

F1 (Linda)
F 3 (Felicia)
M1 (Andy)

FELICIA. I'm sorry to push, but we are closing soon, so...

LINDA. Oh, sure. I'll try to make up my mind.

FELICIA. Great.

Felicia walks off.

Linda flips through the clothing rack a little more, but there's nothing she wants. She returns to the rack with the dress. She takes it from the rack again and looks at it longingly. A thought comes to her, and her body goes still. She looks around the store. Felicia is nowhere to be seen. Linda looks at the dress... and then with a crazy impulse she stuffs the dress under her coat and heads for the entrance. She's almost out when—

HEY!

Linda freezes. Felicia runs over and gets between Linda and the exit.

Hand it over.

LINDA. I, I'm sorry. I don't know why I—

Linda holds the dress out to Felicia, who snatches it away from her.

Linda is frozen for a moment then she takes a tentative step to move around Felicia and leave.

FELICIA. Where do you think you're going?

LINDA. Please, I'll go. I won't / come back.

FELICIA. You're not leaving.

LINDA. I didn't mean to take it.

FELICIA. Oh, the dress just jumped inside your coat?

LINDA. No, I... I'm sorry, but it was just so expensive. I... You've got the dress. I promise / I won't come back.

FELICIA. I guess you didn't see the sign. We prosecute shoplifters. And I hit the alarm when I saw you take the dress.

LINDA. No! Please. I'm sorry! My daughter—I have to get home.

FELICIA. Should've thought of that before you stole something.

LINDA. Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god.

Andy, the security officer, hurries into the shop.

Start

ANDY. I got your alarm. What's the problem?

FELICIA. She is.

*Felicia points to Linda, and Andy turns his attention to her.
His demeanor changes as soon as he recognizes her.*

ANDY. Linda?

LINDA. ...Andy.

ANDY. It's been ages. How are you? How's Ed?

LINDA. We, ah...got divorced. Last summer.

ANDY. No! I'm so sorry.

LINDA. Thanks.

ANDY. How's...Julie? That's your daughter, right?

LINDA. (*Nodding.*) She's been upset. Wants Daddy. Doesn't understand.

ANDY. Yeah, sure. Wow, I'm so sorry.

FELICIA. Can we save the reunion until after you arrest her?

ANDY. What?

FELICIA. She's a shoplifter.

ANDY. No.

FELICIA. Yeah. She had this under her coat.

*Andy looks at Linda. And after a moment she nods. Andy
looks from her back to Felicia. He thinks. It hurts his head.*

Shouldn't you be calling the police?

*Andy reluctantly pulls his handheld radio unit from a clip
on his belt.*

ANDY. Uh...yeah...guess so. (*Into the radio.*) Control? Darla, I think we need to call the police. I've got a shoplifting complaint at Club Paris.

He listens.

Yeah, I'll get the details.

*Andy returns the radio unit to his belt. Then he turns back
to Felicia.*

They're calling it in. So, she had the dress you're holding?

FELICIA. Yeah. I was watching her, because she seemed a little... off, and when she thought I wasn't looking she slipped it under her coat and headed for the door.

ANDY. She headed for the door.

FELICIA. Like a shot.

ANDY. So, you stopped her and brought her back into the store.

FELICIA. No, I stopped her before she got away.

ANDY. (Nods.) Okay.

Andy unclips the radio unit from his belt again.

(Into the radio.) Control? Darla, cancel the shoplifting call.

FELICIA. What?!

ANDY. She hadn't left the store. There's no crime if she didn't leave. You should know that.

FELICIA. She's a thief!

ANDY. She might've stopped.

FELICIA. Please! She almost sprinted out!

ANDY. You've got the dress. Why don't we let it go?

FELICIA. Oh, I get it. If you're friends with security, it's a get out of jail free card. Uh-huh. I'm calling the cops myself. She's getting arrested, and you're getting fired.

Felicia crosses to the counter and pulls her cell phone from a drawer.

ANDY. Okay, that's your right. But it's Christmas Eve, and the cops don't want to be working any more than you do. They'll drive out here, but they'll know it's a waste of time. They'll talk to you, and they'll talk to me, and they'll talk to her. And that'll probably take an hour or more. And then they'll tell you the same thing I did. She didn't leave the store. But if you really want to press charges, they'll make us all drive to the station, and they'll call your boss and have them come down too, and by now it's gonna be seven o'clock. Or later. And how's your boss gonna like that? On Christmas Eve. When she didn't leave the store.

Andy simply looks at Felicia, who stares back, trying to be firm but wavering.

She made a mistake.

Felicia puts the cell phone away.

Linda, you can go home.

Linda hesitates and looks at Felicia, who glares back at her.

LINDA. Really?

ANDY. Go on. It's okay.

LINDA. Thank you.

Linda impulsively hugs Andy, and then hurries out of the store without looking back.

ANDY. Merry Christmas.

FELICIA. Don't come back.

Andy stands and watches his friend hurry away through the mall. Felicia takes the dress back to the rack and hangs it up.

ANDY. I'd like to buy that.

FELICIA. We're closed. Come back after the holidays.

ANDY. Can you just ring up the dress, please.

FELICIA. I'm through with you. I'd like to go home.

Andy nods.

ANDY. One last sale. Here's my card.

Felicia sighs and makes the sale, but gives Andy maximum attitude. When the credit card sale has gone through, Felicia thrusts the dress at him.

Can I get that gift-wrapped?

Felicia wants to kill him.

Never mind. Just give me a gift box. I'll wrap it myself.

Felicia slides the dress into a bag with a folded gift box.

FELICIA. You're an idiot.

ANDY. I know. Merry Christmas all the same.

Andy takes his bag and leaves as Felicia exits into the back of the store.

Transition to HARK HOW THE BELLS.