

SECRET SANTA

by

Jesus Diez Perez

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jesus@picturesplusproductions.com
jdiezperez@gmail.com
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INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

All is silent in this hospital ward where three ladies rest quietly on their beds. The fourth bed is empty and a lovely old lady in street clothes has an animated conversation with one of the patients. We will meet them in a moment.

The nurses come and go in a controlled chaos, administering medicine, checking blood pressure, chatting with colleagues...

The walls and the beds are covered in colorful Christmas decorations, but overall, the mood is gray.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

The doors BURST open and here comes ANTONIO (28), pushing his food trolley and wearing a silver glittering hat. He's all smiles and optimism in a contagious way. He greets everybody and everybody greets him. The mood lightens up instantly. SALLY (25), the Reception Girl, beams when she sees him.

SALLY

Merry Christmas, Antonio!

ANTONIO

Merry Christmas to you, Sally. Hey, new haircut? You look fantastic!

Sally blushes and smiles.

NURSE

Antonio, tomorrow is Christmas, where's my present?

ANTONIO

You'll find out in the morning, babe. Have you been a good girl?

NURSE

You bet!

They high-five.

DOCTOR

Antonio, thank you for the Christmas decorations, it really makes a difference here.

ANTONIO

Not a problem, Sir. Whatever it takes to cheer my ladies up. And where are they?

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

Antonio pushes the food trolley into the ward, locks it in place, takes off his hat and bows theatrically to his elder female audience.

ANTONIO

Ladies and gentlewomen! Put your hands together for... lunch!

ALL THE LADIES

Antonio!

Antonio touches the tip of his hat.

ANTONIO

Girls...

All the ladies sit up on the bed and clap. His contagious smile quickly spreads across everyone in the room. Everyone but one. He walks to the first bed.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

My lovely Debra, for you today we have...

DEBRA, 70, with a perfect hair and a perfect smile, is expectant. He uncovers a plate as a magician would do.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

Grilled chicken with mashed potato!
Special recipe from the chef.

DEBRA

Yay! Like every day since I'm here!

ANTONIO

And everyday until you go home,
gorgeous. What will you sing for us
today?

Debra doesn't need more encouragement. She sings "All I Want for Christmas Is You" with a great voice, while Antonio improvises a fun choreography with the food trolley. When she sings the "Is You" part, she points at Antonio and he grabs his heart.

He moves to the next bed, where GINGER, 75, and BARBARA, 65, clap to Debra's song. Ginger is dressed in street clothes, she's apparently visiting Barbara, who wears an oxygen mask.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

Barbara, the sexiest girl in this
corner of the ward. What do you
think you have for lunch?

BARBARA

Grilled chicken with mashed potato?

Antonio uncovers the plate.

ANTONIO
Ta-daaa! How did you know?

BARBARA
A little bird told me.

ANTONIO
(points at the chicken,
winks)
I hope it wasn't this one.

Barbara laughs.

BARBARA
When are you going to ask Sally
out, Antonio? My sources tell me
she likes you.

ANTONIO
Your sources? You gossip girl. Nah,
she's too good for me. Besides I
have an important job to do.

BARBARA
Bring us food?

ANTONIO
No. I have to make someone happy.

Barbara smiles. Ginger kisses Barbara on the cheek and stands
to leave.

GINGER
Well, I'm way past visitor's time.
I'll see you tomorrow, dear.

Antonio puts his arm over her shoulder, like a boyfriend.

ANTONIO
My Ginger, you know it's never
gonna work with me. Please, go back
to your bed, love.

Ginger looks disappointed. Antonio notices.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
And where did you get these
wonderful clothes? I may borrow one
day.

Antonio kisses Ginger on her hand and sits her on her bed.
She smiles. She loves this game of cat and mouse.

GINGER
One day I'll get out of here,
Antonio!

ANTONIO

Sure you will, beautiful. And that day I'll celebrate with you.

He uncovers her plate.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

Meet Mr. Chicken and Mrs. Potato!

Antonio pushes the trolley to the last bed.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

And how is my precious Emma today?

EMMA, 90, doesn't reply. She stares out the window, her mind locked somewhere far. Her face reflects a sadness that is deeply buried inside. Her heart is as wrinkled as her face.

Antonio looks at her, his smile gone for the first time. He leaves the chicken plate in front of her. She doesn't even bother to look at it. Antonio feels powerless.

But he recovers quickly. He claps his hands, gaining the attention of everyone.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

Listen up, please, my favorite ladies. As you know, tomorrow is Christmas.

Debra sings "Last Christmas I gave you my heart".

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

Debra, stop teasing me! I'm an easy man, you know that!

Everyone but Emma laughs.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

As I said, it's Christmas, and that means we will have our traditional Secret Santa.

Everyone but Emma cheers.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

So you know how it works: you give a present to someone in this room secretly. Use whatever you have at hand, no money involved.

The ladies are excited, an activity they were waiting for a long time. All but Emma, of course.

Antonio pushes his trolley to the exit.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

Don't be naughty, girls. Santa is coming to town!

Before leaving, Antonio looks back at Emma. She hasn't changed position, staring out the window as if she was a statue made of salt. Antonio sighs, sad, and leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT

All is silent. All the ladies are sleeping. All but one: Emma. She keeps staring out the window at nowhere in particular. She then pulls from the chain around her neck and holds a silver locket on her hand. She looks at the image inside.

POV EMMA - THE LOCKET

Inside the locket there's a very old photograph cut to fit in. It's a young man, handsome, wearing a soldier uniform, smiling to the camera.

BACK TO SCENE

Emma cries in silence.

From the entrance, hidden behind the wall, Antonio spies on Emma. A tear falling down his cheek.

-- END OF SAMPLE --

-- Please, contact me --

-- if you are interested in the full script --