages, but is only able to grab one.

MADDY
 (to George)
 Look what you've done! Leave town
 before you make everything even
 worse.

George holds the only remaining page of the ledger to his chest. He watches the turmoil he's caused.

BETTY
 Let's get out of here.

George jumps on Betty's back. They race through the trees.

MARY

George!

GRETA

(still on her back)

What a dimwit!

EXT. CP'S HUT - DAY

Betty runs full speed through the forest, knocking into trees. Her feet stomp the ground, sending shock waves. CP's hut shakes as they pass by.

INT. CP'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

CP meditates, sitting perfectly still as the hut shakes. Ángel's cocoon sways above him, comes unlatched, and falls onto CP's head. His ANTENNA are stuck underneath the cocoon again.

CP

Oh great and everlasting silence!
You have returned to me!

The cocoon jumps off CP's antenna. CP's head pops up. He prostrates to his unseen deity.

CP

Gone as quick as you came. Guide
me, oh silent one! I am listening.

The cocoon jiggles until a paw crashes through. Another paw pops out, then two feet and a tail. Finally, Ángel's head tears through the cocoon. He wears the rest of it like armor around his torso.

ÁNGEL

Hey amigo, got any munchies?

Ángel burps. CP looks up, disappointed.

CP

Oh, it's you.

ÁNGEL

The one and only! Where's George?

CP

He went to see the bear.

Ángel's jaw drops to the floor.

ÁNGEL

No manches?! [For real?!] I gotta
find him before he gets eaten.
Cashew later!

Ángel runs out. CP sighs, dips an acorn cup into his cauldron,
and takes a sip. He nods with approval.

CP

Zesty!

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Ángel rushes through the trees, still wearing the cocoon around
his torso. He runs into Betty's leg.

Ángel looks up at the massive bear towering over him. He gasps
and his eyes bulge out of his head.

GEORGE

It's okay, she's with me.

ÁNGEL

Run, amigo! Run!

Ángel turns and runs, hits a tree, and passes out. George rolls
his eyes.

BETTY

Hate to break it to you, but your
friends are kinda mean.

GEORGE

Sorry about that.

BETTY

Like, that's the town you were
raving about? I don't see it.

GEORGE

It's not usually like that.
Everyone in Oak Creek has a good
heart. They're just in a bad place
right now.

BETTY

Oh. What can we do to make it
better?

George shrugs his shoulders.

GEORGE
I thought I could make things
right, but maybe Oak Creek really
is better off without me.

Ángel gets up. He points at Betty, scared speechless.

GEORGE
(to Ángel)
Yes, she's a bear. And no, she
doesn't want to eat you.

Ángel cautiously walks past Betty to get to George. His teeth
chatter with fear.

ÁNGEL
Are... are you sure?

GEORGE
Pretty sure.

Ángel grabs George by the shoulders and shakes him.

ÁNGEL
Blink twice if you need saving.

GEORGE
Calm down, Ángel. I confronted
Betty about stealing our nuts, but
she didn't do it.

BETTY
I don't even like nuts.

GEORGE
(whispers)
Gives her tummy troubles if you
know what I mean.

Ángel crinkles up his nose in disgust.

GEORGE
We went to town to clear her name,
and everyone freaked out.

BETTY
So rude.

GEORGE
It didn't help that she sneezed.
She's had a cold ever since she
moved into her new cave. Her
sneezes have been scaring all the
foragers.

ÁNGEL
¡A poco! [Really?!]

Ángel flutters his eyes at George.

ÁNGEL
Remember what to do if you need
saving.

GEORGE
Betty and I are going to stay
here. Why don't you go to Nick's?
You seem to like distracting
people with a trip to that bar.

ÁNGEL
I am thirsty, but it can wait.

George rolls his eyes.

GEORGE
If Betty didn't steal the nuts,
then we need to find out who did.

ÁNGEL
Who could break into a locked
bank? Would they need to be an
expert locksmith or something?

GEORGE
(annoyed)
Forget about the lock, okay?

Ángel and Betty look at George, surprised at his reaction.

GEORGE
Everyone's a suspect. We have to
assume anyone could have entered.
We have to solve the mystery...

ÁNGEL
Let's do this!
(beat)
How do we do this?

GEORGE
We investigate.

BETTY
I'm in!

Ángel looks at Betty suspiciously.

GEORGE
Good.

ÁNGEL
 (to Betty)
 You trying to steal my best
 friend?

BETTY
 What? No.

GEORGE
 Focus! Here's a schematic of the
 town...

George pulls out the last remaining page from his ledger. It's a map of Oak Creek.

ÁNGEL
 Oh no, your book! The whole town's
 savings!

GEORGE
 I know... the only record...

He holds the page close to his chest and then lays it out in front of them. They all lean in to examine the map.

EXT. ANT HILL - AFTERNOON

The townspeople gather, shaken and out of sorts. Maddy snaps her fingers and hundreds of ants link arms, creating a platform with their bodies to lift her up.

Mary sees a ripped page from George's ledger. She picks it up, but the chilly wind blows it from her paw.

Reprise of Maddy's Mob song.

MADDY
 (to townspeople)
 That bear has wreaked havoc on Oak
 Creek for too long. We cannot
 stand idle, waiting for it to
 strike again. We must protect
 ourselves.

TONY
 Yeah!

CHIPMUNK #2
 (deep voice)
 Hey, that's my line...
 (to Maddy)
 Yeah!

MADDY

Our lives are at stake. We have to keep the bear out. We must build a wall to protect ourselves.

BIG BURLY

It would have to be huge to keep that bear out.

MADDY

We may be small, but we are mighty. Just look at what the many can do.

The ant platform she stands on grows taller. An ominous sight. Some townspeople clap with uncertainty.

MADDY

The beavers will chop the wood. The squirrels will carry it. The birds will help us reach new heights.

CHASE

We are pretty great, aren't we?

Noel hits Chase in the arm and rolls her eyes. She walks away and finds Mary in the crowd.

MADDY

We work day and night until it's done. If we don't, we will perish!

NOEL

(to Mary)

Hey, you're George's wife. Right?

MARY

Yes, Mary.

NOEL

I'm Noel. This doesn't feel right.

MARY

Not at all.

MADDY

(to townspeople)

We will be ready when the bear returns.

The townspeople cheer, more committed this time.

MADDY
 And if George is found anywhere
 near Oak Creek...
 (to soldier ants)
 Arrest him.

Tony and the soldier ants salute their queen.

NOEL
 (to Mary)
 George would never do anything
 against the town. He loves Oak
 Creek.

MARY
 We have to figure out what's going
 on...

NOEL
 What should we do?

MARY
 You're not afraid of a little
 adventure, are you?

Noel grimaces.

INT. OAK CREEK BANK - AFTERNOON

George and Ángel look through the ransacked bank looking for clues.

GEORGE
 There's got to be something I
 missed.

Ángel finds a nut under some papers. He picks it up and puts it in the cocoon armor still around his torso.

BETTY (O.S.)
 Any luck in there?

EXT. OAK CREEK BANK - CONTINUOUS

George and Ángel exit, and Betty peeks out from behind the tree.

BETTY
 I see a lot of activity down by
 the ant hill over there. They're
 up to something big.

GEORGE
No new clues.

BETTY
We gotta hightail it out of here.
Soldier ants at three o'clock.

Ángel nods in the direction of the approaching soldier ants as Betty hides behind the tree. Her scared face is still very visible.

SNOW falls. George licks his finger and checks the air. He holds his empty hands to his chest, sans ledger.

EXT. ANT HILL - AFTERNOON

Snow falls. The town works tirelessly to build a stick wall. Big Burly hoists a tall pointy stick up. Chase catches it from above, and they work together to secure its position.

MADDY
Higher, higher, higher! High
enough to keep the bear out.

BIG BURLY
Maddy, shouldn't we be building a
bigger perimeter around the whole
town? Not just around the ant
hill?

MADDY
We have to start somewhere. Stop
dilly-dallying and we'll get to it
before Christmas.

Nick the spider taps Maddy on her shoulder. She turns around.

NICK
Someone said you have a special
job for me?

MADDY
Yes, a very special job indeed.
Check in with the colony and
they'll get you started.

Nick heads into the ant hill.

Chase glides down from the tree.

CHASE
I need a break.
(MORE)

CHASE (CONT'D)

How about some of those delicious
nuts you have somewhere around
here, Maddy?

Maddy pulls Chase aside.

MADDY

Birds have such special talents.
Perhaps an extra ration just for
you?

Chase smiles.

CHASE

I am pretty special, aren't I?

Noel watches this exchange from a tree branch above. She fumes
and glides down toward Mary, who ties sticks together with
other animals.

MARY

(to Noel)

Any intel from above?

NOEL

Not yet. I'm not very good at
this.

MARY

Strange how no ants are working on
the wall.

Noel looks around. Only a few soldier ants protect the ant hill
entrance.

NOEL

You're right. Where'd they all go?

MARY

I think they're in the ant hill.
We've got to get inside.

NOEL

They have the front door
protected. It's too dangerous.

MARY

I'll see if I can get in through
the back.

NOEL

Stay safe.

They nod and separate. Mary slinks toward the back of the ant hill.

MARY
(to herself)
I'm tired of playing it safe.

EXT. BACK OF ANT HILL - CONTINUOUS

Mary tiptoes toward the back entrance where a soldier ant nibbles on a stick.

SOLDIER ANT
(to Mary)
What are you doing back here?

MARY
Looking for more wood.

SOLDIER ANT
Check over there.

He points in the opposite direction. Mary cranes her neck to see Tony passing nuts out of the ant hill in an assembly line.

MARY
Okay, thanks.

Mary slinks away.

The soldier ant finishes the stick and joins the assembly line.

SOLDIER ANT
(to Tony)
5 minute break.

Tony sighs and passes a heavy nut to the soldier ant.

TONY
Boy, this is a lot of work. Do you think we'll ever get a day off? My request for holiday vacation got denied again. The Queen has never been richer, and all we get is more unpaid overtime.

SOLDIER ANT
Yup. But the Queen knows what's best, right?

The ant assembly line continues passing the stash out of the ant hill.

Mary pops up from behind a tree. She crawls toward the ant hill undetected. Near the entrance, she stands up and makes a run for it.

SOLDIER ANT
 (to Mary)
 Hey, what do you think you're
 doing?
 (to ants)
 Grab her!

Tony turns around, surprised to see a swarm of his fellow ants leaping onto Mary. They take her down in front of him.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

George, Ángel, and Betty stare at the map of Oak Creek. SNOW falls onto the page.

GEORGE
 Who could have stolen the stash?
 Think, George, think.

ÁNGEL
 All this thinking is making me
 hungry. Let's eat.

Ángel pulls out the nut he found in the bank. He holds it out for George.

ÁNGEL
 Here amigo, have a bite.

GEORGE
 I don't have time to eat.

Ángel holds it out for Betty.

ÁNGEL
 How 'bout you, Betty bear? Want a
 snack?

Betty sniffs the nut and recoils. She holds back a sneeze.

BETTY
 Ahh.. ahh...

Betty sneezes with a GROWL.

BETTY
 Ahh choo!

The thrust of her sneeze sends Ángel flying backward. Stars circle his pulsing head.

ÁNGEL

I take it you're not a health nut.

George takes the nut from Ángel's hand.

GEORGE

Betty, you haven't sneezed in a while. Smell the nut again for me?

George sets the nut on the ground in front of Betty. She bends down and sniffs it. A sneezing fit ensues.

Ángel covers his head from the sheer velocity of the sneezes. When she's done, Ángel drips with snot.

ÁNGEL

Today's nut my day.

BETTY

Ug, I thought my cold was getting better.

GEORGE

Betty, don't you see? You don't have a cold. You're allergic to nuts!

BETTY

I am?!

GEORGE

Smell the nut one more time to make sure.

Ángel braces himself. Betty smells the nut and sneezes.

BETTY

OMG George, you're right! I'm allergic to nuts.

ÁNGEL

That's nuts!

BETTY

Insane! Wow, George. This explains so much!

ÁNGEL

You're a genius for figuring it out!

GEORGE

(to himself)
Figuring it out...

INSERT MEMORY: Betty sniffs Maddy's ant hill and immediately sneezes!

INSERT MEMORY: The bank vault is open and empty. The place is ransacked. Standing in the center of the chaos is Maddy. She turns around with a subtle smirk.

BACK TO:

George's eyes grow wide with realization.

GEORGE
Maddy! The ant hill!

ÁNGEL
Is Maddy allergic too?

GEORGE
No, Ángel. Maddy robbed the bank. The stash is in the ant hill. We have to get it back. We have to save Christmas!

ÁNGEL
Woohoo! Let's do it!

GEORGE
You guys stay here for back up. I'm going to sneak into the ant hill to find the stash. Once I do, I'll signal you.

BETTY
We need a better signal this time. Merry Christmas was too confusing.

George nods.

EXT. ANT HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Maddy watches the townspeople build her wall.

MADDY
Faster! Higher! Don't stop now!

The surrounding trees blow in the wind. Maddy looks around with suspicion.

MADDY
Chase! We need you.

Chase places a stick in the wall with great effort. He sighs and flies down to the ground.

CHASE

Where's my extra special ration,
Maddy? I'm doing the work of ten
squirrels.

MADDY

(whispers)

Be a good bird and keep an eye out
for any suspicious movement from
up there, will you?

CHASE

No snack, no work.

Chase folds his wings.

Maddy nods to one of her soldier ants, and they toss Chase a
seed.

MADDY

Now back to work!

Maddy walks away from Chase. He looks at the seed, offended.

CHASE

Keep it, you cheap ant.

Chase flies away.

MADDY

(calls after Chase)

You ingrate!

Maddy surveys the tree line. Out of the corner of her eye, she
spots a squirrel TAIL hiding behind a log.

MADDY

(to soldier ant)

How are we doing?

SOLDIER ANT

Making good progress, my Queen.

MADDY

Make it faster.

Maddy looks back at the tail and sees George sneaking toward
the ant hill.

MADDY

Arrest him!

Maddy points to George. He stops dead in his tracks, and then
makes a run for it. The ant army pursues him.

MADDY

Bring the traitor to me.

The ants chase George. He grabs some leaves, crumbles them, and throws the dust in their eyes. The first row fall back, but more follow.

The ants jump onto George and topple him. They tie his hands together with webbing, carry him to Maddy, and lay him at her feet.

MADDY

(to George)

I see insolence runs in your family.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Ángel rests while Betty paces.

BETTY

I hope George is okay. Maybe we should go check.

ÁNGEL

I'd go check, but he's been kinda testy. I don't want to make him mad.

BETTY

I'd probably just sneeze all over and make things worse.

Chase flies over to them with his mouth agape.

CHASE

Say what?! Ángel, what are you doing with the big bad bear?

BETTY

Excuse me? Who are you calling big? How rude!

Betty sucks her stomach in.

ÁNGEL

She's on our side, amigo.

CHASE

I don't know, I just spent all day building a stupid wall to keep her out, so...

Chase shrugs his bird shoulders, unfazed.

ÁNGEL
How's Noel?

CHASE
She's fine. What are you gonna do,
go save her from the teeny tiny
little ants?

Chase laughs.

ÁNGEL
Those ants are evil, man. And
yeah, maybe I will.

Ángel leaves in a huff.

Betty grins and leans in towards Chase, licking her lips.

BETTY
Now that you're alone with the big
bad bear, you better watch your
back buddy.

Chase is unfazed. Betty realizes he isn't scared and drops the act.

BETTY
How do you stay so chill? What's
your secret?

Chase looks around and then leans in.

CHASE
(whispers)
I fake it.

BETTY
You do?

CHASE
Oh yeah.
(increasingly hectic)
I'm losing it inside right now. If
George doesn't save Christmas, I
have to fly south for the winter.
I don't want to do that! I like
Oak Creek. Squirrels look up to me
here. The other birds make fun of
me, but here, I'm respected.

BETTY
Okay, whoa. Calm down!

Chase grabs Betty's face.

CHASE
And those ants totally freak me
out!

Betty pulls away from Chase.

BETTY
Calm down! How bad could they be?

Out of nowhere, a huge net falls onto Betty. She's trapped!
Lots of little ants jump down and encircle Chase.

CHASE
Ahhhhhhhh!

Fighting, Betty tears a hole in the net with her claw.

Nick the spider slides down and quickly repairs the hole. He spins another layer of web around Betty to seal her in tight. Betty's attempt to fight fails as the web tightens.

EXT. ANT HILL - CONTINUOUS

George lays at Maddy's feet with hands tied. Her soldier ants bring Mary out of the ant hill and put her next to George. She's tied up too.

GEORGE
Mary, what happened?

MADDY
She was trespassing. George, you and your family have brought great suffering to Ant Creek --

GEORGE
Don't you mean Oak Creek?

MADDY
That's what I said. You must now face the consequences of your actions. I hereby sentence you both to life in prison.

NOEL
That's not fair! They have the right to a fair trial.

MADDY
(to Noel)
You've chosen the wrong team.

Maddy snaps her fingers, and her soldiers grab Noel and tie her up as well.

NOEL

Hey!

The townspeople stop toiling and gather to watch.

GEORGE

You won't get away with this,
Maddy. I know the truth. I know
you stole the stash from the bank.
And I can prove it.

Gasps from the crowd. Maddy laughs.

MADDY

We've done no such thing. How
undignified.

GEORGE

(to townspeople)

She's stolen our stash. She wants
to take your homes. And now she's
enslaved you to build a wall to
keep the bear out. But the bear
isn't the problem.

MADDY

Silence! Ants, take him away.

BIG BURLY

Let him speak!

The crowd shouts out in agreement.

CHIPMUNK #2

(deep voice)

Yeah!

GEORGE

The stash must be hidden in her
palace. Open it up to us, show us
what's inside.

The townspeople pick up sticks and brandish them, chanting.

TOWNSPEOPLE

What's inside? What's inside?
What's inside?

MARY

George, I think they're moving
everything to a new location.

George can't hear Mary over the chanting.

GEORGE

What?

Maddy laughs.

MADDY

Too little too late, dear George.
You have no idea what you're up
against.

Giant wings flip out of Maddy's back, revealing that she's a
FLYING ANT!

Her group of soldier ants also unleash their WINGS. They slowly
rise up into the air.

MADDY

You fools are no match for my
army. Get 'em boys!

Maddy laughs maniacally as a swarm of flying ants grab George,
Mary, and Noel by the fur.

MADDY

Merry Christmas!

The ants fly George, Mary, and Noel through the forest,
following Maddy's lead.

The townspeople watch on in horror.

Ángel pops his head out of the brush as his friends are carried
off. He runs after them.

EXT. CLIFF - MOMENTS LATER

The flying ants take George, Mary, and Noel toward a thin tree
branch that dangles over a steep cliff.

MADDY

Drop 'em.

GEORGE

Maddy, no!

The flying ant army drops the gang onto the shaky tree branch,
which wobbles under their weight. Maddy laughs as she watches
them struggle to keep their balance.

MADDY
 (to a soldier ant)
 Are they ready yet? We have to
 move.

SOLDIER ANT
 They're almost done.

MADDY
 We'd really love to stay and watch
 your demise, but there are more
 important things to attend to.

Maddy snaps her fingers and flies away. Most of her army follows, but a few stay and chew through the branch.

Ángel runs through the forest. He sees his friends on the bowing branch. It's going to break!

MARY
 George, it's been an honor being
 your wife. I love you.

GEORGE
 I love you too, but it's too early
 for goodbyes. Quick, chew through
 your binds.

The squirrels chew through their hand ties as they dangle above the cliff.

Ángel climbs up a nearby tree. He swallows his fear, jumps off the branch, and dives down.

The ants eat through the wood branch, which shreds and buckles. Noel loses her balance and falls off!

GEORGE
 Noel!

Ángel flails his arms as he free falls. The cocoon around his torso rips off, revealing new wing-flapped arms. Ángel is now a FLYING SQUIRREL!

ÁNGEL
 Wha?! Cool!

Ángel glides gracefully through the air, swoops down into the edge of the cliff, and catches Noel.

George and Mary watch in awe.

GEORGE
 Ángel has wings!

Ángel ricochets off the cliff and flies Noel to safety.

Ángel climbs back up a nearby tree, jumps off, and saves Mary. He glides down to the ground with her.

George frees his hand from the binds as the branch breaks and falls into the ravine.

GEORGE
Ahhhhhhh!

Ángel glides down and reaches into the abyss.

ÁNGEL
Noooooooooo!

Mary and Noel clutch each other with fear.

George grabs onto Ángel's hand in the nick of time.

Ángel pulls him up to safety.

GEORGE
(to Ángel)
Thanks amigo.

ÁNGEL
No amigo... Tu eres mi familia.
[You're my family.]

George and Ángel hug.

NOEL
Ángel! You saved us.

Noel gives Ángel a hug next. He beams with excitement.

ÁNGEL
Anything for you, my chica.

GEORGE
You can fly!

Ángel flaunts his newfound wings.

ÁNGEL
It all started with a wise old
caterpillar and an oaky drink with
a zesty after taste.

George and Ángel laugh.

GEORGE

Quick, let's get back to the ant
hill and find our stash!

George, Mary, Ángel, and Noel run back to the ant hill.

INT. ANT HILL - CONTINUOUS

They enter the large structure. Little tunnels line the vaulted walls.

A handful of ants charge at them, carrying pointy spears. Ángel and Noel jump up and hang onto the ceiling. George and Mary dodge the ant spears as they lunge toward them.

Mary grabs George's hands and does a backflip over him, kicking a few ants in the process. The ants tumble back in a line like dominoes.

George whips his tail around, taking out a row of ants. Mary smiles, impressed.

Ángel drops from the ceiling, taking out more ants.

Only one ant remains. The squirrels strike battle poses.

SOLDIER ANT

I don't get paid enough for this.

The soldier ant drops his spear and puts his hands up. George motions for him to go. The ant runs away scared.

Noel glides down to join, and they all walk through the hall.

ÁNGEL

This place gives me the creeps.

Noel holds Ángel's hand. He smiles.

GEORGE

Where is everyone else? There are
thousands of ants in the colony.

NOEL

Only some of them flew away.

MARY

Where did they fly off to?

They walk through to the back of the ant hill where they find Tony and a few ants passing what's left of the stash outside. Only a few nuts remain.

Tony walks inside to pick up another nut. He stops when he sees the squirrels.

GEORGE
(to Tony)
Where's the stash?

TONY
Long gone. We've been moving it
from one place to another all
week.

Tony picks up a nut and his back CRACKS. This crack is the most epic yet! He drops the nut and sits on it, moaning.

GEORGE
Where is she taking everything?

TONY
How should I know? I'm just a
peasANT. She snaps, we work. She
doesn't exactly stop to tell us
the plan.

GEORGE
That must be really frustrating.

TONY
You know what? It is. It's hard to
see your Queen lying and stealing,
but I'm just one ant. How should I
know what's best for the colony?
And what am I supposed to do about
it?

GEORGE
Help us find the stash.

Tony rubs his lower back, thinking.

GEORGE
Please. Where is it?

TONY
Follow the line of ants to the
drop sight. Come on, I'll take you
there.

GEORGE
Alright!

Tony leads the gang outside.

EXT. TREE LINE - CREEK - MOMENTS LATER

Tony, George, Ángel, Mary, and Noel run past a line of ants that pass nuts to the landing point at the creek. Falling SNOW dusts the ground.

They reach the shoreline. There, Maddy and the flying ants float above TWENTY STASH PILES.

GEORGE

Give it up, Maddy. It's the end of the line.

MADDY

Dear George, this is the end... for you. For us, it's just the beginning.

Maddy snaps her fingers, and the ants fly down to grab webbed nets on the ground. They soar back up with the nets filled with nuts.

Maddy snaps her fingers again, and the ants fly off with twenty full nets.

GEORGE

We can't let them get away!

George WHISTLES LOUDLY. No response.

GEORGE

Ángel, where's Betty?

ÁNGEL

I left her with Chase.

George jumps onto one of the nets in mid-air and holds on for dear life.

GEORGE

Ahhhhh!

TONY

Take me with you!

Tony jumps onto George's tail as he's flown away. He climbs up his tail and torso, and up to George's shoulder.

Ángel runs up a tree, jumps, and glides over to the next tree to chase the ants. Noel follows.

MARY

There's no way I'm sitting this one out.

Mary runs.

Chase flies overhead, panting. He soars next to Mary.

CHASE

Help! The ants are --

Chase sees George gripped onto one of the stash nets, surrounded by hundreds of flying ants. He passes out from the stress of it all.

Mary shakes and slaps Chase. He jolts awake.

MARY

Pull yourself together!

CHASE

I'm not freaking out right now.
Not at all!

MARY

Good, let's go!

Mary jumps onto Chase's back, and he flies in pursuit.

EXT. CREEK - CONTINUOUS

The swarm of ants fly the stash nets over the water.

Maddy sees Ángel and Noel chasing from the sidelines. Ángel throws a stick through the swarm, knocking a few ants out of formation.

MADDY

(to soldier ants)
Fly faster you lazy dimwits.
They're gaining on us!

The net George clings to dips close to the creek. He maintains his grip and lifts his feet to avoid the water.

GEORGE

Ahhhhh!

George pulls himself up the net with Tony on his shoulder.

GEORGE

(to Tony)
We have to get closer to Maddy.
I'm going to jump.

Tony looks at the gap between the next net.

TONY
Are you insane?

GEORGE
Hold on tight!

George steadies himself. Tony grips George's fur.

George jumps onto the next net. Tony sighs relief when they nail the landing.

The force of the jump causes the ants to drop the previous net, losing their portion of the stash in the water.

George looks back at the lost nuts with dismay.

NOEL
I'm on it!

Noel reverses course to go after the lost nuts.

Chase and Mary gain ground.

MADDY
(yells)
Faster!

MARY
Come on, Chase. Let's take out
some ants!

CHASE
Of course that's what a confident
bird like me would do.

Chase gulps.

MARY
What are you waiting for?

Chase swallows his fear and swoops down with determination. He flies through the swarm, knocking out a row of ants. A few stash nets fall in the process.

Chase lets out a blood curdling scream as he rubs his head with his wing.

CHASE
Ah! Get the ants off me! Eek!

MARY
There are no ants on you. Just me.

CHASE

Cool, cool... In that case, let's
do it again!

Chase doubles back and flies through the swarm again, thinning their ranks.

A large NINJA ANT jumps on a net close to George. He flashes a handful of wooden NINJA STARS. He throws them at George, one by one.

NINJA ANT

Waaaaa yaaaaaa!

TONY

Watch out!

George scrunches his body up and down to avoid the ninja stars. Tony is tossed about.

George jumps off the net to avoid another star. He falls down, and grabs back onto the bottom of the net. His feet glide through the water. He struggles to pull himself back up.

Scared, Tony grips George's face so tightly, George can't keep his eyes open.

GEORGE

I can't see!

George shakes his head. Tony falls, but saves himself by grabbing back on to George's tail.

The Ninja Ant throws his final star. It cuts George's net in half, releasing the nuts into the stream.

The ants carrying the empty net let go, releasing it, with George and Tony, toward the creek below.

George does a backflip through the air and lands onto another stash net.

GEORGE

Whew.

TONY

That was close!

The Ninja Ant sets his sights on George.

Ángel gains on the ants from the sideline. A swarm comes for him. He pulls out a pair of sticks and wields them like nunchucks. He knocks out a bunch of ants, but they keep coming. A swarm of them push him off a branch.

He grasps at the air and right before hitting the ground, he opens his wings and glides. Ángel flies to the next branch with a huge smile on his face.

ÁNGEL

Woo hoo hoo!

The SNOW picks up with a big chilly burst of wind. Everyone works harder to fly against the BLAST.

The Ninja Ant jumps onto George's net. George whips his tail around, trying to knock off the Ninja. Tony is whipped around in the process.

TONY

Gahhh!

The Ninja Ant karate-kicks George across the face. His body spins, and he's left dangling one-handed. Tony's life hangs in the balance.

As the chase gets closer to the waterfall, the STORM increases. Water droplets turn into ice daggers that fall into the creek below.

The Ninja Ant punches George several times. George regains both hands on the net. He whips the Ninja profusely with his tail, bringing Tony up into the mix. Tony slaps the Ninja Ant for good measure.

George kicks the Ninja, causing it to lose balance and fall into the water.

NINJA ANT

(on way down)

Waaaaaaa!

GEORGE

TKO!

Tony crawls up George's tail and settles back onto his shoulder. George jumps onto the next stash net, getting close to Maddy.

GEORGE

Give us back our nuts, Maddy.

MADDY

Bow down to your Queen, and I will show you mercy.

GEORGE

Don't mess with Oak Creek!

George whistles and his gang charges from all sides. Ángel glides in from the right. Chase and Mary fly in from the left. The ants have nowhere to go but through the waterfall.

Maddy laughs maniacally. She snaps her fingers, and a giant WOOD APPARATUS rises out of the waterfall, parting the falling water.

MADDY

You're on my turf now.

More flying ants come out of the waterfall to join Maddy. Her reinforcements hold spears, ready to attack.

George's eyes fill with fear as the ants throw their spears at Chase and Mary. Chase flies erratically to dodge the onslaught.

Maddy and her army fly toward the rapids.

BETTY (O.S.)

ROAAAAAR!

Betty runs down the creek GROWLING. Her paws stomp through the water at breakneck speed.

BETTY

No one puts Betty in a net.

George smiles at the sight of Betty.

TONY

(to George)

She's too far. The Queen is always two steps ahead.

MADDY

(to her army)

Into the enclave!

Maddy flies into the parted waterfall, followed by the frontline of her army and the remaining stash nets.

The SNOW STORM grows. Another large gust, and the waterfall starts to FREEZE.

The net George and Tony cling to enters the waterfall.

Chase and Mary continue to dodge spears in the air.

MARY

(from the sky)

George, be careful!

Betty reaches the waterfall as the final nut stash enters. She stands on hind legs to reach the waterfall, but it's too high. Frozen droplets fall down on her like daggers. She GROWLS as she protects herself with her arm.

INT. FROZEN WATERFALL - SUNSET

Maddy settles into an enclave within the new frozen ice structure, surrounded by her massive army, the remaining stash nets, and a wooden contraption that looks like a homemade catapult.

Tony lets go of George, but stays close.

Maddy snaps her fingers, and half of her army fills the catapult with the remaining nuts while the other half threatens George with spears.

GEORGE

You won't get away with this,
Maddy.

MADDY

You should have ensured the safety
of the stash, George. You were
just giving nuts away.

GEORGE

I --

MADDY

And then you left the bank
unlocked. How irresponsible. Your
town depended on you, and you let
them down.

Shock and guilt sweep over George.

MADDY

I'll tell everyone what you've
done.

Maddy's reflection in the ice looms over George.

Anger takes over George's face. His paws clench into fists.

MADDY

You're too much of a coward to
hurt anyone.

GEORGE

You're right, Maddy. That's not my
style.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And it was irresponsible of me to leave the bank unlocked. I was supposed to protect everything, and I failed.

MADDY

That's right. You need to run away for good. Oak Creek is better off without you.

George holds his empty hands to his chest.

GEORGE

No! I'll tell them it was my mistake. They deserve to know. But you're the one who took everything. You tried to take over the town.

MADDY

The wealth would trickle down eventually.

GEORGE

It doesn't work like that. Our whole little ecosystem is connected. If some are suffering, all are suffering. Even though we're all different, we need to look out for each other in order to survive... and thrive. We're in this together.

MADDY

How... charming.

GEORGE

You will face trial for what you've done.

MADDY

Ha! I don't need Oak Creek! I'll create a new colony right here. My workers can build anything.

Maddy snaps her fingers.

MADDY

(motions to George)
Get rid of this inconvenience.

Ants move toward George slowly, tired.

George backs away, scared. The ice below him starts to crack.

GEORGE

Please. You don't have to do this.

Tony steps in front of George. The advancing ants halt.

TONY

(to other ants)

It sounds like a lot of work to build a whole new colony. I like the one we have.

MADDY

Who are you? No one cares what you think.

TONY

(to Maddy)

Are we all nameless playthings to you?

(to other ants)

I don't know about you guys, but I'm getting sick and tired of doing her bidding. Toiling and building for her benefit. When are we going to benefit? A little time off here and there at the very least.

MADDY

Yes, of course.

SOLDIER ANT

She doesn't keep her promises. Come on guys, let's go home without her.

MADDY

What? You can't have a colony without a queen.

TONY

You're right... But we can have a democracy!

The ants look at each other, considering.

TONY

Come on, what do you say? Freedom! Freedom!

ANTS

(chanting)

Freedom, freedom, freedom.

The ants all cheer.

GEORGE

Good luck out there on your own,
Maddy.

MADDY

If I'm going down, you're all
coming with me.

Maddy flies up to her mechanical contraption. She turns it, aiming toward the frozen waterfall. She pulls the lever, releasing the remaining nut stash into the frozen wall.

MADDY

Good luck without me!

The ice structure cracks under the impact, causing it to BREAK.

Everyone braces themselves. The floor drops from underneath them, sending George, the nut stash, ice, and all the ants down into the creek.

Maddy tries to fly away, but is knocked down by falling ice.

EXT. CREEK - CONTINUOUS

From below, Betty watches the ice fall down like daggers.

Mary, Chase, and Ángel hold their breath as the ice structure collapses around George.

Everything moves in SLOW MOTION. A large ice chunk falls with George and the ants close behind.

Betty runs toward the ice dagger, ROARING.

BETTY

(in slow motion)

Nooooooooooooo!

Betty head butts the ice dagger out of the way and maneuvers her big body to catch George and the ants safely.

END SLOW MOTION.

Realizing they're safe on Betty's back, George and the ants cheer.

EXT. CREEKSIDE - SUNSET

Snow falls. Betty walks out of the water. Ángel, Mary, and Chase cheer from the sidelines.

George and the ants disembark from Betty's back. George hugs Mary tight.

A few townspeople run out of the trees to join; Big Burly, the chipmunks, Nick the spider, Rabbit...

BIG BURLY

There you are! Is everyone okay?

GEORGE

Guys, I have to fess up. The night before the bank was robbed... I forgot to lock the door.

CHASE

Smooth move.

Ángel hits Chase.

CHASE

I mean, hey... We all make mistakes.

ÁNGEL

Oh... Amigo. I distracted you. It's partly my fault.

BIG BURLY

An honest mistake, George. I forgive you.

Nick approaches sheepishly.

NICK

We've all made mistakes.

CHIPMUNK #2

(deep voice)

Yeah.

CHIPMUNK

(high voice)

Uh-huh.

The townspeople gather in a tight circle around George.

GEORGE

Thanks, but we're in trouble. We've lost everything. The entire stash is gone.

Noel breaks in carrying a net... only half full.

NOEL

I tried to get as many as I could,
but with the water and wind, I...

She shows what's left of the stash.

GEORGE

That won't get us very far.

Noel puts the nuts in the center of the circle.

NOEL

Still, we'll share them equally.
We're in this together, right
George?

George smiles as the gang sings, "All In This Together."

Big Burly steps up and adds a few nuts to the pile.

BIG BURLY

I had a few put aside for a snowy
day.

Rabbit hops in and drops a load of seeds.

RABBIT

I was saving up for a new leg, but
that can wait until next year.
This one's still got a lot of luck
left in it.

Rabbit knocks on his fake leg.

Nick throws in some nuts with one of his spider legs.

NICK

It's not much, but I also have a
lot of venom to share.

GEORGE

That'll put legs on your chest!

Nick and George laugh. George pats one of Nick's legs, and the spider embraces him with all eight.

Some ants carry nuts into the pile from the creek. Tony smiles through his back pain as he places a nut on the growing stash.

The chipmunks throw in some seeds.

CHIPMUNK #2

(deep voice)

You've always been good to us,
George. We're all in this
together.

CHIPMUNK

(high voice)

Yeah!

Everyone laughs.

George holds his empty hands to his chest, smiling with tears
in his eyes. He looks at all the smiling faces surrounding him.

Betty collects some nuts from the shoreline and pushes them
into the pot.

BETTY

And there's no more pesky bears to
hurt your foraging missions.

George hugs her snout. It's close to the nuts so she sneezes!
The animals brace for it. Their fur blows in the wind.

GEORGE

Oh my! Oh my!

MARY

What is it, dear?

GEORGE

Betty, when did you say you
started sneezing?

BETTY

As soon as I moved into my new
cave.

GEORGE

That cave?

He points to her cave entrance near the waterfall.

BETTY

Yeah, it still needs some work,
but do you guys all want a tour?

GEORGE

Do we ever! If you're allergic to
nuts then I'll bet the bank,
you're sitting on a gold mine!

EXT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

George climbs off Betty's head and onto the roof of her cave. There, he finds the most epic nut stash lying right under an acorn tree.

The animals join him one by one and cheer at the glorious sight.

GEORGE

This is going to be the best
Christmas ever!

George passes nuts to Ángel, who passes it to Chase, who passes it to Tony... The full assembly line forms with both ants and animals working together.

EXT. OAK CREEK MAIN STREET - CHRISTMAS DAY

The town is restored to its full Christmas glory. A circular table fills the town center with the Christmas tree in the middle. Everyone feasts on nuts, seeds, and fruit cake.

George looks around his town and smiles. Children run around laughing, ants co-mingle with animals, and Betty wears a Christmas hat.

Rabbit pops off his fake leg and hands it to Betty.

BETTY

Oh whoa. Honestly, I already feel
really lucky. Thanks though.

Rabbit shrugs and pops his leg back in. Betty laughs.

Big Burly puts an acorn cup of almond milk with two paper straws in front of Tony and another soldier ant.

TONY

Finally, some paid holiday time
off!

SOLDIER ANT

Cheers to that!

The two ants grab their straws and drink up.

Noel greets Ángel with Junior.

NOEL

Junior, I'd like you to meet
someone very special to me.

ÁNGEL
 Hey little amigo. I'm Ángel. But
 you can call me --

Chase flies down and joins them.

CHASE
 I guess you won't need me to
 babysit anymore, huh Noel?

NOEL
 What about for date nights?

Ángel smiles as he puts his arm around Noel.

CHASE
 Okay. Now that I'll be staying for
 winter, I guess I'm available.
 (whispers)
 Just don't tell anyone I'm a
 babysitter. I have an image to
 maintain.

Chase puts Ángel in a playful headlock. Junior laughs, showing
 off his missing tooth.

George watches on with a smile. CP flies out to greet George.
 The shaman caterpillar is now a beautiful BUTTERFLY.

CP
 Who needs a swaddle? Come here,
 give me some love.

CP wraps George in a big hug with his wings then flies off,
 laughing.

George turns around and is faced with Greta in her walker,
 carrying the baby.

GEORGE
 Ah!

GRETA
 There's my favorite son-in-law.
 I'll admit it, you did good. Merry
 Christmas, George.

GEORGE
 Oh wow, Merry Christmas!

George goes in to hug Greta, but she passes him the baby
 instead.

Mary approaches George and Greta.

MARY
 (to George)
 I have a present for you.

GEORGE
 What else could I possibly need?

She hands him a wooden box. Ángel, Noel, and the townspeople look on.

George opens the box. Inside is a brand new LEDGER. He gasps.

GEORGE
 This...

George clutches the ledger tightly to his chest.

GEORGE
 This means the world to me.

MARY
 And you mean the world to Oak
 Creek.

Everyone claps for George and sings "Best Christmas Ever."

George's toddlers come up to him for a hug.

TODDLER SQUIRREL
 Let's play dada!

GEORGE
 Should we plan another bank heist?

TODDLER SQUIRREL
 I'm banker!

TODDLER SQUIRREL #2
 No, I'm banker!

GEORGE
 I'll be the robber. I've had a
 little practice.

George winks at Mary. She smiles.

MARY
 But the bad guy never wins!

George hands the baby back to Greta, and for a change, it SPITS UP on her! She groans.

Old Squirrel approaches Greta, raising his eyebrows in greeting. Her shoulder is covered in spit-up, and his pants have a pee stain. They inch closer together, smiling.

George and Mary chase after their toddlers as the rest of the town reprises the "Best Christmas Ever" song.

THE END