MINUTES LATER WHEN THEY JOINED him in the living room again, “It’s Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas” began to play and Taylor smiled. “This song is so appropriate,” she said as she looked around the room.

“Glad you like it,” Adam said, because he was genuinely happy to be here doing this for her.

She stood in front of the tree looking at him, and Adam continued to stare at her. It occurred to him that this felt very real and extremely normal.

“Let’s decorate the tree,” Taylor said abruptly. Adam was grateful for the reprieve. He went
to the bowl that Brooke was holding and took a few pieces of popcorn.

“We won’t have enough to string if you eat it all, Dad,” she told him, repeating the same words he told her when they were decorating their tree.

Adam popped it into his mouth and grinned.

“All right, I knew they were down there somewhere,” Taylor said as she came back into the room with another box.

She opened the box and removed a hunk of red tissue paper, unwrapping it slowly before lifting the white frosted bulb into her hand.

“It’s beautiful,” Brooke whispered.

Taylor twirled the white bulb in her hand. “It’s hand blown crystal from Prague. My parents lived there for two years. They have an amazing Christmas Market in the old town square with giant trees and vendors. There’s people and music and lots and lots of Christmas.”

“Oh, look at this one,” Brooke said to him when she very gingerly lifted a red bulb from the box.

“Be careful with it, sweetheart.” Adam issued the warning even though he could tell she was doing her best to handle it delicately. “It’s beautiful.” He was initially looking at the bulb but soon found his gaze traveling to Taylor.

For a few moments Taylor stared back at him but then she switched her attention back to Brooke. “Go ahead, put it on the tree.”
When all the popcorn had been strung and hung on the Balsam fir, and every bulb from Taylor’s boxes also dangled from its branches, Adam figured it was time for them to leave. He could try to bring up dinner or some other reason to stay, but in the time that he’d been with Taylor today he’d felt an overload of emotions that he’d thought long buried.

“Thank you so much for everything,” Taylor said to him when they were all standing back admiring the finished tree. “Oh and um, Adam, I wasn’t entirely truthful when I said I wasn’t missing a traditional Christmas at home. ‘Cause all of this...is pretty amazing.”

She said exactly what he was thinking, but he refrained from saying those words as she smiled warmly at him.

“Let’s grab our coats, honey,” Adam told Brooke.

“I’ll get them!” Brooke ran into the dining room where they’d hung their coats on the backs of the chairs.

“I love this tree,” Taylor said when they were alone. She wasn’t just smiling at this point, but practically beaming as she spoke. “And I really love that you and Brooke were here to decorate it with me.”

Adam stepped closer to her. He pushed the strands of hair that were brushing against her cheek away. Her skin was so soft, her brown eyes even prettier up close than he’d imagined.
“I’m more pleased with the smile that tree has put on your face,” he admitted.

Brooke returned with their coats at that moment and Adam stepped away from Taylor. After getting her coat on, Brooke hugged Taylor. “We’ll see you tomorrow,” she said happily.

Adam waved at her as they walked out the door, moving down her driveway already thinking about exactly what Brooke had just said—seeing Taylor tomorrow.