

Magic Photo File Project

“Please come in and have a seat.” says Santa as four of his elves walk in.

“Thanks for coming. I have a new project I’m starting and you four have been chosen because I’m too busy, I don’t want to do this, and you four would be a much better choice to handle this project than I, So I took a vote and voted you in. You’re Welcome.”

The four elves look at each other not sure if they should be excited or not.

“It’s called the Magic Photo File Project and I think it’s going to be fun, so stop looking at me as if I’m about to tell you that we’re having liver and beets for dinner tonight.”

The elves raise their eyebrows in a horrified expression as Santa laughs.

“Loosen up, this is going to be fun. I chose you four because I knew you would love the project, so relax and pay attention.”

Elves love to have fun, but can be rather touchy and timid when Santa starts a new program. Of course Santa knows this and loves to tease them in a good hearted way.

“I came up with this Magic Photo File Project because, as you know, I spend a lot of time reviewing families during the course of the year to get ideas for the kids and all. Many times, I come across families that are struggling emotionally. Could be any number of reasons, but emotionally, these families have hit a wall. The love tank seems to be running on empty, and it always makes me sad because I know they have good hearts.

“What I usually do when I come across a family like this is to pull up their Photo Files on their computers and start at the beginning, pushing the slide show viewing option and sit back to enjoy. It never fails to give me a history of a very good family.” Santa pauses in thought before sharing a side thought, “You know, I’m always amazed at how the earthlings take so many photos of events in their life, stick them in a file and never look at them again. What’s the point, right?”

The elves look at each other nodding in agreement with Santa.

“So anyway, I was looking through a photo file and it occurred to me that this might be a good project for us here at the North Pole. What if I sent you, the members of the Magical Photo File Project, a family that is struggling, some general information and any specific photos to look

for and you all could put together a nice slide show for the family, put it on their opening screen with a title of 'Open Before Christmas'. The hope is that as they watch the slide show, they will see what I see when I do it, and their struggles will gain a whole new perspective and hopefully re-ignite the spirit of Christmas for them."

Santa looks around at the elves who are much more relaxed now and even have a hint of enthusiasm.

"Yes, Focus Freddie." Santa calls on one of the elves who has a question.

"What if they don't have any pictures. A lot of families don't take photos any more you know."

"Good question with a really good answer. I talked to God and he gave me full clearance in situations like that to call on the Guardian Angels at Earth Operations Headquarters and they have full access of the families life and would be happy to assist you in developing a nice slide show. And if the family has no computer, we simply make it a Christmas gift for them. Maybe have a tablet with instructions to turn it on and have it open to the slide show we have created. God has also encouraged me to have you notify the guardian angels of anyone we do a slide show for so they can help us out on their end as well. I know you elves are going to have fun with this, and I encourage you to go wild with it. Remember, these will be families that are struggling and need to be lifted up and we have Gods full support to do whatever it takes to cheer them up, so don't hold back. But do run any really crazy ideas by me before you implement it, just to be safe."

"Any other questions?... yes, Patty Pixel"

"Do you want each of us to take a family, or all of us work on one family at a time?"

"Another good question. You all work together. I chose you four because I thought you made just the right mix. Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel are exceptional at looking at the details and editing a photo to maximize the quality of the shot. Digital Dave is an excellent computer technician who can put together a wonderful slide show, and Frieda Framer has a keen eye for capturing the emotional content perfectly. The four of you working together should be able to put together some really good slide shows that will pull these families back to the emotional compassion that they have been missing. I think you elves are going to do great work."

"This is going to be so much FUN!" says Frieda Framer who is always the emotional one.

“I can’t wait to get started.”

“Well it just so happens that your first project will be a rather tall order for you. As you know, the world has been dealing with a pandemic for over a year now. Safe to say that every family in the Santa delivery zone has been struggling. People have lost their jobs, families have been in isolation, working from home, children doing on-line schooling without being with their friends, and that’s not counting the many who have had to deal with the virus within their own families. Needless to say, the world could use a lift this holiday season, so I have put together a list of all the people who have struggled due to the pandemic with no added issues that you can put together a simple slide show of encouragement for. I’ve listed them on your computers and linked you to their photo files already. I’m asking you to choose about twenty or so good photos that you feel will encourage them to hang in there and be positive. I will have these slide shows posted on their computers three days before Christmas. The first and last slide will have the same message of encouragement for everyone, so it will basically be a fancy Christmas card.”

“Wow. That’s a lot of slide shows for just four elves? We’re good, but not that good, Santa.” says Patty Pixel.

Santa smiles, “Ah yes, but Santa has you covered. I got the ‘pause’ button that God lets me use every Christmas Eve to pause time and let me catch up in a busy neighborhood before I start up time again. It will be used in this room for you all to create these slide shows without using up any earth time.”

“That’s awesome!” says Focus Freddie as the others agree with enthusiasm.

“Awesome indeed. So I’ll leave you to your project and if you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to call me. I’m sure after you do a couple and get the hang of it, you’ll be cranking out these encouraging slide shows in no time at all. Thanks for your help.”

As Santa leaves, the elves are busily pulling up their list and getting started as the Magic Photo File Project begins to take shape.

Santa was right, of course, as the four elves quickly get into a rhythm that is making beautiful, uplifting slide shows for everyone in the Santa delivery zone on earth.

Frieda Framer pulls up the file and goes through every picture, looking for the 20 or so pictures that best trigger an emotionally positive response. She returns the file to the earthling computer and attaches the 20 pictures chosen to the link and passes them over to Focus Freddie

and Patty Pixel who crop and tweak the pictures to give each one the maximum emotional impact. Then they pass the 20 photos with the link on to Digital Dave who is a master at putting the pictures in just the right order to create the perfect slide show.

They have no idea how long it has taken them because of the pause button Santa gave them. Every day when they get together in their work place, they push the pause button. After they have created a large group of slide show greeting cards and are a bit hungry, they push the pause button and leave, only to find all the other elves are just starting their day. It takes a little time to get use to the tricks of working at the North Pole, but every elf will agree that you simply can't get a better assignment in the elf world than working at the North Pole. Santa has such a great connection to God, who is always more than happy to help Santa out with awesome tricks that make the work at the North Pole so much easier.

The elves of the North Pole are truly happy elves.

"Good to see you, please come in." says Santa as the four elves enter Santa's office after having completed the rather large project of creating encouraging slide show greeting cards for everyone in the Santa delivery zone.

"That wasn't such a hard project, right?" he says as they take their seats and laugh at the comment.

"If it wasn't for that pause button, we wouldn't be anywhere near done, that's for sure." says Frieda Framer as the others agree whole heartedly.

"Ah yes, but you did have the pause button. If I didn't have access to the pause button, I would never considered having you four take on a project like that. So tell me what you think about the project before we move on with it."

"I thought it was a great experience. My problem was in narrowing all the good picture down to the 20 we used for the slide show. I agree with you Santa, that the earthlings take so many great pictures that capture the emotions of the events in their life, but then just stick them in a file never to be seen again. I had to bring a lot of tissue boxes every day because there were so many touching photos to go through, and I don't even know these people I'm looking at." says

Frieda Framer.

“It is amazing how these earthlings pay so much money for therapy when they have files full of memories that would better serve to build their confidence and fill their hearts with love, and they never open them.” says Santa in agreement.

“And these people spend a lot of money on really good camera equipment. I’m sure Patty Pixel will agree with me that there were a lot of really good pictures that we barely had to do anything to.” says Focus Freddie.

“That’s no joke,” Patty Pixel agrees, “ Those earthlings are very good at documenting their special moments in life, you’d think they’d be good about using them to help appreciate what their life is all about.”

“Maybe that will change when they open up our awesome slide shows we created.” says Digital Dave.

“I certainly hope so. I checked them out and you four did a really good job. But let’s not beat up the earthlings for what they don’t do, let’s appreciate that they do take pictures that gives us another opportunity to promote love in their world. The pandemic has been rough for so many earthlings. I think you did a great job of using their pictures to cheer them up again. It would be nice if they learned from this what pictures are for, but if not, we are here to help them out. Thank you.” Santa agrees.

“ So now that you fully understand what this program is all about, I think we can move on to the next phase of it.” says Santa to get them on to the point of this meeting. “I have some special assignments already lined up for you to take on. These will be different in that I don’t want them to be cookie-cutting slide shows. I want them to be unique to their own situation. I’ll give you a full report of the situation that has brought them to this point in their life and some ideas of what I think is needed. From that, I want you four to create your slide show. I only have one rule in doing these slide shows - Whatever it takes to reach their hearts! If you can reach them in one photo, great. If you need thirty, great. We need to use this program to create slide shows that will take the earthlings deeper and deeper into their hearts until they surrender to the answer right in front of them and change the direction they are headed in a more positive direction and outcome. God and I encourage you to feel free to call on the guardian angels of the earthlings you are working with if you need anything cleared up for your project. And remember

that if you can't find the pictures, the guardian angels always have access to their life too. The guardian angels can always capture pictures of tender moments that advance love, so don't hesitate to use them. They are busy angels, of course, so if you can create the slide show on your own, do so. But don't hesitate to call on them if you get stuck on something."

Santa stops as he can see in the faces of his four elves that they understand and are anxious to get started.

"So unless you have any questions, I have a file here for you to start with ..."

Before Santa can finish, Patty Pixel jumps up, grabs the file from Santa's hand as the four elves bolt out of his office without another word, leaving Santa frozen, smiling and shaking his head as he talks to himself, "Okay then... you're dismissed.... (then in a louder tone) Thanks For Coming!" he says to the open, empty door. "Looks like I chose the right elves for this program." He says as he goes to close the door laughing.

"Wow, this couple is in sad shape." says Frieda Framer as she reads through the report. "This guy even has the divorce papers ready to go after the holidays. What a chump. It says here they haven't had a tender moment in months and according to Santa, they both have been so busy avoiding each other, they have no chance of getting back to the love that's in their hearts unless we can create a slide show from the pictures of their past."

Frieda Framer sets the report down and looks at her fellow elves with a bright expression, "This sounds like fun!" she says with a bit too much enthusiasm.

"Yea, we'll have these two gushing in cheesy love within twenty pictures for sure." agrees Focus Freddie.

"I bet we nail it in fifteen pictures." says Digital Dave with confidence.

"I don't know, " says a cautious Patty Pixel, "He's already got the divorce papers ready. It's not easy to move the heart of a man who has already given up on love, you know."

"Let me pull up their photo file and see what I can find." says Frieda Framer as she stares at her screen, quickly scrolling through the pictures.

"Oh look at this one." says Frieda Framer as she posts a picture from the file of the man

and wife in a very romantic setting.”You can see the absolute love in their eyes, can’t you?”

“I think we should pile on the pictures of his wife doing wonderful things. Playing with the kids, fixing up the garden, being a pillar of beauty at special events with him. We want this guy to really feel small. We want him to think ‘This is the woman you want to dump? Like YOU can do better? What a dirt bag!’ says Patty with obvious attitude.

“Woe, woe, woe little firecracker. We have to remember, Patty, that the objective here is to melt the guys heart into an emotional sea of compassion and love, not drive him into a pit of worthless depression. We want to encourage him to appreciate how much he has with loving memories, not condemn him for getting off track a little. Tender moments, Patty, tender moments.” says Digital Dave.

Patty sighs, “I suppose you’re right. But I think we need to remember that this is a guy who already has the divorce papers ready to go. This is a guy looking for the easy out to avoid having to do the work to get back on track. A little dose of guilt wouldn’t hurt, that’s all I’m say’n.”

“The guilt will come when he looks at the love. Every picture has to reflect the love.” says Frieda as she continues to scroll through the files, sending the really good ones to Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel to start working on.

As Frieda gets to the end of the files, she seems completely satisfied that they have enough pictures to turn this love around. While Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel freshen up and enhance each picture, they agree. And when Digital Dave shows them the final product, there is not a dry eye in the room.

‘Open Before Christmas’ the tag on the file says.

Doug is suspicious and annoyed that someone has been messing with his computer. He tries to think who it might be that would leave this file on his desktop. Probably Sue, his wife, which makes him even more upset. She’s probably looking through his files to get the goods on him, but she would have been disappointed. He’s always been very careful not to leave anything

in his computer that could damage his spotless reputation. He chuckles at the thought of how long it took his wife before she realized she wasn't going to find anything.

Reluctantly, he opens the file:

*'When it comes to LOVE,
it's always good to look at the past
in order to find the focus you need
as you move towards your future.
We wanted to help.'*

says the opening screen. There's a 'Start' button that Doug pushes hesitantly.

As Doug watches the slide show, he is becoming more nervous and concerned. He tries to look away. He thinks he'd like to delete it. But with each slide, he finds himself unable to do anything but look at the pictures. The tender moments captured. The look of pure joy on Sue's face. Look at how she's looking at me. Wow - I remember that night. I never laughed so much. Every picture pulls him deeper.

The last frame has a final message:

*'You and Sue have really good hearts.
For Christmas, Santa would rather you both
open your hearts instead of presents.
You both deserve the LOVE that your hearts carry.
We know you can do it, Doug.
Merry Christmas
Santa's Elves' at the North Pole*

Doug quickly closes the file and sits back. Was this some kind of a joke? Where did those pictures come from? It doesn't seem like Sue to do something like this. That's just not her style. Who else would have pictures like that?

He shakes his head. He's over thinking it. It doesn't make sense.

Out of curiosity, he opens his pictures file and finds a folder that has pictures of one of

the events reflected on the slide show and opens it. There is the same picture of Sue that was on the slide show. He looks at the surrounding photos which together takes him back to an evening spent with Sue that they enjoyed so much.

From there, Doug spends quite a few hours into the late night, traveling through the files of pictures that reflect a good life.

The next day found Doug a bit tired, understandably, and a bit subdued. He can't get his mind off of the slide show he received, and refuses to even think about where it came from. The Elves at the North Pole made me that slide show? Right - I'm sure no one would have a problem believing that one.

Meanwhile Sue seems a bit subdued as well. Not tense and edgy as she normally is. Doesn't seem to be interested in conversation, but thankfully, neither is Doug. There seems to be a clear reluctance to make eye contact between them.

Luckily, the morning routine of getting the kids off to school and yourself off to work serves them both well this morning. Any parent knows that having children can be part of the solution and part of the problem at the same time.

And being the holiday season, both Doug and Sue have no problem keeping themselves busy between the shopping for the kids, holiday events and regular routines.

But it's still there.

Every night after everyone else goes to bed, Doug stays in his office and watches the slide show. And afterwards, he always pulls up his picture files and spends some time looking through so many folders that have documented his life. For the first time, Doug is asking himself, 'How did our love get off track?'

It happened the next morning. They were getting the morning routine going and Sue was putting together the children lunches when she casually said, "I'm going grocery shopping today after work. Is there anything special you'd like to have for Christmas dinner?"

Doug nearly chokes on his toast. Wow. It's been a long time since Sue asked him what he wanted for dinner, let alone Christmas dinner. He hesitates, then smiles.

"Why don't you get a leg of lamb and I'll cook it?" he says.

Sue stops and slowly looks towards Doug, "Really?"

Sue use to love cooking with Doug and she especially loved it when he made a leg of

lamb. It was her favorite. Of course, Doug knew this as well.

“Sure. It’s been a long time since I helped out in the kitchen. It’d be fun to do it again.”

Sue desperately tries to keep her composure. She was expecting the usual, ‘Whatever’ response as he grabbed his things and walked out to work. It’s been a long time since she saw this side of her husband.

Of course, they both quickly got back to their morning routines and went to work without any further conversation.

As Christmas morning came, there was a noticeable calm between Doug and Sue that had been growing stronger every day since Doug opened his slide show from the supposed Elves of the North Pole. They were both clearly guarded in their response to each other, but the holidays usually increase the tensions within families and this was clearly not the case this year.

After the kids opened their presents and were busy taking over the room with all their toys, Doug handed Sue a present.

With a look of uncertainty, she begins to open the gift. As she takes the lid off, she freezes as she sees the divorce papers staring up at her. Her heart sinks and her eyes fill with emotion as she slowly looks to Doug with an expression of absolute pain.

Doug sees that she doesn’t get it and quickly encourages her to read the note with it. She looks back inside the box and pulls out a small envelope.

Sue: I did some research and discovered that if you throw divorce papers on your Christmas log on Christmas morning, it will bring your family the warmest, happiest Christmas of all time.

Merry Christmas

I Love You

Doug

Sue looks back at Doug, who has tears falling from his eyes as well.

“Sue, I’m sorry.” He says, then points to the papers inside her box, “That will never happen, I promise you that. Please throw those on the fire.”

Sue stands up and nearly leaps into Doug’s lap as they embrace in a passionate kiss that

seems to melt their hearts together.

When they come up for air, Sue gets up and takes the divorce papers, rips them in half and scatters them onto the fire.

After a wonderful Christmas day of the kids playing with new toys while mom and dad cook a fabulous feast in the kitchen, the kids are carried off to bed and are sound asleep before the lights are turned off.

With the children quietly sleeping and the fire place slowly burning out, Sue and Doug settle into the couch to enjoy one more glass of wine.

“What made you change your mind?” asks Sue about the divorce papers.

Doug smiles, “Oh, it was crazy. I don’t think you would believe me if I told you.”

Sue perks up and looks at Doug, “Santas Elves at the North Pole?”

Doug perks up and looks at Sue, “You did that?”

“No. I thought you put the slide show on my computer.” Sue says.

“Wait.... you got one too? Was it the same one?”

“I hope not. Mine was a bunch of pictures of you. What was yours?”

“A bunch of pictures of you during some of the great moments we’ve had. Wow! Do you think they really came from Santas Elves? I mean the pictures came out of our own files. Who could do that?”

Sue puts her hands on each side of Doug’s face and looks into his eyes with passion.

“Whoever it was that did it, I’m glad they did.” and she kisses him.

“Now that’s what I was looking for when I started this program.” says Santa as he stops the video and looks around at a table full of tissues and four elves sobbing’

As they slowly gather their composure, Santa looks at them with a big smile. “So I’m guessing you four want to continue in this program?”

“I just love happy endings, Santa. That’s why I love working at the North Pole.” says Frieda Framer, who is trying very hard to gather herself.

“Well hopefully you four will create a lot of happy endings. Are you ready for another

one?”

Quickly, the four sit up and put their game faces on as Digital Dave says boldly, “Let’s do it!”.

Santa smiles, drops another folder on the table as he walks out, “Keep up the nice work, my friends. Oh, and making two separate slide shows for them was a nice touch. That really nailed it. Keep it going!”

“Heather is a thirteen year old girl desperately trying to break away from being a girl and heading for a world of being a teenager. Needless to say, her relationship with her mother is anything but charming. Her mother, Beth, is a good mother who doesn’t try to hold her daughter back, although if you talked to Heather, she would give you the impression that her mother is completely smothering her and controls her every move.” reads Frieda Framer to the others as they look at a new case.

“It’s frustrating for Beth because she’s always been a very supportive mother in every stage of Heathers life. But now Heather is moving into the world of being a teenager, and she is really good at it.”

“I knew when Santa told us about this project we would be getting a lot of cases involving teenagers.” says Focus Freddie as the others agree.

“Well it sounds like Heather has a good heart and Santa gave us the link to Beth’s photo files as well as a link to Heathers computer. I’ve got the photo file up. [Frieda Framer pauses] WOW - there are a ton of pictures here. This lady has so many pictures of Heather. Geeze, lady, did you take pictures EVERY day for thirteen years? [Frieda Framer looks up to the others] Should be no problem finding some good pictures with this one!” she says brightly.

As Frieda Framer goes through the files and sends the good ones to Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel, she gets into a rhythm of being absolutely focused on the pictures as she scrolls through them, and is constantly blurting out [without looking away from her computer] “Oh my God, throw the one with the blue dress out. This one is way better.”

Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel look at each other and decide to sit back and just wait for

Frieda Framer to finish, as they seem to be deleting a lot of pictures they worked hard to get perfect, so it seems to be a lot of wasted effort on their part.

But Frieda Framer is a fast worker, and before long she sits back and looks to the others.

“That should do it. How many do we have?” she asks.

Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel look at their screen, then at each other, before looking to Frieda Framer, “147 pictures.” they say without emotion.

“YIKES!,” says Frieda Framer, “That’s way more than twenty.” as she scoots over to look at Patty Pixels screen and quickly starts deleting pictures.

“There, that should do it.” says Frieda Framer as she scoots back to her computer feeling much better.

Focus Freddie looks at Frieda Framer, “Fifty four is still too many Frieda Framer. You have to understand that Heather does not have the pause button like we do. We do not want to keep her up all night, we just want to give her enough to soften her heart and get her headed in a better direction, that’s all.”

Focus Freddie looks at Patty Pixel who smiles at him, then he looks at his screen at the fifty four pictures. He highlights one and looks up to Patty Pixel, “Delete?”

“Yup.” says Patty Pixel as she follows him on her screen.

This continues at a quick pace, with Frieda Framer constantly trying to jump in with a protest, only to be cut off with both Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel holding up their hands to stop her every time.

Finally the two get down to the twenty pictures or so needed and send the pictures over to Digital Dave, as they look over to Frieda Framer and smile.

Frieda Framer, ever the optimist, smiles back, “Wasn’t that fun?” as Patty Pixel and Focus Freddie look at each other shaking their heads.

Heather always likes to sit at her desk in her room and watch some videos or check out the social media scene before she heads to bed. This has been one of the issues between her and her mom.

Beth knows that she has to be the bad guy because if she didn't go into Heathers room and remove the laptop and take it with her on her way to bed, Heather would likely be up all night.

Of course, Heather sees it as a prime example of the world of suppression she has been forced to live unjustly with.

As she opens her laptop, she sees a file that is tagged, 'Open Before Christmas'.

She quickly pulls it up and finds the first slide that says:

*We know you are quickly moving forward
to becoming an independent adult.
But it's always good to look back first
at the foundation your parents gave you
When you were so dependent on them*

Heather pushes the 'Start' button and sees a picture of her mother holding her on the day she was born. Then a picture of her mother running next to her cheering her on enthusiastically when she was learning to ride a bike without training wheels. Twenty pictures that reflect a mother involved. Twenty pictures that trigger the memories of a mother who was always encouraging her. Twenty pictures of a woman who always gave up her own agenda to be a part of her daughters agenda. Then she gets to the last slide:

*Your mother doesn't want to stop you from becoming an adult
She wants to help you become a good adult - like she is.
Merry Christmas Heather
Santas Elves at the North Pole*

Heather stares at the final slide and reads it over and over, bouncing between the first two lines about her mother, and the last two about Santas Elves at the North Pole? She's not sure what to make of it. Did her mother make this slide show? She doesn't think so. That really doesn't seem like something her mother would do.

She goes back to the beginning and plays the slide show again.

And then again.

Every time, she looks at the expression on her mothers face as she remembers the event that it represents. But after a while, she hears the familiar sound of her mother coming up the stairs to go to bed. She quickly turns off her laptop, unplugs it and stands to meet her mom who is quietly knocking and opening her door.

“Here you go mom. Goodnight” she says as she hands the laptop to her mother and turns towards her bed.

Beth raises her eyebrows surprised. This is the first time she hasn’t had to wrestle the laptop away from her without a barrage of protest.

“Goodnight, honey. Do you want me to read you a bedtime story?” she asks.

Heather looks back at her mother with an ‘oh, please’ look on her face.

Beth smiles warmly and shrugs her shoulders, then with a strong dose of appreciation, says “Thank You.” as she turns to leave.

For the next few days, Beth sees that Heather is being much more receptive to talking with her. There hasn’t been any battles to get simple tasks done. She even wanted to talk to her about those touchy issues of what it’s like when your body goes from a girl to becoming a young woman.

They agreed to go Christmas shopping together the next day, and Beth promised to take her by a woman’s apparel shop and look at girly things.

As they walk into the mall, they notice a woman standing with a microphone and a guy standing next to her holding a camera. They recognize that she is a young reporter for one of the local stations.

“Hi, I’m Jessica Thomas, and I’m doing a story about having a female President and how it affects teenage girls today. Would you mind answering a few questions for me?” says the reporter to Heather.

Heather looks to her mom who shrugs and smiles, before saying ‘Sure’ to the reporter.

“Great. This will just take a minute. Mom, you can stand over by the camera man and you can stand next to me. What’s your name?”

“Heather.”

“Okay” The reporter waits for the camera to signal that they are on.

“This is Jessica Thomas. I am talking to teenage girls about having a woman in the White House, and today I’m with Heather. So tell me Heather, what do you think about having a woman being your President?”

“I think it’s great. It’s about time, really.”

“Do you think a woman can handle the many issues of being the President as well as men?”

“I think a woman can handle anything better than the boys - except being stupid. Boys are much better at that.”

Jessica laughs and jokingly says “Sorry boys” to the camera before she continues.

“So Heather, does having a woman President change your outlook of what you want to be when you grow up?”

Heather pauses a bit then shrugs her shoulders, “Not really. I want to be a good mother like my mom was for me.” she says.

Jessica obviously sees this is not a keeper interview and moves quickly to exit.

“That’s so sweet, Heather.” as she turns to the camera, “This is Jessica Thomas reporting.”

As Jessica moves quickly to thank Heather and move her out, Heather asks her when is it going to be on the news.

“Oh, well you know Heather, these stories take time. You do a lot of interviews like this and then you go through the editing and getting it down to the right time set and then it’s still no guarantee that they will even air the piece, so there’s no telling, really. But thanks for helping out Heather.”

Beth can tell that Jessica was blowing off her daughter, so she moves quickly to get her back into shopping mode.

“That was so nice of you to say about me Heather.” says Beth as they are walking away.

“Oh Mom, don’t get all cheesy on me. I have no idea what I want to be when I grow up and I just said boys were stupid. I said that about you because I’d rather be cheesy than stupid.”

Beth thinks about it and decides she loves that response and laughs out loud.

“You have lots of time to figure that out so don’t worry about it. And it’s much better to be cheesy than stupid. [Beth looks over at Heather and smiles] It just takes boys longer to figure that stuff out.”

They both laugh.

That evening as Heather hears her mom coming up the stairs, she decides not to close up her laptop.

Beth softly knocks on Heather’s door and slowly opens it, finding Heather at her desk with the laptop open.

“Mom, can I show you something?”

“Sure honey.” says Beth as she walks over to the desk and looks at the empty screen.

Heather points her mouse to the folder that says ‘Open Before Christmas’ and looks to Beth, “I got this about a week ago and at first I thought it was from you. But I don’t think it is. I watch it every night and I just don’t know what to think about it.”

Heather pushes the ‘start’ button as Beth looks on.

With each picture, Beth becomes more emotional. After a few, she pauses the slide show and asks Heather where she got those pictures from.

“Mom, they’re in the slide show. I didn’t make the slide show.”

Beth turns back to continue the show, “Those are from my files. They’re beautiful.”

“I know, really.” says Heather as they both follow the slides reflecting a mother and a daughter creating thirteen years of wonderful memories.

When they get to the final slide, Beth seems frozen as she stares at the last slide for what seems to be a quarter of eternity, then looks at Heather.

“Santas Elves?”

“I know. It’s crazy. But who else could have done this with your pictures?”

“Is there a new band out named Santas Elves?”

“Mom, really?! Do you think I would listen to them if there was? Besides, how would they get into your picture files?”

Beth looks off in thought before Heather redirects.

“Mom, let’s watch again without trying to think of who did it, okay?”

Beth turns her attention back to the screen as Heather starts the slide show a second time.

This time they both watch it in silence. This time Beth gets pulled into the slide show with more focus as she watches these pictures that reflect such wonderful memories. As the show ends, Beth looks to Heather

“That really is a beautiful slide show.”

“I know. I’ve watched it a hundred times and it just gets better. It makes me want to look in your picture files at the other photos.” she pauses then looks at her mom, “I know I’ve been a hand full recently and I’m sorry mom. I know they always say they’re cute now, but wait until their teenagers. But I don’t want to be that teenager. I want that mom on the slide show to be my mom as I’m a teenager.”

“I’ll always be that mom for you Heather.” says Beth as the two embrace.

As Beth wraps up the cheesy mother/daughter hugging, she says, “You know, I have a ton of pictures in my files. Maybe that would be a nice project for us?”

“That would be great. From bedtime stories, to looking at files of family pictures. Can’t think of a better way to end the day.” says Heather as she climbs into bed.

“Another great outcome. You elves are great!” says Santa as he looks around the table full of tissues and elves sobbing once again. “But I’m thinking I should get an extra supply of tissues before we continue.” he says with a laugh.

“Santa, do you think we should leave off the Santas Elves at the North Pole at the end? Seems like it’s confusing people.” asks Digital Dave.

“Don’t worry about that. I only concern myself with two things - being truthful and getting a positive outcome. This was another great outcome, and you are Santas Elves and you are from the North Pole and you are the ones who created the excellent slide show. You’ll learn that being confused is pretty much a normal state for earthlings anyway. Nice work.” says Santa as he drops another assignment on the table and leaves.

“Wow, this one is going to be tough, listen to this.” says Frieda Framer as she reads through their next assignment. “This lady is actually thinking of taking her own life.”

“No way” says Focus Freddie, as the others sit up to hear more.

“Way. She was thirty years old and engaged to the love of her life when she got sick. She had to have an operation, which saved her life, but she was told that she wouldn’t be able to have children, so her boyfriend calls off the engagement because he wants to have a family.” Frieda Framer reads as she’s shaking her head.

“What a dirt bag! That guy doesn’t deserve her.” says Patty Pixel with obvious attitude that the others do not challenge.

“Oh wait, it gets worse.” says Frieda Framer as she continues, “This girl, her name is Becky Brownstone [she looks at the others] she goes by BB, is a nurse. During the pandemic, she has been working twelve hour shifts non-stop, having to choose which patients to help and which patients to let die.”

“That sounds so unreal. How can anyone make decisions like that?” says Digital Dave.

“It’s a numbers thing. Too many sick people, not enough nurses. That’s why they call it a pandemic.” says Focus Freddie.

“So nurse BB is at a snapping point. It’s not that she’s planning to kill herself, but when she prays, she tells God she is more than ready to go.” Frieda Framer reads.

“Talk about burnout.” says Patty Pixel, “Who can blame her, though. Her life sucks”

“We’re going to have to do something special for her.” says Digital Dave, “Maybe we could talk to her guardian angel?”

“Santa encouraged us to call on them any time, but never told us how.” says Patty Pixel as the others agree.

At that moment, the door opens and in walks a short little lady who is dressed in a green skirt, red and white striped long sleeve shirt and a red pointed felt hat. It appears she was trying to look like an elf, but didn’t really come close - the elves are very precise about their attire after all.

“Can we help you?” says Frieda Framer as the others watch the lady come in and take a seat with pained looks on their faces.

“Hi! I’m BB’s guardian angel and you wanted to talk to me, so here I am.” says the angel

with confidence, as the others look at each other.

“Guess that’s why Santa didn’t give us any contact info.” says a bewildered Digital Dave.

“Yes,” says the angel, “I am BB’s guardian angel so I monitor not only what is going on with her, but any other conversations about her as well. I heard Digital Dave say you should contact her guardian angel, and since that’s me, I came right over.” she says with a smile.

Patty Pixel, never the elf to be shy, breaks the silence, “Do all the guardian angels dress like that?” she says with an unflattering face.

The angel laughs, “Oh no. The angels are spirits, so we don’t have any specific look. Whenever we are required to go to earth for any reason, we can take on any physical presence that best suits the situation we are going into. Do you like it?” says the angel as she stands up and spins around proudly.

The elves look around at each other, as Focus Freddie shakes his head negatively, indicating no comment needed - let’s move on.

“Great,” says Frieda Framer, “So do you have a name?”

“No, we don’t need names in the guardian angel program. I’m BB’s guardian angel until she passes into the spirit world and then I’ll be assigned to the next child born and be their guardian angel. But you’re welcome to call me whatever you want if it helps any.”

“Well since we are working for a girl named BB, why not call her BA for Becky’s Angel?” says Patty Pixel as the other nod in agreement, not so much because they like it, but because they are anxious to move on.

“So we have been assigned to make a slide show for BB using her photos, but as I’m looking through them, there isn’t a lot to go on. Since she seems to be in pretty bad shape emotionally, we would love to have any ideas you might have.” says Frieda Framer.

“Of course,” says BA, “Thank you for wanting to help. BB has had a tough time the past year or so and her spirit is really down. She has a really good heart, which is nice, but it also can work against you. This pandemic can be very brutal for a nurse with so much compassion. She feels like she’s drowning in sadness every day she goes to work. I don’t think she’s had any time to relax or laugh in months.”

“I can only imagine. It must take a lot of compassion to be a nurse under normal circumstances, but in a pandemic, it must be overwhelming.” says Patty Pixel as the others agree.

“It is.” agrees BA, “There is so much sadness, it’s hard to imagine how tough it is. That’s why I don’t think BB is suicidal. I don’t think she wants to die, I think she just wants this world she’s living in to end. I’m not sure that making a slide show with a bunch of pictures from her happy past would work either. I’m concerned that seeing pictures from her happy past might depress her more about her present situation. She keeps saying her job is to save lives, not watch people die who could live if only there weren’t so many people sick. It’s really sad.”

“How long has BB been a nurse?” asks Focus Freddie.

“Well let’s see.... she’s thirty two years old, so I’m thinking she’s been a nurse for about eight or nine years. She’s always wanted to be a nurse and went right into nursing school from high school.” says BA.

“Now you have access to every moment of her life, right?” Focus Freddie continues.

“I can pull up any moment of her life and give you a snap shot or video.”

“In the years that she has been a nurse, how many lives do you think she has saved?”

“Well that depends on what you’re looking at. Obviously you can say that there are patients every day that a nurse works with that would likely die if they didn’t come to the hospital.” says BA.

“Okay, let’s narrow the group. How many patients did BB work with where she had a significant moment that turned their life around. Something BB said or how she treated them that made them pivot into a more positive direction in their life?” asks Focus Freddie.

BA looks at her screen and does a quick calculation, “Thirty seven.” she says.

“Good ... I was hoping you wouldn’t say 147.” he says as he looks at Frieda Framer and smiles.

“What are you getting at?” asks Frieda Framer.

“Well maybe it would be better in saving BB’s life by showing her how she saved other lives as a nurse. You know, show her what an impact she’s had on others.”

“That might be a good idea.” says Frieda Framer.

“But that won’t be easy with just pictures.” cautions Patty Pixel.

“It would be easy. I could add an audio thread to the slide show.” says Digital Dave.

“Get out of here. No way!” says a surprised Patty Pixel.

“It’s easy. I could add an audio thread or a music thread. There’s a lot you can do with a

slide show, ya know.”

“Well that’s a little information we could have used, YA KNOW. Why didn’t you tell us before?” says Patty Pixel a bit annoyed.

“Didn’t need to. The other projects worked perfectly with just the pictures. And the purpose of this program was to get people to look at their photos for the answers to their struggles. We only needed the photos. But in this case, it might help to add the audio to show BB how much impact she has had as a nurse.”

“I like it.” says Focus Freddie who turns to BA, “Do you think you could put together about eight patients. Maybe ones with really good stories that will leave no doubt that BB made a big impression on them?”

“I’m already ahead of you.” says an excited BA who is busy typing on her computer, “I’m sending you eight pictures with the stories for the audio. Then I contacted the patients guardian angels to send me a current picture that we can use on the following slide that reflects how their life changed because of her.”

“Oh this is going to be so cool.” says Patty Pixel as she gets busy pulling up pictures on her computer as the others do as well.

The room becomes an explosion of creative energy as the elves work feverishly tossing ideas back and forth as they create the slide show for BB. Digital Dave is working with Frieda Framer who volunteered to be the voice on the audio stream, while Focus Freddie and Patty Pixel work on the photos to make each picture pull in the maximum emotional response, as BA works through her computer with other guardian angels to find the best pictures to use.

“Okay, we have sixteen slides ready to go. Do we need any more?” asks Digital Dave as a calm comes to the room.

“One more story,” says BA as she sends another photo to the elves. “This girl is named Rosemary. Her guardian angel approached me a few days ago and we’ve been working together on it. She’s seven years old. Lost both parents three years ago. There’s not much family, and what there is doesn’t want to take on the responsibility, so she is up for adoption and will live in foster care until she can find the right family.[BA looks up at the elves] Trust me, children do NOT want to get lost in the foster care system. You don’t want to force feed a story like this, so I’m thinking we should have the eight stories of BB’s life as a nurse, then show her the picture of

Rosemary and keep it really simple. Say this is Rosemary. She's in room 3204 on the 3rd floor of your hospital. We think it would be great if you dropped by and said hello to Rosemary. And leave it at that. Don't say anything else. Knowing Rosemary's heart and BB's heart, I think if we do this right, we may create a situation where Rosemary can save BB's life and BB can save Rosemary's life. And in the guardian angel program, that's an outcome we want to celebrate."

The elves look around at each other with looks of excitement ready to explode.

"This is going to be so awesome!" says Patty Pixel as she pulls up the photo of Rosemary and gets to work.

"Open Before Christmas?" Says Becky as she turns on her laptop and finds the folder staring at her after another long day at the hospital. "Oh great. Just what I need. Now someone has hacked my computer."

She deletes the file on her screen shaking her head. Within a few seconds, it pops back on her screen, this time it says, 'Please Becky, Open Before Christmas.'

"What the" Becky deletes it again, gets up and goes to the kitchen to pour herself a glass of wine. "I don't need this."

As she heads back to her chair, the file is back up on the screen and says, 'BB Please. We Promise It Will Make Your Day'

"WHO ARE YOU?!?" Becky says as she stares at the file and takes a sip of her drink.

"I swear to God if my computer goes crazy when I open this, I'm taking it out on my balcony and tossing it!" she says as she carefully points to the file and double clicks it.

We know it's been rough for you recently

We wanted to make this slide show for you

Thinking it might encourage you

Because we care

She reluctantly pushes the start button and grabs her glass of wine.

The first slide is a picture of her at the bedside of a patient and she's holding her hand talking to her.

Remember this patient? Her name is Betty. She was asking you to 'pull the plug' and let her die. She was in bad shape, but you stayed with her for a long time and talked to her.

The next slide is of the same woman a few years later, looking healthy and having a warm smile as she plays with children.

This is Betty now. She volunteers as a cook at a children's home and the children absolutely adores her. Because you didn't pull the plug. Because you spent the time with her. The children are thankful that you were there in Betty's critical time. Thank You.

Seven more stories with the same impact.

Eight stories of patients at a crossroad in their lives. Eight patients that she encouraged and spent time with.

By the time she got done with the eight patients, Becky's eyes were overflowing with emotion. She remembered each patient and was so pleased to see that things turned out so well for each of them

Then the slide show brings her to Rosemary. This little girl triggered no memory. She never saw this girl before. What a cutey, she thought.

This is Rosemary. She's in room 3204 on the third floor of your hospital. We think it would serve you well to drop in and say hello to Rosemary next time you're at work.

The slide show reaches the final page.

You have a very compassionate heart, Becky

Your past reflects such a giving heart

We know your future will too

Merry Christmas and Thank You

for all you do for LOVE

Santas Elves at the North Pole

Becky is overcome with emotion. Today was such a rough day at work, so the timing

could not have been better. She's not sure how it came about, or who sent it to her, but she can not deny the emotional response in her heart. She would spend the better part of the night looking at the slide show. Over and over again. Each time drawing her deeper into it's message. It truly has been a rough couple of years, but for the first time in a long time, she is looking towards the future. For the first time in a long time, she is seeing hope.

The next day, Becky decides to leave early to go to the hospital, being anxious to drop by room 3204 to see what the connection Rosemary has in the slide show. One of her best friends is a nurse in the children's unit, so she can talk to her first.

"Hey BB, what brings you to the 3rd floor?" says Shirley at the nursing station.

"Hi Shirley. I wanted to see someone before I start my shift."

"Great. Who?"

"Room 3204. Her name is Rosemary." says BB.

"Of course. She's one of my favorites. How do you know her?"

"I don't. I got a note that said there was a girl named Rosemary in room 3204 that I should meet. I have no idea what this is all about, but I thought I'd go see her anyway."

"Who sent you the note?"

BB pauses in thought and decides that this is not the right time. "Listen Shirley, it's a long story that would be best told with a glass of wine. I know this probably breaks several regulations, but I'm hoping you can just trust me and know that I will explain it all later. Right now, I have no idea who this girl is or why I have been told to go see her. But something tells me it's going to be okay."

Shirley looks at her friend and smiles. She knows BB has never done anything crazy, so she trusts her to keep this from becoming a bad situation.

"Okay, girl. She never has any visitors except her social worker, so it would probably do her good. But if the social worker comes in, please just pretend you're a nurse and get the hell out of there before she can ask you any questions." says Shirley as she and BB heads towards room 3204.

"What about her family?" asks BB.

"Doesn't have one. Parents died about three years ago and she's been in foster care since." says Shirley as they arrive at room 3204.

Shirley knocks on the door gently and opens it, signaling to BB to stay while she checks on Rosemary.

“How’s my girl today?” she asks as she walks over to the bed .

Rosemary is laying quietly, looking out the window.

“Hi nurse Shirley. I’m okay.” says the girl as she sits up expecting the normal routine of taking vitals.

“Oh honey, I’m not here for vitals. I have someone who wants to visit you.”

“Someone wants to visit me? Who is it?”

“She’s a nurse on the 5th floor and a good friend of mine She wanted to meet you.”

“Why?”

“Honey, you’ll have to ask her. Mind if I let her in?”

Rosemary shrugs her shoulders, “I guess so.”

“If she gives you any trouble, just ring for me and I’ll throw her out, okay” says Shirley as she heads to the door.

“She’s all yours, but remember - if the social worker comes in, you have to bail. You know how social workers are a bit touchy about privacy matters.”

“Got it.” says BB as she heads into room 3204 and Shirley heads back to her station.

BB walks over to the bed and finds the innocent little girl staring at her. They know nothing about each other which makes it a bit suspicious, but BB knows how to break the ice.

“You must be the Rosemary I’ve heard so much about.” she says with a warm smile.

Rosemary raises her eyebrows, “Are you here to take me for more tests?”

“Oh no. I can do the test right here.” BB leans in and looks very seriously at Rosemary’s face, “I need to find out how long it takes you to smile.”says BB as she pulls out her watch from her pocket and studies Rosemary’s face.

Rosemary looks a little confused, but breaks into a big smile.

“Wow! Your smile muscles work great! You must do a lot of smiling.”

Rosemary shakes her head, “I guess so.”

“My name is Becky, but my friends call me BB. So I only need to know if you’re my friend.”

“I don’t even know you.” says Rosemary who is smiling and quickly relaxing more.

“Well that is a problem, isn’t it. Let’s see. My favorite food is spaghetti and tacos.”

Rosemary smiles, “Me too.”

“Crunchy or soft tacos?” BB asks curiously.

“Both... but I really like the crunchy ones.”

“Me too.... I love going on walks and being outside... especially in the SNOW.”

“I do too. I’ve always wanted to build a snowman.” says Rosemary with a hint of sadness.

“Well there you go. We just have to be friends now, so you can call me BB, okay?”

“Okay” says Rosemary who is enjoying the company.

Just then the intercom comes on as Shirley announces that the social worker is coming.

“Okay, well it looks like I need to leave, but I enjoyed meeting you Rosemary. Can I visit you again?”

“Sure.” says Rosemary without hesitation.

“Great. And don’t say anything to the social worker about us, okay. They ask too many questions.”

Rosemary nods in agreement as the social worker walks in and BB heads for the door.

“How’s our Rosemary doing today?” says the social worker who looks at the unfamiliar nurse heading at her with a hint of suspicion.

“She’s doing great. I was just checking her smile muscles and I must say, they are in excellent shape.” says BB as she gets to the door and turns back to Rosemary. “Have a great day Rosemary, and keep working those smile muscles.” she says as she winks and Rosemary giggles.

“Thanks for the heads up, Shirley.” says BB when she gets to the nursing station.

“No problem. I know social workers need to do their job, but this one seems a bit too stuffy, if you ask me. So did you figure out why you needed to meet Rosemary?”

“Not really, but she certainly is a cutey. She likes both soft and crunchy tacos, though, so maybe that was it.” says BB with a smile, “I’ve got to go start my shift. Thanks again Shirley.”

As BB starts to leave, Shirley speaks up, “You know, they’re looking for a family for Rosemary.”

BB turns and laughs, “I live alone, that’s not a family.”

“You live alone and she’s alone too. And you both love crunchy and soft tacos. What more do you need?”

BB walks away, blowing Shirley's comment off, but in her heart, she doesn't deny it crossed her mind. When she heard Rosemary had no family, she felt her heart skip. And while she was talking with Rosemary, she admits she was looking at her more than just as a patient she was visiting.

That night, after another tough shift at work, BB found herself again looking at the photo of Rosemary on her slide show. She still doesn't know what Santas Elves at the North Pole is all about, but she finds the idea of getting to know Rosemary pulling on her heart more and more.

Every visit with Rosemary pulls Becky deeper. Every time she sees Rosemary laugh pulls Becky deeper. Every day she goes without seeing Rosemary pulls her deeper more.

Even the stuffy social worker has taken notice that Becky and Rosemary have the chemistry that creates an interesting prospect.

"Thanks for coming, Becky." says Mary the social worker who asked Becky to come by her office to talk. "Rosemary talks a lot about you and you both seem to be connecting so well. I wanted to get a sense from you for where you see this relationship going?"

"I really love that girl. When I look to the future, I only want to see Rosemary."

Mary thinks for a moment, "You do seem to have a special chemistry. The only thing I don't understand is how you came to know about Rosemary in the first place?"

Becky knew this would come up and takes a deep breath.

"I have always believed that telling the truth was the most important part of being a nurse. What I'm going to tell you comes from a very frightened heart because I know it's the truth, and I also know that it could completely ruin my relationship with Rosemary, and I don't want to lose her."

"Mary, I was in a very dark spot in my life. The pandemic was certainly taking a toll on me, but it came shortly after I had surgery and the doctors told me I would not be able to have children, which ended my engagement to a man who couldn't bare the thought of living with a woman who could not pass his precious genes to a new generation. I was, as you could understand, in a very dark spot in my life."

Becky stands up with her laptop in her hand and places it in front of Mary and turns it on.

“Mary, it was after another rough day at the hospital, when I opened this laptop and found that file you see there. It said Open Before Christmas. It was not my file and I figured someone hacked me, so I deleted it. It came back, this time with a tag that said, Becky Please Open Before Christmas. I deleted it again. It came back a third time with the tag you see there, and I opened it.”

Mary looks at the file, then to Becky who nods to encourage her to open the file.

*We know it's been rough for you recently
We wanted to make this slide show for you
Thinking it might encourage you
Because we care*

Mary looks up at Becky with a puzzled look.

“Please push start”

Mary pushes the start button and watches the slide show. She looks up at Becky after every story. Becky has a look of complete hesitance and uncertainty. She has no idea if this is going to have an impact or more importantly, a positive impact, but it's the truth and she feels she has to stay with the truth.

When Mary gets to the picture of Rosemary, she becomes even more cautious.

This is Rosemary. She's in room 3204 on the third floor of your hospital. We think it would serve you well to drop in and say hello to Rosemary next time you're at work.

Then Mary gets to the final slide.

*You have a very compassionate heart, Becky
Your past reflects such a giving heart
We know your future will too
Merry Christmas and Thank You
for all you do for LOVE
Santas Elves at the North Pole*

Mary sits back and considers what she has just witnessed.

“You have no idea where Santas Elves at the North Pole came from?”

“That’s why I brought it to you, because I have no explanation.” says Becky.

“And you deleted it twice before you opened it?”

“Yes. It came back every time.”

“Do you mind if I delete it?” asks Mary.

Becky hesitates, but confirms.

Mary sits up and deletes the file. It instantly pops back up with a new tag on it.

Mary, you know better than that

You’re a social worker after all

You can’t delete other peoples files

You want to end up on the naughty list?

Mary sits back in her chair with a look of horror on her face. Becky gets up and looks at the screen. She too is speechless.

After a very uncomfortable time of silence, Becky looks at Mary, who slowly looks to Becky.

“For the record, I never saw this, but clearly, you and Rosemary need to be together. I can start putting together all the paper work right away if you wish.”

Becky smiles with tears streaming down her cheeks as she nods in enthusiastic agreement.

“Now that’s an outcome I’ll take every day!” says an excited Santa as he turns off the video feed and turns to his elves. “The Magic Photo File program is clearly everything I thought it could be. Thank you all so much. I showed this to God and he loved it. He is going to present the program to his Guardian Angels at Earth Operations and encourage them to contact the Magic Photo File program at the North Pole if they ever need a slide show, so you four should be quite busy I would guess.” says Santa as he looks around at the four elves emotionally drained

once again, as he smiles.

“Be strong, my little helpers. I’m thinking it’s going to be like this for a long time. You’ve done a great job and I really do appreciate you.” says Santa as he heads out the door, leaving the Magic Photo File program in good hands.