

ELF

BY

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ELF

BLACK SCREEN

No sound. FADE IN the white title:

"THE NORTH POLE"

POP!!! Champagne streams out of a bottle--

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Jolly MUSIC plays. A bevy of ELVES celebrate another successful Christmas; they drink, pour champagne on each other, wear hats reading, "Christmas '68" as--

Several elves start CHANTING for a speech. SANTA, seated on a raised podium with MRS. CLAUS, stands to APPLAUSE. Smiling, he merrily gestures for quiet.

SANTA

Well we've had another successful year--

A party HORN blows. LAUGHTER. Rice is thrown. Santa cheerfully pats down with his hands for quiet.

An extremely successful year and I'd like to thank you all for giving the children around the world a wonderful, wonderful Christmas. I know that. . .

OFFSCREEN a COOING is heard.

That. . . that--

More COOING. Perplexed, Santa looks down to his bag just as a human baby, dressed only in a diaper, crawls out with a teddy bear to the front of the podium.

The music SCRATCHES off. Silence. The elves stare in awe at the bemused infant. Beat.

ELF

What's with the bambino Chief?

Santa looks befuddled -- FREEZE FRAME.

TITLE OVER FRAME:

"IT WAS A LONG NIGHT. . ."

Beat.

"BUT SANTA RETRACED HIS STEPS"

SMASH TO:

Santa's sleigh whips through the night sky. Over:

London, Big Ben. India, The Taj Mahal. Brazil, The Virgin Mary. . .

MANHATTAN - NIGHT

The Empire State Building. Snow twirls down.

Santa's sleigh dashes past--

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

A large, dark, silent room. Children sleep.

A Christmas tree blinks colored lights as two elderly NURSES change a giggling baby's diaper. They whisper:

NURSE ONE

Young mother?

NURSE TWO

(nodding)

Yes. Broke the poor dear's heart.

Nurse One nods sympathetically, staring at the grinning tot.

NURSE ONE

He is a sweetie isn't he?

NURSE TWO

That he is. That he is.

She fastens the pin on the diaper -- Brand labeled "Little Buddy Diapers", Stamped "Manhattan Adoption".

She bends down into the crib and gently kisses him:

NURSE 2

Merry Christmas my little Angel.

She covers the baby snug in his blanket and gently knudges the crib into a slow rock. They leave the room. Silence.

CLOSE ON - THE ROCKING CRIB

the baby rises giggling. His eyes light up.

BABY'S POV - ROCKING BACK AND FORTH

Santa's black boots drop in from the chimney. Quickly, Santa moves to the Christmas tree, methodically delivering the children's presents.

THE BABY

begins to gleefully sway back and forth, harder and harder, rocking the crib IN AND OUT OF FRAME, until--an OFFSCREEN PLOP!

Santa looks up quickly from his presents:

SANTA'S POV

the empty, rocking crib.

Santa goes back to the presents.

THE BABY

gleefully skitters across the floor towards a large, fuzzy teddy bear in Santa's big red bag.

The baby crawls quickly into the bag, just as Santa scoops it up. FREEZE, TITLE--

"SANTA FINALLY FINGERED THE SPOT"

Beat.

"BUT, AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT. . ."

POP!!! Champagne streams out of a bottle--

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Jolly MUSIC plays. Elves celebrate. All except:

CINDY AND STANLEY ELFIWITZ

they stand alone in the corner. Stanley tries to comfort the obviously distraught Cindy.

The music SCRATCHES off. They look up. Cindy's eyes suddenly light up. FREEZE, TITLE--

"THE ELFIWITZ'S WERE LOOKING TO ADOPT"

CINDY (V.O.)

It's a miracle!!!

INT. ELFIWITZ HOME

A quaint, homey cottage. Cindy sits cuddling the baby on a small bed. Santa and Stanley stand behind.

CINDY

He's our Christmas miracle!

SANTA

Cindy please, let's be reasonable. I'm Santa, I know a Christmas miracle when I see one. I practically invented the concept. So believe me when I tell ya, this isn't a miracle. It's a mistake. It's a big mistake. It's--Stanley talk to her.

Stanley shrugs helplessly.

He's a human Cindy. He doesn't belong here!

CINDY

He needs a home Santa, and that's just what we'll give him. A home. Wasn't he put up for adoption?

SANTA

Well, yes. But--

CINDY

Then it's final.

She looks lovingly down to the baby.

HER POV

the baby still in his "Little Buddy Diapers".

CINDY (O.S.)

From now on, he'll be our little Buddy.

The baby smiles, giggling merrily. FREEZE, TITLE --

"BUT, OF COURSE, THAT WAS JUST THE BEGINNING"

CUT TO: OVER A BED

A large body underneath a blanket.

CINDY (O.S.)

Buddy! Hurry, you'll miss your sleigh!

A GREEN ELF HAT

a bell on it's tip, JINGLES into frame.

Large bare feet hit the floor and stumble to:

A CHEST OF DRAWERS

opening to several pairs of the same green outfits.

A CLOSET

opening to several pairs of the same curled, belled shoes.

INT. ELFIWITZ KITCHEN - MORNING

Stanley, now graying, sits with spectacles reading the morning "North Pole Post" -- It's headline, "DONNER, DASHER HIT WITH FLU! RUDOLPH THE SNIFFLES!"

Cindy, now with some wrinkles, prepares a brown bag lunch.

A door quickly BANGS open -- a large figure passes them by.

CINDY

Aren't you forgetting something?

She holds up the brown bag lunch. A large hand quickly comes back INTO FRAME.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Thanks Mom. Bye Pop.

Without looking up from his paper:

STANLEY

Bye son.

CINDY

Have a good day at school!

The door BANGS shut as--

BUDDY ELFIWITZ

a full grown man in his mid-twenties exits the cottage into the snow covered North Pole.

He still has that innocent, child-like beam about him. Wide-eyed he turns looking for the school sleigh.

FRANK AND LOU

Two snowmen, stand on a snow bank across from Buddy.

FRANK

Sleigh left ten minutes ago dummy.

BUDDY

Aw geez. And on report card day too!

Quickly Buddy turns back to his house, running towards a regular sleigh labeled, "Buddy".

He grabs the sleigh and, taking several deep breaths, runs past the snowmen.

FRANK

That boy sure is one big, dumb elf.

LOU

Ain't that the truth.

Running full speed down the snow covered hill, Buddy leaps onto the sleigh--

WHOOSH!

He whips down the North Pole slopes, expertly rudder navigating around Christmas trees, over moguls, avoiding ELF PASSERSBY--

INT. ELF CLASSROOM

Filled with ELF STUDENTS behind desks.

MR. ELFMAN, an older, stern looking elf dryly reads through the attendance. The names followed by the students, "Here!"

MR. ELFMAN
Elfheim. Elfhennegar. Elfhowser. Elfiwitz.
Elfiwitz. . .

Silence. . .

Elfiwitz!!!

EXT. SCHOOL

An elderly JANITOR ELF sweeps the snow steps of the school. His partner, another elderly JANITOR ELF, takes a break reading the paper:

READING JANITOR

I told 'im. I says keep givin' the reindeer them vitamins. Keep givin' it to 'im, this is the cold and flu season ya know. But do they listen? Do they? I tell ya--

Spotting something, the Sweeping Janitor stops sweeping.

SWEEPING JANITOR

Oh Lord. He's a comin'.

Buddy bursts through a large snow bank, careening at full speed towards the school.

The janitors casually open the front doors, just as, Buddy flies through:

READING JANITOR

And he's a goin'.

INT. HALLWAY

An ELF HALL MONITOR dives out of the way as Buddy heads through the hall and quickly towards an approaching door.

INT. ELF CLASSROOM

Mr. Elfman is finishing the attendance as--

THWACK!!! The door is slammed into.

The class looks towards the door. After a moment, the handle turns, Buddy walks in disheveled, a trifle embarrassed.

MR. ELFMAN

Why Mr. Elfiwitz. So happy you could join us.

BUDDY

The um, the sleigh left without me.

MR. ELFMAN

Imagine that. The sleigh leaving without you. If the sleigh didn't leave without you that would be the miracle!

Buddy, smiling nervously, takes his large, specially designed seat in the back.

MR. ELFMAN

Well you're here now. So why don't we take advantage of this quality time and have you share with us your essay on why you want to be a Helper. I'm sure we'd all love to hear that.

Buddy quickly leafs through his bag and races up to the front with a piece of paper. He stands in front of the class:

BUDDY

Why I want to be a Helper because, by Buddy Elfiwitz. I want to be a helper because I love Christmas.

Buddy looks up smiling to utter silence -- Beat.

BUDDY

The end.

Mr. Elfman stares blankly at Buddy.

MR. ELFMAN

. . . Stirring.

THE SCHOOL'S WORKSHOP

Mr. Elfman, hands behind his back, walks down the aisle carefully inspecting the student's Jack in the Box work.

Jack's spring out of boxes as he walks past commentating:

MR. ELFMAN

Excellent. Excellent work Marcy. Need more Jack in that box Noel.

He gets to Buddy, who opens up his box to--a dormant rock. Buddy smiles proudly to the reddening Mr. Elfman.

MR. ELFMAN

You want to explain that Elfiwitz.

BUDDY

It's a rock in the box.

MR. ELFMAN

A rock in the box?

BUDDY

Well I wanted to leave more to the kid's imagination. It's the simplicity of it that I love.

Elfman stares at Buddy mystified. The class BELL JINGLES--

EXT. WHITE SNOW PLAYING FIELD - DAY

The Elf students are playing kickball in their elf gym shorts.

The BATTER kicks the red rubber ball and reaches first safely.

The PITCHER gets the ball back. He nervously swallows as:

Buddy steps up to the plate wearing his green elf gym shorts and curled elf cleats. He spits in his hands and rubs them together.

The pitcher waves his outfield to sink out.

Buddy bends into his hitters position, mumbling to himself:

BUDDY

Come on baby, bring the heat. Come on baby, bring the heat. . .

The crouched CATCHER secretly flashes one finger between his legs -- The pitcher nods and delivers. . .

The red ball speeds over the snow. Buddy's eyes light up as he races towards it and--

THWACK!!! The ball soars way back. The outfielders run after it as Buddy sprints around the bases. Catching up to the base runner ahead, he impatiently picks him up and touches third as the outfielders relay the ball in--

A play at the plate. The catcher's eyes bulge with fear as he helplessly catches the ball -- Buddy and the carried elf base runner charge at full speed and--WHAM!!!

CLOSE ON - A GET WELL CARD

being signed and passed around the class. Buddy sits in the corner facing the wall.

Mr. Elfman walks around passing out report cards, amidst quiet excited CHATTER:

MR. ELFMAN

I am pleased to report that a large percentage of you have advanced to the Workshop Placement Program. Some of you have even made All Helper. But whatever your grades, you all should be very proud of your accomplishments this elfmester. Well. . .

He hands Buddy his report card:

Most of you anyway.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

ADORA, a cute elf girl, walks home with her GIRL FRIENDS talking about their elf cards.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Hey Adora!

Buddy races up to them -- Adora's friends quickly flee. Before she knows it, Adora is alone with Buddy. She reluctantly walks.

BUDDY

I heard you made the All Helper team.

ADORA

Yeah.

BUDDY

Wow that's great! I uh--I didn't.

ADORA

Imagine that.

BUDDY

Yeah. But so what I was wondering was with you being like super smart and everything, and me needing a tutor, I was just wondering, I was just wondering-- Oh who am I kidding! Adora, I know it's still a month away, but would you would you like to get a soda or something on Christmas Eve?

Adora looks at him stunned. Quickly he reaches into his bag:

BUDDY

Oh I uh I made you a music box. With your name on it.

He hands her a scraggly box. She still stares, stunned.

BUDDY

But the supply closet was all out of songs so there's no actual, you know, music. And I didn't exactly know how you spelled Adora so--

The box reads "You" in crown. She looks at the box with disgust.

ADORA

Are you asking me out?

BUDDY

Well um. . . yeah.

A horrified, disgusted look comes across Adora's face.

ADORA

Uchh!!! I would rather die than go out with you Buddy Elfiwitz!

She drops the box and runs to her house. About to slam her door she turns back:

ADORA

Freak!

The door slams! Buddy stands momentarily still.

BUDDY

So about the tutoring?

CLOSE ON - A REPORT CARD

the subjects: Tinkering, Widdling, Wrapping, Creativity & Gym. Next to all of them reads, "Needs Improvement".

BUDDY (O.S.)

Sorry Pop.

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INT. ELFIWITZ KITCHEN - NIGHT

Stanley reads the report card with his spectacles. Buddy sits across the kitchen table.

STANLEY

Ah don't worry son. Not everyone hits a home run their first time at the plate. Of course, this is like your tenth time. But why quibble?

Cindy comes into the kitchen putting on make-up:

CINDY

Buddy you have to apply yourself.

BUDDY

I do apply myself mom. But everything I do just turns out badly. I mean, I want to do well but it's, I don't know, I just don't seem to fit in.

CINDY

Of course you fit in! You just have to work harder at it, that's all. Talk to him Stanley!

STANLEY

Listen to your mother son.

CINDY

You're just special Buddy, that's all. Special.

BUDDY

But I don't want to be special. I just want to fit in. I want to be normal.

CINDY

You're normal. Just in a special way.

BUDDY

Yeah well, the others don't seem to think so.

CINDY

And if they can't accept for who you are, they weren't your friends in the first place.

BUDDY

Well, I guess that's why I've never had any friends.

CINDY

Buddy--

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The clock STRIKES the hour.

CINDY

We have to go. But we'll talk about this when we get back from the P.T.A. meeting.

They get their coats and head towards the door.

There's penguin in the freezer, we'll be back later.

BUDDY

Alright. Tell Mr. Elfman I said hello.

INT. ELF AUDITORIUM

ELVES, parents and teachers, are gathered in a large hall. Mr. Elfman angrily addresses the crowd:

MR. ELFMAN

The big lummoX has got to go! Besides his obvious physical short comings, the boy is a complete imbecile! He's a red pimple on the nose of everything Elf. Just today he turned in designs for Barbie's Turkish Bath House, ran down poor Jimmy and crushed little Stevie and went joy riding in Santa's sleigh. The boy can't stay! He's incompetent, stupid and lazy. Let's face it, he's a human. And the others can no longer pay for his overwhelming inadequacies!

He turns to the seated Elfiwitz's.

No offense.

Another ELF rises:

CONCERNED ELF

I agree. The Elfiwitz boy is setting bad examples for the normal children. And quite frankly, he frightens our entire family. Who knows, the boy could snap and kill us all.

Approving nods and MURMURING abound. Cindy rises:

CINDY

That's nonsense! That's utter nonsense. Buddy wouldn't hurt a fly. He's just, well he's just a little slow that's all.

SMUG ELF

Sister, he's not a little anything.

CINDY

Okay let's forget about what kind of example Buddy is setting for a second. What kind of example are we setting? Somebody's different, he doesn't fit into what we perceive to be normal and because of that we just throw that person away?!

MATTER-OF-FACT ELF

Yep. That's basically the jist of it.

MURMURING. Another ELF rises to address the floor.

LEVEL HEADED ELF

Now hold on, hold on. Obviously the parents of the uh. . . abnormality have some qualms about our qualms. Which is understandable, I guess. So I give to you that there is only one person who can figure out the situation. A person who's point of view is totally objective. And a person's whose opinion we can all respect.

Silence. An ELF stands next to the speaker.

CLUELESS ELF

Thank you Chuck--

LEVEL HEADED ELF

Not you idiot. Santa.

Large doors swing open as Santa enters. The elves rise to their feet as Santa takes the floor.

SANTA

Please, sit, sit.

The elves take their seats.

I have been informed of the situation. and I have painstakingly made a list of the arguments on both sides.

SMART ASS ELF

Did you check it twice?

Another ELF raps the smart ass on the back the head:

PROPER ELF

Show a little respect would ya.

SANTA

But I can't help coming back to the same question. What's best for Christmas? It's just around the corner you know.

CROWD MURMURS

You don't have to tell us. . . What are we stupid?

Santa pats down the noise with his hands.

SANTA

Now Cindy, I know Buddy and I know he means well. But. . . we have to take into account the other elves. Let's face it, Buddy just doesn't belong here. I'm sorry, but the day has come.

MOVING IN on Cindy, tears roll from her eyes.

SANTA (O.S.)

We have to tell Buddy the truth.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE

A warm, homey office. Plaques and memorabilia of Christmas past line the walls. A fire crackles.

Santa sits at his desk going over a list. A KNOCK on the door, Buddy nervously enters. Santa gets up to greet him:

SANTA

Buddy, Buddy. Come in, come in. How are you?

Santa shakes Buddy's hand.

BUDDY

I swear Santa, when I took it I didn't know it was your sleigh, honest. And, and you know elves don't lie Santa.

SANTA

Yes, yes elves don't lie Buddy, I know you didn't take it on purpose. Please have a seat. Cookie?

Buddy takes a cookie off the offered tray as he sits in a large, red leather chair in front of Santa's desk. Santa retakes his seat behind his immense desk.

SANTA

Now then Buddy. This is a very difficult thing I'm about to tell you, but I've discussed it with your parents and we feel it's time you should know the truth. Buddy-- did you, did you ever notice you're not like the other elves?

BUDDY

Well, yeah, kinda. But, it's because of my glandular condition.

SANTA

Actually Buddy no. It's not because of a glandular condition. It's, well, it's because of your genes.

BUDDY

I don't wear jeans.

SANTA

Not pants Buddy. Genetics. You see, many years ago there was a slight, well, screw-up and you were brought to the North Pole. As in, you're not from the North Pole. You see Buddy what I'm trying to say is. . . you're adopted.

Silence. Buddy stares at Santa.

BUDDY

Seriously, if this is about the sleigh--

SANTA

I am serious Buddy. I know this is hard to take in. But you were put up for adoption from a place called Manhattan years and years ago. Your biological parents weren't elves Buddy. They're human.

BUDDY

Human?! Come on Santa I've got bells on my feet. I'm all elf! If this is like some kind of scare tactic--

SANTA

Buddy, it's not a scare tactic! It's the truth. You're not an elf! You were raised by elves and yes, you yourself will always be an elf, at heart. But the sad matter is Buddy. . .

Santa hands him a wrinkled, yellowing birth certificate.

SANTA

You're a human. Your biological father still lives in Manhattan. Your mother, your mother, she past on. I am sorry Buddy, but you are a human.

Buddy gets up stunned. He turns, staring at the pictures on the wall, he stops on a photo of himself towering over his elf parents.

BUDDY

I know. Somehow I always knew.

Buddy turns back to Santa.

BUDDY

Santa. . . where's Manhattan?

INT. ELFIWITZ KITCHEN

Cindy weeps, packing Buddy's lunch. Santa and Stanley try to comfort her.

SANTA

It's where he belongs Cindy. It doesn't mean he loves you any less. He just wants to fit in.

BUDDY'S ROOM

Buddy packs a small green suitcase with clothes, his birth certificate, a pouch labeled "Magic dust" and a picture of him and his elf parents -- he stares at the picture, a tear in his eye.

THE KITCHEN

Cindy finishes packing the lunch.

CINDY

And his real father, did you--did you tell him about his real father?

SANTA

He had the right to know Cindy.

CINDY

Well. . . who is he?

Santa, takes a deep breath:

SANTA

Well, he's. . . he's a New Yorker.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - DAY

Bustling with people. All types. BUSINESSMEN, ARTISTS, the HOMELESS and Buddy -- Still dressed in his green elf suit, carrying his small green suit case.

He bounds down the street in giddy awe--

Stopping, asking for directions, a hot dog VENDOR points him in the right direction.

ANOTHER AVENUE

Buddy carefully inspects the buildings addresses, he stops, looking down at:

A note sheet, FROM THE DESK OF SANTA -- the red scribbled writing, "Walter Ludlow Hacket, Greenway Press, 350 Fifth Avenue"

He looks up to 350 Fifth Avenue -- The Empire State Building towers above him.

INT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, LOBBY

A large SECURITY OFFICER sits with a thinner SECURITY OFFICER filling out a report. The larger officer spots something and knudges his partner, who looks up--

THEIR POV

Buddy strides through the large, busy hallway to the semi-circular security desk. He stops in front of the officers.

LARGE OFFICER

Aw I'm sorry Mr. Riddler, Batman stepped out.

THIN OFFICER

Would ya care to leave a riddle?

BUDDY

Well no, I'm actually here to see Walter Hacket.

(Proudly)

He's my biological father.

The guards look at each other.

LARGE OFFICER

Uh huh.

A FROSTED GLASS DOOR

Lettered: WALTER LUDLOW HACKET, Editor

YELLING is heard from behind the door.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Cluttered, manuscripts lay strewn about as--

WALTER LUDLOW HACKET, late forties, stressed, his knit tie pulled recklessly to one side stands behind his paper scattered desk. He YELLS into his phone:

WALTER

A stroke?! Miles, she owes us that book! She can't just break her contract on some whim! Yeah, okay stroke. Well can't she even write a little? Not even with one hand? How about dictation? Totally paralyzed huh? Well great! That's just great! I'm trying to save my job here Miles! I got Greenway coming to check out the new Mrs. Curwillacer line and Mrs. Curwillacer decides to have an aneurism. That's just great! What else can go wrong?!

THE LOBBY

Buddy sits below the carved insignia, "GREENWAY PRESS - CHILDREN'S BOOKS" flipping through the book, "Mrs. Curwillacer Goes To Town".

An older secretary, MARGERY McCLANAHAN hangs up the phone and amiably turns to Buddy:

MARGERY

So how is it working at Macy's this year?

BUDDY

Gee I don't know. What's Macy's?

MARGERY

(to herself)

Oh dear. . .

HACKET'S OFFICE

Walter scours his desk, looking for something amidst the mass of paper, mumbling angrily to himself--His phone RINGS! He slaps the speaker phone:

WALTER

What?!

MARGERY

Mr. Hacket, there's a . . . a gentleman here to see you.

WALTER

Yeah? Another one of Greenway's nitwits?

MARGERY

Well I don't know about the Greenway part sir.

WALTER

Yeah alright, send him back--

He slaps the speaker off, continuing to scour his desk. Finally he finds the correct paper:

WALTER

Aha!

The door swings open to Buddy, glowing with excitement. Walter stares at him with amazement.

WALTER

What the hell are you?

Buddy rushes in, drops his suitcase, and gives Walter a tremendously affectionate hug. Walter stands fearfully still in his grasp.

BUDDY

Oh my God, I'm so excited! I don't even know where I should start!

WALTER

What. . . do you think--you're doing?!

Walter pushes him away, retreating behind his desk:

Are you from Mars or something?!

BUDDY

(laughing)

No! You're way off!

He slaps his intercom:

WALTER

Ms. McClanahan, call security.

BUDDY

Okay, okay, where should I start--Well when I was a baby I was put up for adoption, but accidentally taken to the North Pole by Santa Claus where I was raised as an elf--But just yesterday I found out I wasn't an elf, which really explains a lot, and that I'm a human, so here I am. . . Dad.

He stares at Buddy in disbelief.

WALTER

Are you some kind of a lunatic?

BUDDY

No, I'm your son!

WALTER

Son?! I don't have a son!

BUDDY

Yuh huh! Mary Welles was my mom. You used to date in high school. Santa told me!

WALTER

Santa told you?! Listen Elf, I don't know where "Santa" gets his information, but I never got Mary Welles pregnant!

BUDDY

Yuh huh! In your Dad's Buick. After the Prom. You got some wine. In the back seat! Don't you remember?! You didn't see her for a year after that. You wanted to know why she never returned your calls.

Walter looks at him perplexed -- How does he know this?

It was because of me. . . Dad!

Buddy begins to move around the desk, Walter runs the around other side, Buddy chases him around the desk.

WALTER

Get away from me! Get away from me! I don't know who you are or what you want, but I know judo. I know judo!

Walter starts tossing children's books in his path, Buddy bats them away as he gives chase:

BUDDY

Wow! This is just what I imagined it'd be like! Can we have a picnic tomorrow?

Walter runs behind his chair, jukes one way, jukes another. Then pushing the chair into Buddy, he runs back around the desk towards the door, Buddy steps onto the desk and jumps onto Walter--tackling him to the ground.

BUDDY

Maybe we can even throw the ball around. Oh Dad!

Buddy hugs him hard as the security officers burst into the office.

WALTER

Help me. . .

The officers quickly yank Buddy off of Walter and drag him towards the door.

BUDDY

What? Was this a bad time Dad?

The officers pull him out of the room. Walter lies on the floor stunned.

BUDDY (O.S.)

I could come back later.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The officers carry Buddy out of the the front doors and onto the sidewalk.

OFFICER

Go back to Macy's ya psycho.

An officer throws Buddy's JINGLED hat at him.

BUDDY

. . . 'Kay.

EXT. MACY'S - DAY

People bustle by the department store.

INT. MACY'S OFFICE

Crowded with Christmas paraphernalia -- ornaments, elf costumes, Santa suits. . .

A thin, worn looking man sits behind a desk across from Buddy.

INTERVIEWER

You brought your own hat. Nice touch.

He warily looks at Buddy's application:

Alright so tell me, Buddy, you elfed before?

BUDDY

All the time.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, where?

BUDDY

The North Pole.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah okay North Pole, funny Ha Ha. Listen it's been a long day. What we look in a Macy's elf is enthusiasm. Enthusiasm, get up and go, spunk, pizzazz, vim, vigor, yada, yada, yada. So let's just cut to the chase. What does it mean to you to be an elf?

BUDDY

What does it mean to me?

Buddy begins to get a little teary eyed.

It means everything to me. I've wanted to be an elf every single solitary day of my life. I've dreamed about it, practiced and hoped that one day I could call myself a little helper. I mean I love Christmas. It means, it means the world to me.

The interviewer silently takes this in for a moment.

INTERVIEWER

Well, far be it for me to step on your dreams. When can ya start?

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - LATE NIGHT

Walter walks out of the front doors, looking haggard, disheveled, stuffing papers into his overstuffed briefcase.

Visibly tired he walks down the street. Hearing a slight JINGLE, he stops. Suspiciously, he turns around -- Nothing.

He begins walking quicker -- Another JINGLE -- his pace quickens, the JINGLES quicken. He starts to run, the JINGLES follow.

He ducks around a corner, hiding against the wall, he holds his briefcase over his head ready to strike. He waits listening, the BELLS have stopped. He takes a deep breath. Buddy appears from the opposite direction, still holding his suitcase.

BUDDY

I got a job Dad!

WALTER

Oh my God!

Walter sprints away, Buddy gives chase.

WALTER

Leave me alone! I'm not kidding! I'm not joking! Leave me alone!

Still running Walter gets out his cell phone, dialing 911.

BUDDY

Don't you want to celebrate? I got a job!

WALTER

As what?! A medical experiment?!

BUDDY

No as an Elf!

Walter huffs and puffs down the street, his phone to his ear:

WALTER

Of course, what was I--Hello police! You gotta help me, I'm being chased by a maniac! I'm running south down Fifth avenue, crossing 29th, I'm wearing a black overcoat, and the maniac is dressed as an elf-- hello? Hello! I pay taxes you know!!!

Buddy tackles Walter to the sidewalk. The phone goes flying, his briefcase papers scatter along with Buddy's suitcase.

BUDDY

Dad, was mom anything like me?

Fury begins to build in Walter's eyes as he lays trapped under Buddy.

WALTER

(slowly angrily enunciating)

I am not your father!

He shoves him off, standing up.

I am not your father! What do I have to say to you to prove that I am not your father! I mean what do you want anyway?! Do you want money?! I don't have that much money!

BUDDY

What's money?

Walter starts to furiously pick up his scattered papers:

WALTER

Shut up, because you're not getting any. You know I've met some sick lunatics in my day, I work with writers! But you, you take the cake! You come waltzing in my office, dressed like some jolly green idiot, claiming to be my son and expect me to welcome you with open arms?! What kind of a madman are you?! This isn't Fantasy Island! I'm not Mr. Rourke! So do me a favor, don't bother me okay, ever again!

Walter has stuffed the last of his papers back into his briefcase. He begins to hail a cab. Buddy still lies on the ground, trying to take this all in.

BUDDY

What about our picnic?

WALTER

There's not gonna be any picnic! Understand?! No picnic! Just, just go back to the asylum okay!

A cab pulls up, Walter gets in, the cab SCREECHES away.

Buddy sits watching the cab pull away. A police car pulls up, an officer rolls down his window addressing Buddy:

OFFICER

Hey, were you chasing somebody?

INT. HACKET APARTMENT - NIGHT

A Christmas tree twinkles in a neatly decorated apartment.

Walter stares blankly out of the window down to the passing traffic.

WOMAN'S VOICE

. . . He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, And away they all flew like the down of a thistle. . .

EMILY ALLEN a radiant forty, sits on the couch reading "The Night Before Christmas" to her ten year old son, MICHAEL.

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, Happy Christmas to all, And to all a good night!

She closes the book:

All right you heard what the man said, to all a good night.

MICHAEL

I have to?

EMILY

Well if you want to get Santa upset this time of year.

MICHAEL

No.

EMILY

All right then. (kissing him)
Goodnight honey.

MICHAEL

Goodnight mom.

Michael races away, Emily clears her throat:

EMILY

Michael! Aren't you forgetting someone?

Michael reluctantly re-enters the room.

MICHAEL

Goodnight Walter.

Walter, still staring lost out the window, turns dazed.

WALTER

What? Yeah, see ya.

Michael, a little hurt, races back away. Emily shoots Walter an icy stare.

EMILY
Would it kill you to make just a little effort?

WALTER
I made a little effort.

EMILY
A very little effort.

WALTER
It was an effort! What do you want from me? I'm not a Hallmark card. Jesus everybody wants me to be their Dad all of the sudden. Is there a sign on me or something?

EMILY
What?

WALTER
Nothing, nothing.

He plops down on the couch, crunching onto the book.

Ow!

He pulls it from underneath him:

Why--why do you read him this junk?

EMILY
Junk? You publish that junk.

WALTER
No, no, I publish other junk. This is the competition's junk.
(flipping through the pages)
God I hate this stuff.

EMILY
Well that's just great. An editor of children's books who hates children books. And for that matter, children!

WALTER
Yeah, well, I'm just a mass of contradictions.

She stares at him angrily. His eyes soften, he kisses her on the cheek.

WALTER

Why do you ever put up with me?

EMILY

Why? Because somewhere, somewhere beneath that crusty exterior is the wonderful, caring, gentle man I fell in love with.

WALTER

Yeah, I guess I am quite a catch.

She smiles, he kisses her gently.

It's just, I had a long, bad day. A long, strange, bad day. I promise I'll make it up to you--I'll make it up to him. I'm just, you know, I'm just not used to having a kid around.

EXT. 42ND STREET - LATE NIGHT

A street corner. Buddy talks with a scraggly, filthy BUM.

BUM

Macy's huh? Well that's big time. You're gonna need a good night's sleep if you want to be fresh in the morning. Basically what you want to do is not freeze to death.

BUDDY

Okay, don't freeze to death.

BUM

Exactly. What ya want to do is find a warm grating, where there's some steam rising ya see. Course this here steam is probably toxic, but beggars can't be choosers.

BUDDY

Gotcha.

BUM

So ya sleep on that there and come morning you'll be fresh as a daisy. Unless a course ya get killed.

A GUNSHOT blasts. A car ALARM--

INT. HACKET BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Walter wakes from his bed in a cold sweat.

INT. HACKET KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

He sits down at the kitchen with a box labeled "Pictures". Opening the box, he quickly flicks through the photos.

He stops on a prom picture: A teenage Walter, long hair, bad suit, is posed in front of a curtain with a beautiful young woman in a white dress. Looking at the picture, a twinge of a smile. He turns it over, a handwritten note: "What a night, Love always, Mary"

Walter stares at the writing--

EXT. 42ND STREET - LATE NIGHT

Frozen with fear, Buddy is huddled on a steel grating, steam rises around him.

Police SIRENS sound and blast past. Hookers are propositioned. SCREAMS, more GUNSHOTS--

FADE OUT

DINGS rise audibly until:

AN ELEVATOR DOOR

DINGS open. An even more disheveled Walter steps listlessly out walking absently past morning salutations.

INT. HACKET OFFICE

He sits down at his scattered desk. Margery follows him in with his morning cup of coffee and "New York Times".

WALTER

Ms. McClanahan I didn't get a whole lot of sleep last night so--

MARGERY

Bad dreams?

He looks at her impatiently.

WALTER

Sex--What difference does it make?! Look, the point is, I've a lot of work to do and I don't want to be disturbed. I don't want to talk to anyone and I don't want to see anyone. Got me?

MARGERY

Well yes, but Mr. Greenway said to call him as soon as you got in. He said it was very important.

WALTER

Well then, I didn't get in yet. Did I?

MARGERY

No I--I guess not. I'll--

Taking papers out of his briefcase:

WALTER

Goodbye Ms. McClanahan

Awkwardly, Margery backs out of the office. Walter looks through his scattered papers, he stops on one, confused--

HIS POV

a yellowing birth certificate -- Male child born, Nineteen Hundred Sixty Eight, February Two, Mother: Mary Welles, Father: Walter Hacket--

WALTER

You gotta be kidding me.

INT. MACY'S - MORNING

EIGHTH FLOOR, SANTA LAND

kids wait in line to see Santa.

Buddy, still in his elf green, waits anxiously next to a sullen elf, obviously tired of Buddy's ranting.

BUDDY

. . . Of course I didn't get a whole lot of sleep last night. Excitement, nerves--this is so great! I mean come on, elves this big. Wow! It's like a dream come true. And Santa's gonna be here! I just can't wait to see him again, can you?!

GRUMPY ELF

I'm on pins and needles.

BUDDY

Boy I know what you mean and, and the, the--

Buddy looks stunned--

HIS POV - SLOW MOTION

JOVIE DAVIS, twenties, a petite beauty, dressed as an elf. She glides like a vision to the Christmas tree.

BUDDY

(mystified)

Suffering snowballs. Who's that?

GRUMPY ELF

That? That's Jovie. She's a complete flake. Hey, hey why don't you go over there, and talk to her?

BUDDY

Oh I don't know. You think I should?

GRUMPY ELF

Absolutely. I absolutely think you should.

BUDDY

What would I say?

GRUMPY ELF

Aw you'll figure it out when you get there.

BUDDY

Ya think?

GRUMPY ELF

I know.

BUDDY

Well. . . okay. Here I go!

GRUMPY ELF

Bon voyage.

Jovie puts last minute ornaments on the Christmas tree. Buddy nervously approaches. He looks down trying to think of something to say. She notices him standing there, talking to himself and smiles.

JOVIE

Hey down there.

Buddy shoots his look up. Jovie is smiling at him, the Christmas tree ornaments sparkle behind her, she looks like an angel. Buddy smiles at her dreamily.

JOVIE

Quite a conversation you got going on.

BUDDY

What? Oh I was just you know--

JOVIE

Talking to yourself?

BUDDY

Um, yeah, pretty much.

JOVIE

Okay good. We haven't met, I'm Jovie.

BUDDY

(savoring every syllable)

Jovie.

JOVIE

Yeah. You must be new.

BUDDY

I'm, I'm Buddy.

JOVIE

Okay. Well you look pretty handy Buddy. You mind helping me out up here?

BUDDY

. . . Sure!

Buddy grabs a ladder out from underneath an elf putting decorations on the wall and quickly scurries it next to Jovie. She hands him some tinsel.

JOVIE

Alright could you take this end and wrap it around the other side there.

Buddy does so happily:

BUDDY

Jovie. I think that's the most beautiful name I've ever heard.

JOVIE

You think so? It was supposed to be Jody, but my mom had a speech impediment so I got Jovie instead of Jody, it's a whole Nell thing. So when did you start here?

BUDDY

Oh um this is my first day. I just got into Manhattan town.

JOVIE

Yeah. Where you from?

BUDDY

The North Pole.

JOVIE

Already in character huh? I'm a singer myself, I was never too into the whole acting thing.

BUDDY

Wow they let you sing and elf? Talk about liberating.

JOVIE

Yeah. I used to be in a band. Unfortunately my boyfriend used to be in it too. So now I don't have a boyfriend and I don't have a band.

BUDDY

Oh, I'm, I'm sorry.

JOVIE

Don't be. He was a loser. I have this bizarre weakness for losers. But it's okay I got this other gig at The Cabaret on 47th Street. Every Saturday, it's not bad, the music's a little more traditional than the thrasher rock I'm used to, but you know, it keeps me in tune.

The clock STRIKES ten.

JOVIE

Uhp it's show time.

JOLLY MAN (O.S.)

Ho, Ho, Ho!

The kids start to CHEER.

JOVIE

Here comes the big man.

Buddy rushes down from his ladder. He hits the floor, his eyes wide, almost breathless with excitement. Quickly he brushes off his uniform and straightens his cap. A big smile on his face.

BLACK BOOTS

drop down from the chimney. A FAT MAN dressed as Santa appears with his big red bag -- the kids cheer -- Buddy's smile drops.

BUDDY

Who the heck are you?

MACY'S SANTA

(laughing)

Why I'm Santa Claus.

BUDDY

Are not!

The kids look on silently. The laughing fat man leans merrily close to Buddy, his tone changes:

MACY'S SANTA

Look moron get out of my way before I hurt you.

He walks past Buddy towards his chair:

Ho, Ho, Ho!

Buddy turns angrily and jumps on the fat man, bringing him down into the tree.

BUDDY

Imposter!!! He's an imposter!!!

Buddy sits on top of the fat man, pounding him.

The kids watch on in awe.

INT. HALL OF RECORDS - DAY

Walter stands impatiently at a counter. The plaque above the counter reads, "Public Records".

A wiry, spectacled man comes back to the counter with the birth certificate.

MAN

It's the real deal alright. That particular tot went missing in an orphanage, but the birth certificate is the genuine article. We got a matching copy right here.

WALTER

No there has to be some mistake!

MAN

No mister, no mistake. One male child, born February Two, Nineteen hundred and sixty eight. Mother one Mary Welles, Father one Walter Hacket.

WALTER

I know what it says, I can read, but isn't there, I don't know, a chance of forgery, false documentation?

MAN

Look what didn't you understand about real deal? There's no forgery okay. We got an exact duplicate in our records. An exact duplicate.

WALTER

So? It's an exact duplicate. What's that prove?!

MAN

It proves authenticity. As in the genuine article. No fake. Real deal. Birth certificate. Get it?!

Walter stares angered, speechless -- his phone RINGS, snapping him out of it, he answers the cellular:

WALTER

. . . Yeah?!

MARGERY

(over the phone)

Mr. Hacket, I'm sorry to bother you, but it's your son.

WALTER

My son?!

MARGERY

I'll put him through.

WALTER

Oh God--

CLOSE ON - BUDDY

a phone in his hand:

BUDDY

Dad guess what?! I met a girl! Oh, and one more thing--

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Walter angrily writes a check. He hands it to the DESK OFFICER.

The officer fills out a form.

OFFICER

And what's your relation to this guy?

WALTER

Oh well he's my, my. . .

OFFICER

Your what?

WALTER

My--my friend's illegitimate son.

OFFICER

Ah well tell your friend to tell his illegitimate son to take it easy on the hooch. We don't like seeing Santa get the snot kicked out of him, especially right before Christmas. It's hard to be jolly with a broken nose you know.

WALTER

Thanks. I'll tell him.

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

A large CONVICT holds Buddy pinned against the cell bars.

CONVICT

Secret what?

BUDDY

Secret Santa.

Several BUMS and hard looking MEN sit with a scrap of paper in their hand.

BUDDY

If you don't want to put your name in the hat you don't have to, but you're not gonna get a present.

CONVICT

Oh no? Well maybe I don't want to play a game with some god-damn fairy!

BUDDY

No, no I'm not a fairy, I'm an elf. Common mistake I--

The convict slams Buddy against the bars.

CONVICT

And if I want a present I'll get one.

BUDDY

Well not with that kind of attitude.

CONVICT

Is that right Tinkerbelle?

BUDDY

It's Buddy.

The cell door SLAMS open:

GUARD

Elfiwitz!

PRISON DOORS

slide open to Buddy being escorted through by a GUARD.

WAITING ROOM

Walter sits in a hard chair amongst PIMPS and DEGENERATES. A foul expression sits upon his face.

The door opens to the Guard and Buddy.

BUDDY

Thanks. Merry Christmas.

The guard looks at him with contempt. Buddy turns to see the scowling Walter. He throws his arms wide:

BUDDY

Dad!

Buddy begins towards Walter. A purple suited pimp turns to Walter.

PIMP

That's one fine dressin' boy you got there.

Buddy fast approaches Walter, but Walter stops him with his arm out like a traffic cop.

WALTER
Shut up. Don't say a word.

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Walter marches out of the front doors, Buddy follows closely behind, almost like a puppy dog trying to keep up.

BUDDY
Where we going Dad?

WALTER
Hey what does not say a word mean to you?

BUDDY
Quiet time?

WALTER
Exactly. Quiet time.

Walter marches on--

BUDDY
Um, Dad?

WALTER
What?!

BUDDY
I'm not that good at quiet time.

WALTER
I don't care if you're good at it! And stop calling me Dad!

BUDDY
How's Pop?

WALTER
Mr. Hacket's fine. I like Mr. Hacket.

BUDDY
. . . Poppa?

Walter stops to turn and yell at Buddy:

WALTER
Hey you know just because your mother put me down on the birth certificate as your father doesn't mean I am your father. You know that?

BUDDY

What does it mean?

WALTER

What does it mean? I'll tell you what it means--

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Classical music soothingly plays. Buddy sits on the examination table. Walter sits reading a magazine.

BUDDY

Blood test? But I don't like tests. What if I fail?

WALTER

You can't fail a blood test.

BUDDY

I don't know anything about blood.

WALTER

You don't have to know anything about blood. You don't have to know anything about anything! You just have to sit there okay. That's not too much to ask is it?

BUDDY

Is there multiple choice?

The door swings open to a DOCTOR with a clip board.

DOCTOR

Walter, how goes the publishing world? My daughter just can't wait for that new Mrs. Curwillacer.

WALTER

Yes, we're all very excited.

DOCTOR

Oh I bet.

Turning to Buddy, he beams a friendly smile:

Okay, I'm Dr. Benjamin. And from what Walter here tells me you're his alleged illegitimate son. Very good.

BUDDY

I'm Buddy.

DOCTOR

Yes very good.

(preparing the needle)

Okay Buddy you want to pop up your sleeve there?

Dr. Benjamin moves over to Buddy with the needle:

DOCTOR

Alright, two shakes of a rabbit's tail and I'll be out of your hair. And, more importantly, your arm.

WALTER

How long are these results gonna take Doug?

DOCTOR

Oh you know with the labs, a couple days minimum.

WALTER

And with an advanced copy of the Curwillacer?

DOCTOR

Couple hours, tops.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

A little GIRL sits on the floor brushing a doll's hair.

Walter, on his cellular, paces. Buddy sits in a waiting chair, a cotton ball taped to his arm.

BUDDY

My arm. I can't move my arm.

WALTER

Oh stop it with the arm already would ya?

BUDDY

But it won't move.

WALTER

Stop whining!--

(into the phone)

Miles, it's Hacket, where have you been? I've been trying you for the last hour? Yeah is there any sign of improvement with Curwillacer? Dead?! That's not a sign of improvement!

He paces into the hallway. Buddy turns to the little girl.

BUDDY

He's been under a lot of pressure at work.

GIRL

Your arm won't hurt so much after a little.

BUDDY

You sure? Then it's not permanent?

GIRL

No it'll go away.

BUDDY

That's a relief.

GIRL

So what are you dressed up for?

BUDDY

Christmas. I'm an elf.

GIRL

Aren't you kinda big for an elf?

BUDDY

Well I'm a human technically. But I came to Manhattan to you know fit in with my own kind. But in reality I was raised by elves.

GIRL

(totally unfazed)

Oh. I'm Carolyn.

BUDDY

I'm Buddy.

Buddy moves next to her on the floor and shakes her hand.

BUDDY

That's a pretty doll ya got there. What did you wish for for Christmas this year?

CAROLYN

Well my number one wish is a Susie Talks A Lot. But it's kinda expensive so I don't think I'm gonna get it.

BUDDY

A Susie Talks A Lot? Well I'll put in a good word for ya.

CAROLYN

Oh yeah. With who?

BUDDY

Well Carolyn, let's just say I know some people.

CAROLYN

What people?

BUDDY

(confidentially)

Top people.

CAROLYN

Who?

BUDDY

Okay Carolyn let's not pull any punches -- it's Santa.

CAROLYN

You know him?!

BUDDY

Do I know him?--

A smiling WOMAN comes out of the office with Dr. Benjamin. Carolyn waves to her -- Buddy turns around and waves. The woman's smile drops. She quickly picks up her daughter and heads for the exit. Buddy stands:

BUDDY

Bye.

CAROLYN

Bye Buddy.

WOMAN

(to Carolyn)

What did I tell you about talking to strange men?!

CAROLYN

He's not strange mama, he's an elf.

She bursts through the doors. Dr. Benjamin signals to Walter. Walter storms back in:

WALTER

Well damn it Miles I'm upset too! Before we could've hid the fact that she had a stroke and just kept writing the books. Can't we hold off on the funeral? No, no just a couple years. Alright well then just keep it out of the papers Miles, okay? Keep it out of the papers. Yeah I'll call ya back.

He hangs up the phone and turns expectantly to Dr. Benjamin.

WALTER

Well?

DR. BENJAMIN

Well Walter. . . it's a boy.

Walter face drops. He looks at Buddy -- smiling ear to ear.

INT. HACKET HOME - NIGHT

Emily cuts carrots on a cutting board. Michael sits at the dinner table, pleading with Emily:

MICHAEL

But mom, it's not a real gun, it's a Johnny gun, all the guys are getting them.

EMILY

So you'll be the exception.

MICHAEL

Why?

EMILY

Because it shoots paint pellets Michael. And I don't want you playing with anything that can turn your face into a canvas.

MICHAEL

It's soft pellets and it comes with headgear.

EMILY

I don't care if it comes with a suit of armor Michael, you're not getting it.

Upset, he slams back in his chair.

MICHAEL

Dad would let me.

Hurt, she stops slicing the carrots for a moment. Then continues:

EMILY

Well your Dad's not here now. It's just me and Walter.

MICHAEL

Great.

EMILY

Michael I'm doing the best I can okay. You know, sometimes it's not so easy being a family.

MICHAEL

Nobody else seems to have a problem.

EMILY

Everybody has problems Michael!

The phone RINGS. She looks at Michael sulking.

Look it just takes time in a new situation. You just have to give Walter a chance. You remember when Eddie was a new hamster and put him in with Milo? At first they stayed away from each other, but now they're good friends right? It just takes time to adjust, that's all.

(answering the phone)

Hello.

INT. CAB - DUSK

Walter, on his cellular, sits next to the beaming Buddy.

WALTER

Guess what Hon?

CLOSE ON - EMILY

sitting shaking -- absolutely stunned. She holds a large glass of wine. Walter paces the bedroom floor.

WALTER

I don't know, I don't know, it was the prom. She had some wine, I had some wine, one thing led to another, Jesus I don't know -- five seconds in a Buick thirty years ago and now this.

EMILY

And you never knew?

WALTER

She never returned my calls. It was my first time, I thought I must've done it wrong. But I guess that's all been cleared up.

Emily sits back trying to take this all in.

EMILY
Were you in love with her?

WALTER
What difference does that make?!

EMILY
Were you?

WALTER
I don't know. Maybe a little.

EMILY
Maybe a little?

WALTER
It was a long time ago! What do you want from me?! I'm not happy about this. Do you think I'm happy about this?! I'm not ready to be the father of a twenty five year old reject from a mental institution.

EMILY
Oh well that's real nice Walter. He's your son for God's sake.

WALTER
Great. So he gets to ruin my life on some technicality. That's just great!

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Silence. Buddy sits silently on the lower portion of a bunk bed. Michael sits silently at his desk doing his homework.

BUDDY
You know, I've never really had a brother before.

MICHAEL
I'm not your brother.

Beat.

BUDDY
You know, I've never really had a half brother before.

MICHAEL
You're not my half brother. You're my step brother and you're not even that.

Beat.

BUDDY

I've never had a step brother before.

Michael finally turns to Buddy.

MICHAEL

Are you gonna shut up?

BUDDY

I'm just excited is all. Where I come from, I never felt like I fit in, now at least I know who I am.

MICHAEL

Yeah well whoever you are, just don't touch my stuff alright.

BUDDY

You know, I don't mean to preach or anything, but with that kind of attitude I don't know what Santa's really gonna bring you.

MICHAEL

Yeah look can it with the Santa act okay. I play dumb for mom cause she likes to baby me, but I don't care about you and everybody knows there's no Santa.

BUDDY

No Santa? There is too!

MICHAEL

Please, I'm ten, I wasn't born yesterday you know. I know the way it works.

BUDDY

The way what works?

MICHAEL

Christmas. You put the stuff you want on a list and pretend to be good so Santa, alias mom, gets you what you want. It's a big con.

BUDDY

A big con?! It's not a big con. It's magic! Sure your mom gets you stuff, but Santa brings the rest. The stuff that your mom couldn't afford or couldn't find. But he comes, I know.

MICHAEL

Oh and how do you know?

HACKET KITCHEN

Emily pours herself another generous glass of wine.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Mommm!!!!

She quickly races out of frame--

MASTER BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Michael sleeps peacefully huddled next to his mother.

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

An angry Walter lies awake staring at the top bunk hovering above him. Buddy SNORES loudly in the top bunk.

CUT TO:

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Rain patters against the window. THUNDER slowly rumbles.

7:01 -- the alarm clock MUSIC clicks on.

Walter opens his red eyes, closes them and groggily rolls over towards the alarm. His arm wraps around a body, his eyes still shut--

WALTER

Hon.

He caresses the body -- he stops, warily opening his eyes. Buddy lies curled next to him.

BUDDY

I got scared.

Walter leaps out of bed, infuriated:

WALTER

Get out!!! Get out!!! Get--

He steps on Michael's toy, bringing him down behind the bed with a THUD--

BREAKFAST TABLE

Walter, now in his suit, sits with an ice pack against his eye.

Emily in a nurses uniform, Michael in his school clothes and Buddy, still in his elf outfit, eat in silence.

EMILY

So, Buddy, how did you sleep last night?

BUDDY

Oh pretty good thanks Mrs. Hacket.

EMILY

Please, call me Emily.

MICHAEL

(muttering)

Oh barf.

EMILY

Michael!

Michael goes back to silently picking at his eggs. Emily politely smiles back to Buddy -- Buddy smiles back. She looks at his elf suit:

EMILY

Buddy, do you happen to have any um. . . other clothes by any chance?

BUDDY

No. Just my elf green.

EMILY

I see. Well, you'll have to lend him some of yours Walter.

WALTER

Excuse me?

EMILY

He doesn't have any, any New York clothes. He's about your build.

Walter looks at Emily with controlled anger.

WALTER

Yeah. I guess he is. Thanks for the suggestion dear.

She looks back smiling to Buddy.

EMILY

So Buddy what are you going to do today?

MICHAEL
Make some toys?

EMILY
Michael--

BUDDY
I don't know. Is there like a local workshop
I could go?

WALTER
Oh would you just stop it! Would you please
just stop with the elf crap! Jee-sus!

EMILY
Okay--

MICHAEL
(to Buddy)
Weirdo.

WALTER
(to Michael)
Hey nobody was talking to you!

EMILY
Walter!

BUDDY
(to Michael)
Shrimp!

WALTER
(to Buddy)
Would you just shut up!

MICHAEL
(to Buddy)
Psycho!

EMILY
Michael!

BUDDY
(to Michael)
Freak!

WALTER
(to Buddy)
Hey don't you listen!

MICHAEL
(to Buddy)
Misfit!

BUDDY

Misfit?!

Buddy grabs a buttered muffin and wings it at Michael's head -- Michael grabs some eggs and wings them back --

WALTER

Alright that's it! That's it!

Walter is hit with a pancake. He picks up a cantaloupe--

Emily stands SCREAMING:

EMILY

Stop it!!! Stop it!!! Stop it!!!

Everyone looks to her in silence. After a moment, she tries to regain her composure and sits back down.

EMILY

Can't we please just finish our breakfast like a relatively normal family?

She brushes some egg out of her hair. After a moment, they start eating in silence again.

EMILY

Buddy, I'm sure, because you're not familiar with the city, your father would like to take you with him today.

Walter looks at her in disbelief.

WALTER

You're sure what?!

AN ELEVATOR DOOR

DINGS open. Buddy stands next to Walter in matching suits. Buddy is beaming, Walter is not.

Walter impatiently walks to his office, Buddy bounds behind him, responding pleasantly to Walter's ignored morning greetings.

INT. HACKET OFFICE - MORNING

Walter sits down at his scattered desk. Margery follows him in with his morning cup of coffee and New York Times.

MARGERY

Mr. Hacket, Mr. Finch is waiting for you.

WALTER
Miles is here? Well have him wait, I'm not
in the mood.

MARGERY
And Mr. Greenway called again and--

WALTER
Thank you Ms. McClanahan.

She begins backing out of the office.

BUDDY
Good morning.

MARGERY
Oh good morning.
(she stares for a moment)
Have we met before?

BUDDY
Sure I was--

WALTER
Goodbye Ms. McClanahan.

She awkwardly steps out, Buddy waves to her.

BUDDY
Hey Dad I was thinking--

WALTER
You're kidding.

BUDDY
Well about this girl. She's beautiful and
perfect and I kinda want to ask her out, but
I really never had much luck with the girls
back home. So I was just wondering how do
you go about it?

Walter, not listening, flips open the paper:

HIS POV -- A PICTURE OF AN OLD WOMAN

followed by the headline, "Beloved Children's Author Dies at
91". Walter jumps out of his chair, slapping his intercom:

WALTER
Ms. McClanahan get Miles in here!

Walter paces reading the paper.

BUDDY

Would you get her some flowers? Chocolate?
Maybe a nice poem?

The door opens to MILES FINCH -- a midget, in a sleek
business suit enters. Buddy's eyes light up in amazement.

WALTER

What the hell is this Miles?!

MILES

It leaked.

WALTER

It leaked?! I can see it leaked! Why did
you let it leak?! Why do we employ you?
(hitting his intercom)
Ms. McClanahan!

BUDDY

Did Santa send you on special assignment?

MILES

What?! Who's he Walter?

WALTER

It's a long story.

MILES

Yeah well Greenway called me this morning.
He's gonna be here tomorrow and he wants to
know about the new line.

WALTER

Tomorrow?! Curwillacer just died! We don't
have anything new! He rejected everything
else! How about she wrote a whole bunch of
stories from her death bed.

MILES

She was paralyzed.

WALTER

So?!

The phone RINGS. Walter grabs it:

WALTER

What?!

INTERCUT:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Emily sits at her nurses station on the phone:

EMILY
Hey hon, hi how's it going?

WALTER
Good, good. But it's busy, very busy. What is it?

Walter holds up his one second finger to Miles. Buddy stands next to Miles staring at him.

BUDDY
What happened to your ears?

MILES
What?!

BUDDY
They're not pointy.

MILES
They were never pointy!

BUDDY
Have you heard anything about the reindeer?

WALTER
(to Miles)
My illegitimate son, he thinks you're an elf.
(to Emily)
Hon, I'm sort of in a meeting?

Emily moves to a more private area.

EMILY
Walter I'm worried about us. I'm worried about us as a family.

WALTER
(thoroughly unconcerned)
Yes dear I'm very concerned as well, but could we talk about it later?

EMILY
Yes, absolutely, that's why I made the appointment.

WALTER
Fine, then-- What appointment?

A HEAVY WOOD DOOR: DR. ARTHUR LLOYD, FAMILY COUNSELING

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

An office made of rich wood. Diplomas line the walls.

DR. LLOYD, a bald man, with a trim white beard sits in a deep, red leather chair. He stares intently at:

Walter, Emily, Michael and Buddy sit across the way in four smaller chairs.

DR. LLOYD

Okay. Where shall we begin?

The group sits uncomfortably, Buddy is oblivious.

EMILY

We're having some problems at home.

DR. LLOYD

M'hm. What kind of problems?

WALTER

Oh, you know, the usual.

EMILY

The usual? Well not exactly the usual--

WALTER

Well okay, It's not exactly 'Leave it to Beaver' usual--

EMILY

Things have gotten a little strange recently--

WALTER

Listen, it's just that I've been a little preoccupied at work and I haven't had a lot of time at home. That's all.

(confidentially to Dr. Lloyd)

Our best selling author just died. It's a very hard time. And I've got a very important meeting tomorrow, so if we could speed things up.

EMILY

You see that's just the problem, you never have any time. No time. You know Michael needs us.

MICHAEL

I don't need him.

EMILY

(to Dr. Lloyd)

It's been hard on everyone. Michael's father had some legal issues--

WALTER

He left the country.

EMILY

He had a few problems--

WALTER

So now he's in Brazil playing doubles with the other fugitive criminals.

MICHAEL

He's not a criminal! Take it back!

WALTER

Ah so embezzlement is legal now?

EMILY

Walter aren't you even going to make an effort here?!

WALTER

I am making an effort! It's--

Dr. Lloyd loudly RINGS a bell until all three clam up, restlessly sitting back in their chairs. Buddy sits quietly watching. Dr. Lloyd turns to him:

DR. LLOYD

And what about you? You've been quiet over there.

BUDDY

Me? Oh I was raised by elves.

Dr. Lloyd calmly presses his intercom:

DR. LLOYD

Sue can you cancel the rest of my appointments?

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - NIGHT

Walter, Emily and Michael, obviously all upset, have their drinks and walk to the cashier.

WALTER

Well that was helpful. I hope when his bill comes we can look back and see just how helpful that was. Can I have my wallet?

EMILY

I gave it to Buddy.

WALTER

You what?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A WOMAN from the Salvation Army, with bell and collection box, is thanking Buddy profusely.

Walter walks up in a rush.

BUDDY

Oh hi Dad. This is Lorna.

LORNA

Your son's most generous sir.

WALTER

Oh yeah?

Walter grabs the wallet back from Buddy and looks inside. He gives Buddy a greatly angered stare. He smiles to Lorna.

WALTER

I'm sorry Lorna, there's been a mistake. You see there was over two hundred dollars here.

LORNA

Yes thank you very much sir. And God bless you.

BUDDY

Merry Christmas.

LORNA

Merry Christmas!

WALTER

No you see you don't understand. That's my money and he never had the authority to give it to you. I'll be more than happy to chip in you know a dollar or something, but come on, let's not be ridiculous. So I'll just--

Walter starts reaching in her collection box. She pulls the box away.

LORNA

Um, what do you think you're doing?

WALTER
Like I said Lorna, taking my money back.

LORNA
You can't just take it back.

BUDDY
God already blessed us.

Walter grabs her box:

WALTER
Alright give it back.

She starts struggling with him, hitting him with her bell.

LORNA
Help!!! Help!!! Robbery!!!

WALTER
It's my money!

LORNA
Thief!!!

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - NIGHT

Emily, Michael and Buddy stand waiting at a desk.

MICHAEL
Well I guess he's a criminal now.

EMILY
Michael, please.

An OFFICER returns to the desk.

OFFICER
I'm sorry Mrs. Hacket but it's past bailable hours. You'll have to get him in the morning.

EMILY
In the morning?

OFFICER
In the morning.

INT. CELL - NIGHT

Walter sits haggard and bruised, vacantly staring ahead. hat is passed to him by a ragged DERELICT.

DERELICT

You want in on the Secret Santa?

Walter looks to the derelict without expression.

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - MORNING

A conference room is filled with people seated around a large oval conference table.

FULTON GREENWAY, an older fellow -- large and blustery, sits at the head of the table.

A young EXECUTIVE stands at the other end, in front of several drawings of animal characters. The executive dramatically uses his hands:

EXECUTIVE

Okay picture this. . . Curious George spreads the Ebola Virus.

FULTON

What?

EXECUTIVE

I know it's radical, but listen. He spreads it to the Man in the Yellow Hat. It's very topical, kids learn about the disease and--

FULTON

You're fired.

EXECUTIVE

But--

A couple EXECUTIVES escort him out of the room. Miles reluctantly gets out of his chair.

MILES

Mr. Greenway sir, we've been trying several ideas that we feel that with time will be as popular, or more popular, than the Mrs. Curwillacer series. The bottom line being--

FULTON

The bottom line Miles is that we are getting killed. Do you understand that?

MILES

Yes sir, yes I--

FULTON

The big houses are destroying us Miles. They're destroying us! Where's the vast improvements I was promised? Where?! I don't see anything. Everything you've shown me is about as entertaining as a root canal. And frankly I can't see this root getting fixed any time soon. The next thing you idiots will be telling me is that Mrs. Curwillacer wrote some books on her death bed.

Miles smiles uncomfortably--

I want some answers Miles! And where in the world is Hacket?!

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - MORNING

An older police OFFICER behind a cage hands back Walter's possessions, one by one.

OFFICER

One watch. Swiss, ah very nice. Is it true what they say about these Swiss watches?

WALTER

Please can we just move this along?

The officer looks at him annoyed.

OFFICER

Break time!

The officer takes Walter's stuff with him.

WALTER

No, no, wait. It's true! Swiss watches, excellent time. I bought that in Zurich from an old woman with a limp. Hello! Hello!

INT. MACY'S - MORNING

Buddy walks through the store with a bouquet of baby breaths and a Milky Way bar, muttering to himself:

BUDDY

Hello, um, we met the other day-- Hi you might not remember me-- Hello Jovie, you're looking well--

Jovie, still in her elf suit, lets a little girl in to see Santa.

Santa, with a bruised eye, sits on his chair. The little girl approaches:

MACY'S SANTA

Well hello there. And what's--

Santa looks up stunned.

Buddy makes his way down the aisle.

MACY'S SANTA

Aw Geez. Okay Santa's taking five.

He scurries away.

Jovie smiles as Buddy stiffly, nervously approaches her.

JOVIE

Well hello there.

BUDDY

(very stiffly)

Hello Jovie, you might not remember me--

JOVIE

Sure I remember you. You're the guy that beat up Santa.

BUDDY

Wow you do remember me! Oh here.

He hands her the baby breaths and the Milky Way. She accepts them, caught a little off guard.

JOVIE

Gee. . . Thanks.

BUDDY

Sure. I wrote you a poem, but it was not very--

(stiffening up again)

Um Jovie I was wondering Jovie if maybe some time you would do me the honor of maybe letting me buy you a soda? Some time.

JOVIE

A soda?

BUDDY

Okay well thanks for listening.

Buddy begins to walk away, she stops him.

JOVIE

No, no a soda would be great. Why don't you stop by The 47th Street Cabaret about ten tomorrow, we can get a soda after my set.

BUDDY

Really?! You mean it! Wow! Wait till I tell Dad.

AN ELEVATOR DOOR

DINGS open. Walter, looking a complete shambles, eyes sunken, pale, quickly steps off the elevator. He limps into:

THE CONFERENCE ROOM

Miles is using a pointer on a large drawing of a bear with a fishing cap on.

MILES

Alright, This fuzzy fella's name's Bernie and this bear, he's always getting into trouble--

Walter staggers in, trying to be unobtrusive. Fulton spots him immediately:

FULTON

Why Mr. Hacket! So happy you could join us.

WALTER

Oh my pleasure sir.

FULTON

You look like hell Hacket. You fall off a garbage truck or something?

WALTER

No. No sir. Just had a rather unfortunate evening.

FULTON

Ah unfortunate. That's also a really good description of this so called line you've got here.

WALTER

Well no sir, I think we might have some real, real winners here. Plus with a few new Curwillacer books--

FULTON

Curwillacer?!

Miles shakes his head discreetly to Walter, gesticulating to stop with his hands. Walter notices, slightly confused.

FULTON

She's dead Hacket. Don't you read the papers?

WALTER

Well, you know how the press exaggerates things sir.

FULTON

So she's not dead?

WALTER

Well she's, she's fairly dead.

FULTON

What do you mean fairly dead? Is she dead or not dead?

WALTER

Well she's dead now, technically. But you know the old gal. She believed in reincarnation. Why she could walk in as a-- as a chicken tomorrow and start writing wonderful stories. And from a completely different perspective.

FULTON

What are you talking about Hacket? Have you gone mad?

Buddy RAPS excitedly on the glass conference room window. Walter sees Buddy's smiling face waving at him.

WALTER

Oh God.

(to Fulton)

Excuse me for a moment, won't you?

Walter races to cut him off at the door.

BUDDY

Dad she said she'd go out with me! She said she go out with me!

WALTER

What are you doing here?! I'm in a meeting! Can't you see I'm in a meeting?!

BUDDY

Well I figured you would want to know--

WALTER

Well I don't! I don't care! Get it?! I just don't care! Understand?!

Beat.

BUDDY

So, do you maybe wanna double date?

FULTON

Hacket, what's going on?! Who's he?

Buddy steps into the conference room.

BUDDY

Oh I'm his illegitimate son.

WALTER

He's on a lot of medication.

FULTON

Son?! I didn't know you had a son Hacket.

WALTER

No, no--

BUDDY

Oh well that's because I was raised by elves.

The conference members turn in silent unison to Buddy. Walter smiles helplessly:

WALTER

He was dropped as a child.

CUT TO:

THE CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Buddy sits at the center of the conference table. The executives chairs are gathered around him, engrossed.

EXECUTIVE ONE

And how do the reindeer fly?

BUDDY

Magic dust. Administered by an elf of course.

General murmurs of agreement:

EXECUTIVES

Well of course. . . Who else?

EXECUTIVE TWO

Do you know Rudolph?

BUDDY

Sure.

EXECUTIVE THREE

And his nose?

BUDDY

Oh it glows. But he had kind of a bad cold when I left, so it wasn't doing too hot. It's the cold and flu season up there you know.

EXECUTIVE ONE

So, let me get this straight, there's an actual elf school?

BUDDY

Uh huh.

EXECUTIVE TWO

And they have a placement program into the workshop?

BUDDY

Uh huh.

EXECUTIVE THREE

Wow, this is gangbusters. Marketing can go nuts on this stuff.

Walter watches on in amazement. Fulton puts his hand on Walter's shoulder.

FULTON

Walter your kid is screwy. But dear lord what an imagination.

WALTER

Chip off the old block sir..

SMASH TO:
A SPOTLIGHT

hits Jovie -- she begins a torchy version of:

JOVIE

Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Rock.
Jingle around the clock. . .

Buddy sits in the dark cafe audience smiling.

BUDDY (V.O.)

Dear Mom and Dad,

Jovie's SINGING continues under the narration.

Things are really starting to happen. And I think I'm actually starting to fit in.

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael is asleep. Buddy writes with a flashlight under his sheets.

I found my biological father and he has been extremely supportive and loving.

HACKET KITCHEN

Walter raps Buddy in the back of the head.

I even hit the lottery with a biological step mother and step brother. We've all become very close.

HACKET DINING ROOM

Walter, Emily, Michael and Buddy eat in silence.

And guess what. I met a girl.

DINER - NIGHT

Jovie and Buddy sit at a table drinking malts with straws. Jovie finishes hers and puts her straw in Buddy's glass, Buddy blushes.

I think you would like her a lot. She reminds me of mom in a lot of ways.

MACY'S

Jovie stands happily at her elf station, waving to Buddy.

Oh, and in other news, I'm getting my first book published. I never knew I had a knack for story telling, but apparently I have what they call a vivid imagination.

GREENWAY PRESS

Buddy has recreated his rock in the box -- writers take notes. A writer doodles Buddy bound in a straight jacket.

So I guess that's why they went forward with my idea.

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

Lettered on the frosted glass is: "THINK TANK"

Three AD MEN work inside, smoking cigarettes, throwing out ideas.

THINKER ONE

We call it Elf Boy!

THINKER TWO

No, no--I was a teenage Elf!

THINKER THREE

The Man who would be Elf!

ART STUDIO

Buddy stands on a platform in his elf suit, holding a wrapped gift.

It was a bit of a rush with Christmas just around the corner and everything, but there were a bunch of people hired to get it done, as they say in the business, A.S.A.P.

Cigarette smoking writers furiously clack on typewriters; Artists fill a room, drawing, drawing--

THINK TANK

THINKER ONE

Big Man, Little shoes!

THINKER TWO

Toy Boy!

THINKER ONE

All by his elf!

GREENWAY PRESS

Walter furiously edits the proofs; criticizes drawings;

It was a lot of work, but I think everyone seemed to like the final product. Even the boss Mr. Greenway, or as my biological father likes to call him, the jerk with the money.

Walter shows Fulton the proofs, Fulton beams enthusiastically--

THINK TANK

THINKER ONE

Planet of the Elves!

THINKER TWO

Are you there God? It's me, Elf.

THINKER ONE

Escape from the North Pole--no, Elf-is!!!

THINKER THREE

Hey guys, guys. Why not just make it simple?

BOOKSTORE - DAY

A CLERK places copies of the book, "ELF" in the book store window -- a drawing of Buddy on the cover in his elf suit. Underneath the phrase: "A short story"

Christmas is now only a few days away and I'm very excited to see Santa again. Hope the reindeer are well.

CABARET

Buddy sits captivated in the dark cafe.

I love you and miss you very much, Merry Christmas, your son always, Buddy

Jovie finishes her song:

JOVIE

. . . That's the Jingle Bell, That's the Jingle Bell, That's the Jingle Bell Rock.

One person CLAPS loudly.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

A gala Christmas party is in the works. Elegant dressed PEOPLE mill, mixing drinks with conversation.

Several INTELLECTUALS stand bitterly drinking in a corner.

MAN ONE

The Elf book's selling like hot cakes.

MAN TWO

Yes, looks like Greenway found his new Curwillacer series.

WOMAN ONE

Wonderful. The chronicles of an elf.

MAN THREE

I hear in his next book Buddy has Christmas on Mars.

WOMAN ONE

Really? I hear he just signed a TV deal with Keebler.

WOMAN TWO

Some say he's the next Dr. Seuss.

They drink bitterly.

MAN ONE

Frightening.

THE BAR

Walter, a drink in hand, a cigar in mouth, enjoys a congratulatory handshake from a passing man.

WALTER

What can I tell ya Sid? The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

A hand on Walter's shoulder -- it's a beaming Fulton.

FULTON

Walter, Walter, Walter. Kudos on the book my boy. I don't have to tell you I'm very happy with the success of Buddy's first venture. That's why I wanted to ask you what you thought about signing him to an exclusive deal.

WALTER

Why I think it's a wonderful idea sir.

FULTON

Yes, I think so too. Looks like he's our new rising star. I don't want to just let him slip away.

WALTER

No, no of course not. I'll talk to him about it.

FULTON

Wonderful, wonderful. Merry Christmas Walter.

WALTER

Yes thank you sir.

A DINING TABLE

Emily is gussied up in a dress, Michael and Buddy sit in tuxedos. Two attractive twenty-something GIRLS stand next to the table, gushing at Buddy.

GIRL ONE

So do you know Rudolph?

BUDDY

Sure.

GIRL TWO

And his nose?

BUDDY

Oh, it glows. But word from the North Pole is his cold's gotten worse so--

Walter quickly approaches:

WALTER

(to the girls)

Beat it.

The girls reluctantly move away as Walter sits at the table.

WALTER

(confidentially to Emily)

Greenway wants Buddy to sign a multi-book deal.

EMILY

That's great Hon.

WALTER

Yeah, but we'll make him sweat for it. We'll see what we can get out of the bigger houses.

EMILY

But what about Mr. Greenway?

WALTER

What about him? He's a chimp, a first class ding-dong. And if I can leverage myself into a bigger house, screw him. The only smart thing he ever did was hire me so if I leave, the more power to me. How ya enjoying the party there son?

BUDDY

Oh it's really nice Dad.

MICHAEL

(muttering)

Yeah it's great.

WALTER

Oh what's his problem now?

MICHAEL

Nothing. I don't have a problem.

EMILY

I got paged. They need me to do a double tomorrow at the hospital.

BUDDY

But tomorrow's Christmas Eve. Everyone has to be together on Christmas Eve.

EMILY

I know, I feel horrible, but there's nothing I can do. I'm so sorry Honey--

MICHAEL

(muttering)

Whatever.

Emily regretfully sits back in her chair. Smiling at an idea, she turns to Buddy:

EMILY

Hey Buddy why don't you invite that girlfriend of yours over for Christmas Eve?

BUDDY

(blushing)

Well I wouldn't exactly call her my girlfriend.

EMILY

You've seen her every night this week.

MICHAEL

Didn't you have sex with her yet?

Michael! EMILY

BUDDY
What do you mean?

Emily looks concerned to Walter. Walter leans in to Buddy:

WALTER
Buddy you've uh, you've never had sex before?

BUDDY
No. Why is it good here?

INT. BATHROOM

Buddy and Walter stand in the corner of the large, elegant bathroom. A BATHROOM ATTENDANT suspiciously eyes them.

Walter awkwardly begins.

WALTER
You see when a man loves a woman they want to be together. Right?

BUDDY
Right.

WALTER
I mean you like being with this girl right? You bring her candy, flowers.

BUDDY
Baby breaths.

WALTER
Baby breaths? Don't be a moron. Bring her roses, that's romance. Ask Emily she loves that crap. Anyway, a man and a woman like each other and they want to get together, so they, you know. . . get together.

BUDDY
Right. They get together.

WALTER
Physically. Like, like your mom and I after the prom. You see my Dad never told me anything about this stuff or anything about anything for that matter, he was always too busy to have time for me, and so of course you were born.

BUDDY

Right.

WALTER

So what I'm basically saying is, be careful.

BUDDY

Gotcha.

WALTER

Well. I'm glad we had this talk.

BUDDY

Thanks Dad.

Buddy hugs Walter. Walter not knowing how to respond, slowly hugs him back -- a genuine smile creeps on his face.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Buddy happily bounces down the street with a bouquet of roses. His smile slowly drops.

HIS POV

A scraggly young MAN with long hair and tattoos stands outside the Cabaret arguing with Jovie.

Buddy picks up his pace.

The scraggly man violently grabs Jovie's arm--

Anger flushes Buddy's face as he sprints full speed towards the scraggly man -- Tackling him hard, CRASH, into the sidewalk's metal trashcans.

Buddy begins to pound him--

JOVIE

No, Buddy, Buddy, stop, stop!

The scraggly man shoves Buddy off of him.

MAN

What the hell?! You know this goddamn psycho?!

JOVIE

He's not a psycho! He's--he's my new guy. And he knows how to treat a woman Randy. Unlike some people.

RANDY

Yeah?! Well then good! I hope you're real happy with your new Yuppie! Have a nice picket fence, ya sell out. Who needs you anyway?!

He dramatically kicks over some trash cans and storms away. Buddy looks at Jovie, who appears a bit teary-eyed.

BUDDY

I'm sorry. Was he a friend of yours?

JOVIE

No he's no friend of mine. Let's just go alright.

She turns and quickly walks in the other direction. Buddy catches up to her.

BUDDY

I brought you some roses. But they kinda got a little smushed.

She grabs them from him, still obviously upset. She smells the crushed roses, it calms her a little.

JOVIE

They're. . . they're beautiful.

She shakes her head looking at Buddy:

JOVIE

You are just so much different from all the other jerks I've ever met.

BUDDY

But I don't want to be different. I can be a jerk, just, just give me a chance. You call that a dress?!--

JOVIE

No, no, different is good Buddy. Different is very good. It's just I never met anyone like you before. I was going out with Randy for a year and he never gave me anything. Except excuses of course. He would cheat on me, we'd break up, he'd come back and somehow, somehow I would always get back together with him. Did you ever have a relationship like that?

BUDDY

Well actually I, I never really had much luck with the girls back home.

JOVIE

You're kidding. A guy like you?

BUDDY

Yeah I know it's hard to believe. But back there I was just a nobody. Here, you kinda make me feel like a somebody.

JOVIE

Yeah?

BUDDY

Yeah somebody. Somebody special you know. When I'm with you I feel like, like I'm sitting on top of the world. Like, a star on the biggest Christmas tree.

JOVIE

(smiling at the thought)

A star on top of the biggest Christmas tree.

She smiles at Buddy.

JOVIE

Come here.

She grabs his hand and pulls him running.

BUDDY

Where we going? Where we going?

She laughs as they run through the night street. She comes to a sudden halt. She turns to him smiling:

JOVIE

Okay, close your eyes.

BUDDY

Close my eyes?

She nods.

BUDDY

Well alright.

He closes his eyes -- she leads him out from behind the building into an open center.

JOVIE

Okay. Open them.

Buddy opens his eyes -- shock.

HIS POV

The Christmas Tree at Rockefeller Center -- lit up, huge.

Buddy walks towards it in awe. Jovie follows him.

JOVIE

What do you think?

BUDDY

It's, it's. . .

He turns back to Jovie:

Jovie, tomorrow's Christmas Eve and in the past I've always kind of spent it by myself. Well there was my mom and Dad sure, but all the other guys had dates you know. It's the most magical time of the year and I just don't want to spend it alone again. I guess, I guess what I'm trying to say is Jovie. . . Would you be my date on Christmas Eve?

She looks deep into Buddy's eyes. She leans in close to him:

JOVIE

Sure, Buddy, sure. . .

She kisses him gently. He can't believe it -- he closes his eyes, kissing her back. Snow begins to fall.

INT. HACKETT APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

Snow falls in a steady stream outside the window.

Michael sleeps peacefully. As does Emily.

Walter wakes with a start -- he glances at the clock, 12:54.

He opens Michael's bedroom door, Buddy's bunk is empty.

THE LIVING ROOM

Walter sits restlessly waiting for Buddy. He glances at the clock. . . Police SIRENS are heard echoing outside, a car ALARM sounds. He nervously checks the window. He doesn't know what to do with himself, worrying about a son, obviously this is a new experience--

A FULL BOTTLE OF WINE

he pours himself a generous glass. More police SIRENS, GUNSHOTS are heard-- he pours himself another glass--

THE LIVING ROOM CLOCK

reads 2:30.

THE FRONT DOOR

is heard being UNLOCKED. Buddy walks in with a dreamy smile plastered to his face. Closing the door and leaning on it beaming. He walks over to the Christmas tree, staring at the twinkling star.

WALTER (O.S.)

Hey--

BUDDY

Aaah!!!

Buddy turns and falls into the Christmas tree, catching it before it tumbles over.

BUDDY

Oh Dad. I didn't, I didn't see ya there. You weren't waiting up were you?

Walter sits slumped in his pajamas, the wine bottle empty, he holds the final glass in his hand.

WALTER

Me? Wait up? No, no I was just, you know, up. So, how did it go?

BUDDY

Oh it went great. Those roses, great idea. She said she'd go out with me on Christmas Eve. It's all very exciting.

WALTER

Sure I can imagine. Your first girl. It doesn't get any better than that.

BUDDY

Kinda, kinda like you and mom.

WALTER

Yeah. Kinda like me and your mom.

Walter downs the rest of his drink. Buddy stares out into the falling snow.

BUDDY

What was she like?

Walter looks at Buddy, he thinks for a moment, gazing out into the snow.

WALTER

She was. . . amazing. I never met anyone so genuinely kind in my life. If she wasn't helping one cause it was another. I guess I was one of her causes. She thought she could change me, make me see the light. "Money isn't everything Walter." My god she was beautiful. I thought we would get married, but instead, she just dropped out of my life. Just like that. Without saying a word. I thought she joined the Peace Corp or something. Turns out she just had a baby.

He puts his glass down.

I guess she knew my plans didn't include a baby. I was gonna be a millionaire by the time I was thirty. I was really gonna be somebody-- Well I guess no one can predict the future. Alright. . .

He wavers out of his chair:

Time for--

He takes one step and falls flat out.

BUDDY

Bed?

INT. HACKET APARTMENT - MORNING

The morning light shines onto Walter, who lies completely unconscious on the couch. His mouth slung open, a blanket covers him.

THE TELEVISION

is being flipped from station to station.

Michael and Buddy sit on the couch in their pajamas. Michael works the remote.

Emily enters in her nurses uniform. She's obviously rushed, she throws some last minute things in her bag.

EMILY

Alright you two, I'm gonna be going. Now behave yourselves, I'll see you both bright and early tomorrow morning.

She kisses Michael on the cheek.

EMILY

And don't take advantage of your step father. Bye Buddy, have a wonderful Christmas Eve.

She heads quickly out the door.

BUDDY

Okay, you too. Bye.

She exits. Michael still blankly flips the channels.

BUDDY

Wow you know she's great. Hey I was thinking, maybe you and me could go to the park today and you know get some sleighs.

Michael continues to blankly flip the channels.

BUDDY

And you know. . . sleigh.

Michael flips the channel past Burl Ives' "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer"--

BUDDY

Hey what was that? Can you put it back?

Michael continues to flick--

BUDDY

Can you please put it back?

He continues to flick, passing it again--

BUDDY

Alright that's it.

Buddy jumps on Michael -- they struggle for the remote.

The phone RINGS. Michael, having the remote taken away, angrily gets up and walk over to the cordless. Buddy flicks it back to "Rudolph"--

MICHAEL

Yeah?

INTERCUT:
INT. GREENWAY PRESS

Fulton sits in the boardroom with several MEN in suits.

FULTON

Hello this is Fulton Greenway. Who's this?

MICHAEL

Michael.

FULTON

Well how ya doing there Michael? You all excited about Christmas?

MICHAEL

No.

FULTON

Well that's fine. Say is your dad there?

MICHAEL

No he's out of the country at the moment.

FULTON

Okay. How 'bout your step dad?

MICHAEL

Yeah. But he's unconscious from a drunken stupor.

FULTON

I see. Well then how about Buddy? Is he around?

MICHAEL

Hold on.

Michael throws the phone at Buddy. Buddy is caught up in "Rudoph" -- Hermie, the elf, talks to the head elf.

HERMIE

. . . I want to be a dentist.

BUDDY

A dentist?! What a freak.

(picking up the phone)

Hello.

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - MORNING

Buddy is escorted into the conference room.

A few BUSINESSMEN sit around the conference table. Fulton rises from his chair.

FULTON

Buddy! How's my favorite elf doing?

BUDDY

Oh okay, thanks.

FULTON

Good, good glad you could make it. Did you enjoy the party last night?

BUDDY

Oh yeah, it was really fun.

FULTON

Good, good. Well. . . coffee?

BUDDY

Aw no thanks.

FULTON

Alright then, I'll try and make this short. I know with it being Christmas Eve, you'll have a busy night ahead of you.

A few of businessmen CHUCKLE, Buddy sheepishly glances at them.

FULTON

We really just have a couple of formalities.

A man unclicks his briefcase and starts pulling out a contract.

FULTON

I'm leaving town tomorrow so I wanted to take care of this before I left. Can't just have our new star dangling in the breeze, can we?

BUDDY

No, I guess not.

The contract is placed before Buddy. He stares at it confused.

FULTON

It's the contracts.

BUDDY

The contracts?

FULTON

Yes, the contracts. Don't worry I talked to your father about it. He knows all about it. . . . It's legit.

The men in the room LAUGH heartily. Buddy still awkwardly stares at the papers.

FULTON

I imagine your father talked to you about them?

BUDDY

Yeah he uh. . . he mentioned them.

FULTON

Well? What did he say?

INT. HACKET APARTMENT - MORNING

The phone RINGS -- Loud.

Walter, still unconscious on the couch, wakes with a start as three phones are placed around his head. The phones RING!

WALTER

Michael, ya little. . .

He struggles to knock a phone off it's receiver--

He awkwardly grabs it, slowly, painfully bringing it to his ear:

WALTER

Yeah?

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - MORNING

Walter, haphazardly dressed, is escorted in. Fulton sits scowling.

WALTER

You wanted to see me sir?

FULTON

Do you know the smartest thing you ever did Walter?

WALTER

Excuse me?

FULTON

The smartest thing you ever did. Because I know mine. Or I just found it out. Evidently, it was hiring you.

WALTER

What?

FULTON

You heard me. The smartest thing I ever did was hiring you. Well you can't blame me I'm just a chimp, a first class ding-dong. Yeah if I were you I wouldn't want to be trapped here at this small, meaningless house, I would certainly try to get a better deal at a bigger house, that's what I would do. But then again, I'm just the jerk with the money, so what do I know?

Walter stands absolutely stunned.

WALTER

Uh there uh. . . there must be some, some misunderstanding.

FULTON

No, there's no misunderstanding Walter. You're fired. You're history. You're done.

CLOSE ON - WALTER

stunned, turning pale.

FULTON (O.S.)

And if you think you're taking your son with you, we've already got the contracts. A multi-book contract. Because, after all, you thought it was a wonderful idea. No you're the one taking the fall Hacket. No profits, no shares, nothing! You're finished!

THE LOBBY

Margery is on the phone as Walter staggers in front of her, completely dazed.

MARGERY

Oh Mr. Hacket, I've got Keebler on the line. They want to--

WALTER

The elf. . . where's the elf?

MARGERY

Mr. Buddy, oh I believe he said he was going sleighing.

WALTER

Sleighing?

MARGERY

In the park.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Snow falls.

Buddy holds a sleigh and speaks to an inanimate snowman.

BUDDY

Really, you don't have to be shy. All I want to know is if there are any really good slopes around here. You know, steep, fast, because frankly I'm having a little trouble building up steam?

INTERCUT - WALTER

pounding furiously through the park--passing kids playing--
couples strolling--carriages rolling--

Buddy starts to get impatient with the snowman:

BUDDY

Come on it's not like I'm asking for a birthday party or anything. All I wanna know is where I can find the good slopes.

Walter spots Buddy through the snow, talking to the snowman.

BUDDY

Look can't ya just point?

Buddy spots Walter walking towards him in a rush.

BUDDY

Hey Dad I can't get a word out of this guy.

Walter grabs Buddy roughly by the shirt:

WALTER

Are you a complete and total idiot?!

BUDDY

Is this a rhetorical question?

Walter shoves him away.

WALTER

No it's not a rhetorical question!

BUDDY

Oh, so do ya wanna sleigh?

WALTER

No I don't wanna sleigh! You know why?!

BUDDY

I could teach you.

WALTER

I don't want to learn! Because I just got fired!!!

BUDDY

You got fired?

WALTER

Yes, I got fired! And you know why?!

BUDDY

Poor management?

WALTER

No! It's not poor management! It's you! It's because of you! You told Greenway what I said about him! What I told you about him in the strictest of confidence! Why, in the world, would you tell him what I told you in the strictest of confidence?!

BUDDY

He asked.

WALTER

He asked?! You told him because he asked?!

BUDDY

I had no choice.

WALTER

What do you mean you didn't have a choice?! You could've not told him. You could've lied!

BUDDY

Elves don't lie Dad.

WALTER

Elves don't lie?! Elves don't lie!!! Come here!

He starts to go after Buddy, Buddy quickly starts to run around the snowman, Walter chases him in a circle.

BUDDY

Are you gonna spank me or something?

WALTER

No I'm gonna kill you! I'm gonna strangle you to death!

BUDDY

Well that seems a little extreme.

WALTER

Oh yeah?! Well I gave you life, I can take it back!

BUDDY

Indian giver!

WALTER

Indian giver?!

Walter jumps through the snowman, tackling Buddy to the snow. Walter sits on top of him, pushing him up and back into the white ground.

WALTER

You were a mistake! Do you hear me?! You were a mistake then and you're a mistake now!

Buddy stares confused.

BUDDY

What, what are you getting at?

Walter fiercely pushes him and back into the snow.

WALTER

I want you out of my life!!! Just go away! Do you understand?! I don't want to see you, I don't want to hear you, I don't want to know you. Understand?!

BUDDY

But, but what about the dad, son thing? You started calling me son.

WALTER

Because you were going to make me rich you idiot! That's all! It was about the money!

Buddy looks up at him meekly:

BUDDY

You can borrow money.

WALTER

I don't want to borrow money! I want you to disappear! Get it?! Forever! I don't want to have anything to do with you, okay?! Nothing! Just, just go back to the North Pole. Where you belong!

Buddy looks at him on the verge of tears.

BUDDY

But I. . . I don't fit in there.

WALTER

Well then, I guess you don't fit in anywhere!

Walter, disgusted, gets off of Buddy. Buddy looks destroyed.

BUDDY'S POV

Walter storms away, slowly disappearing into the falling snow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - DUSK

The snow continues to fall. Buddy walks sluggishly along and into:

INT. CABARET - DUSK

"White Christmas" plays on the juke box. Buddy lethargically approaches the old BARTENDER.

BUDDY

Excuse me. Have you seen Jovie?

BARTENDER

Jovie? Jovie the singer?

BUDDY

Uh huh.

BARTENDER

Yeah she left.

BUDDY

What do ya mean she left? I was supposed to pick her up here.

BARTENDER

Well maybe she got confused.

BUDDY

What do you mean?

BARTENDER

I mean some fella with tattoos come in with a bouquet of roses and she left with him.

CLOSE ON - BUDDY

the color draining out of his face. The sound of the bar and music filter out. Silence, his eyes seem to be spinning, he looks completely, utterly lost--

BARTENDER (O.S.)

Say are you alright there Buddy?

"White Christmas" and the sound of the bar come flooding back as Buddy turns to the bartender dazed.

BUDDY

What?

BARTENDER

Are ya alright? You look a little bit green.

BUDDY

Oh yeah. Never been better. You serve alcohol here right?

INT. HACKET APARTMENT - NIGHT

Michael sits in the same position -- on the couch with the remote blankly flipping the channels. He stops on the tail end of a "Johnny Gun" commercial--

THE TELEVISION

a BOY hides behind a tree wearing protective headgear and a camouflage suit, he pulls up his "Johnny Gun" and fires, splattering paint on another BOY wearing the same paraphernalia.

SPLATTERED BOY

Aw man!

The boy who fired the shot thrusts his hand in a clenched fist:

FIRING BOY

Yes!

A STILL

the "Johnny Gun" sits in a long rectangular box next to the protective helmet and camouflage suit.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Johnny Gun -- it's fun and safe!

JINGLE SINGER (V.O.)

From--

Michael flicks off the TV.

MICHAEL'S POV

underneath the Christmas tree -- a wrapped present, shaped like a long rectangular box.

He looks to the bedroom door -- closed.

He quickly grabs: Clear tape, A scissors--

And moves stealthily over to the Christmas tree. He once again looks to the bedroom door -- closed.

He takes the scissors and carefully slices two small slits in the wrapping paper, with great anticipation, he lifts it up -- his anticipation drops.

He tears open the wrapping paper to reveal a "Junior Xylophone Kit".

He stares at it in disbelief -- then something catches his eye and anger begins to seep in.

MICHAEL'S POV

the gift card on the wrapping paper is flapped open reading
"To: Michael, From: Walter & Buddy"

THE HACKET BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walter stands facing the window, snow falls.

He stares at his prom picture. His face strangely
remorseful.

CLOSE ON - THE PICTURE

the young, happy couple -- Buddy's mother radiant.

He stares at it -- a great sadness coming over his face--

The phone RINGS. . . and RINGS. Walter quietly picks up:

WALTER

Hello.

INTERCUT:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Emily stands in her nurses uniform on the counter phone.

EMILY

Hey how's it going over there? You and
Michael getting along okay?

WALTER

(reserved)

Yeah. Yeah everything's fine.

EMILY

(concerned)

Are you sure? You don't sound right.

WALTER

No, no everything's fine. It's just. . .
it's just been a long day.

EMILY

And nothing's wrong?

WALTER

No, no. Everything's fine. Me and Michael
were just about to have dinner.

EMILY
(relaxing)

Okay. What about Buddy?

Walter pauses, looking back down at the photo:

WALTER

What about him?

EMILY

Did he come back with his girlfriend yet?

WALTER

No. Not yet.

EMILY

Oh well don't worry, I'm sure he's on his way.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Buddy sits drinking on a bar stool. He looks wobbly as he slams down his glass on the counter. He slightly slurs his words:

BUDDY

Another.

BARTENDER

Hey buddy this the first time you ever drank?

BUDDY

Yeah what of it?

He stumbles back from his stool, putting up his fists:

BUDDY

You want a piece a me?!

BARTENDER

No I'm just thinking ya better slow down.

BUDDY

Don't tell me what to do! I'm sick of people telling me what to do! Fill her up Mac. The usual.

BARTENDER

Alright buddy, you asked for it.

The bartender turns to get Buddy's drink. He fills a bucket glass with orange juice and splashes in a few drops of vodka. He turns back and puts it on the counter in front of Buddy.

BARTENDER

Here ya go. The usual.

Buddy sucks down the drink and slams it back on the counter.

BUDDY

Another.

BARTENDER

Hey buddy come on man. Don't you think it's time you went home? You know it is Christmas Eve.

BUDDY

I know it's Christmas Eve! Don't you think I know it's Christmas Eve?! And I wouldn't be here if I had a home, but I don't, thank you very much. I don't have anything. I'm a misfit. I don't fit in anywhere.

BARTENDER

Come on buddy--

BUDDY

Aw don't come on Buddy me.

Buddy staggers back from the bar.

BUDDY

All I wanted to do was make a difference. Help out, be a Little Helper. Be somebody. But now I know, now I know I'm just nobody.

A DRUNK at the end of the bar chimes in:

DRUNK

Hey welcome to the club.

BARTENDER

(to the drunk)

Shut up!

(back to Buddy)

Hey listen kid ya had a couple bad breaks, that's all. Everybody gets in a rut. Your girl skitted out with somebody else, so what, there's other girls. It ain't the end of the world.

BUDDY

It ain't the end of the world? It's Christmas Eve, I'm all alone in Manhattan, my biological father disowned me, my girl dumped me and I don't fit in anywhere. That sounds pretty close to me.

A SPOTLIGHT

hits a CROONER on the stage singing:

CROONER

Silver bells. Silver Bells. It's Christmas time in the city--

Buddy cringes and races for the door.

BARTENDER

Buddy! Hey buddy! Only the advice was free!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Snow falls. The wind viciously blows. Buddy trudges against it, the snow blowing into him. "Silver Bells" reverberates hellishly in his head--He begins to move quicker past store shop windows--

--A sign reading "Merry Christmas"

--A mechanical Santa waving--

--A large poster of a family huddled around a Christmas tree opening presents--

Window after window, quicker, quicker -- "Silver Bells" growing louder and louder until--

BUDDY

sweating, gasping, runs into an EXTREME CLOSE SHOT.

Silence. Except for the howl of the wind. Out of breath, he looks up towards the falling snow. He turns, spotting something, he moves closer--

A BOOK STORE WINDOW

filled with a display of "Elf" books.

HIS POV - CLOSE ON

the drawing on the cover of the book -- Buddy cheerfully happy in his elf suit holding a present.

He glances away to see himself reflected in the glass: dressed in a business suit, disheveled, hair blowing recklessly in the wind. . . An elevator DING is heard--

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - NIGHT

CLOSE ON - BUDDY'S WING TIPPED SHOES

exit the elevator and stride through the office. Opening a door, a light is flicked on, as he strides over to a desk and opens a drawer--

The curled elf shoes are placed on the desk.

INT. SEEDY APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small, disgusting apartment filled with records and flyers for the band, "The Butt Uglies" . A bouquet of roses sits on top of a pile of beer bottles.

Randy sits on the couch with his shirt off drinking a beer. Jovie decorates a scrawny Christmas tree in the corner.

RANDY

Doesn't this feel right? I don't even know how I ever survive without you. You know?

Her eyes distant, she stares at the pathetic tree.

JOVIE

Yeah.

RANDY

I mean we are just so right for each other.

Jovie hesitantly glances around the sordid apartment.

RANDY

I don't know who we kid when we bust up. You can't deny fate.

He finishes the beer and tosses it in the pile.

RANDY

I guess seeing you with another guy just really drove me nuts. Expecially a real loser like that guy. I knew he was just to

RANDY (CONT'D)

get my attention. And it worked. What were you ever thinking going out with a guy like that for?

She holds the star to the Christmas tree -- she stares at it.

JOVIE

I don't know. I guess. . . I guess the top of the world.

RANDY

What?

THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

in the distance. It's upper windows are lit up green to form a huge Christmas tree.

Snow pounds down.

CLOSER

Buddy in full elf regalia sadly stares out of the huge electric Christmas tree.

POP!!! Champagne streams out of a bottle--

INT. GREENWAY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A vast hotel room overlooking the city.

Festive MUSIC plays to a far less informal gathering of bodacious WOMEN and young drunk EXECUTIVES.

Fulton, clothes disheveled exits the bedroom with a younger woman. The men in the room start jokingly APPLAUDING, CHANTING for a speech. Fulton merrily gestures for quiet.

FULTON

Well we've had another successful year--

A party HORN blows. LAUGHTER. Rice is thrown. Fulton cheerfully pats down with his hands for quiet.

FULTON

An extremely successful year and I'd like to thank you all for coming to this little get

FULTON (CONT'D)

together and of course for making me a lot of money. I know that--

A man looking out of Fulton's telescope looks up from the eyepiece in disbelief:

MAN

Mr. Greenway.

FULTON

That--

MAN

Mr. Greenway.

Fulton glances angrily at the man at the telescope.

FULTON

I know--

MAN

Hey Mr. Greenway.

FULTON

What?! What is it?! Can't you see I'm in the middle of something?

MAN

Your elf.

FULTON

What? What about him?!

A DRAWING

of Buddy talking to Santa in Santa's office -- It's caption:

"--when I took it I didn't know it was your sleigh, honest. And, and elves don't lie Santa--"

The phone RINGS.

INT. HACKET APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter, stares dull-eyed at the picture book, lethargically he answers:

WALTER

Hello? . . . What?!

THE BEDROOM DOOR

swings open. Walter rushes out into the living room, grabbing his coat.

WALTER

Michael get your--

Every last Christmas present is ripped open -- The living room is filled with torn up wrapping paper.

WALTER

What's all this?

Michael sits angrily flipping channels.

MICHAEL

What do you care?!

WALTER

Michael, I care. But get your jacket, we'll talk about it on the way.

MICHAEL

The way where? Are we going to another party?

WALTER

No of course not. It's just your brother's on top of the Empire State Building.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

Buddy in his elf suit wavers in the snow blown wind on top of the curved protective fence.

Fulton and his executive lackeys stand on the observation deck desperately trying to talk him down:

FULTON

Please Buddy, be reasonable! You've got so much to live for. You're the number one star of Greenway Press!

EXECUTIVE LACKEYS

Absolutely! A-number one! Numero Uno!

FULTON

Nobody's bigger than you, you're gonna be bigger than Dr. Seuss!

EXECUTIVE LACKEYS

Much bigger! A giant! The man's a grape next to you!

Buddy tearfully looks out into the vast snow covered city.

BUDDY

I'm sorry Mr. Greenway.

FULTON

Sorry? Sorry?!

He starts to charge the fence, a GUARD holds him back.

FULTON

Why you ungrateful green snot! After all I've done for you?! You can't just skip out on me like this! We've got a deal! If you die, I'll sue! Do you hear me?! I'll sue!!!

Two EXECUTIVES quietly converse in a corner:

EXECUTIVE 1

(sotto voce)

If he jumps it'll kill sales.

EXECUTIVE 2

(sotto voce)

Yeah. And probably him too.

A CAB

is stopped by a police barricade. A gathering of PEOPLE around the barricade. The CABBIE turns back to Walter and Michael.

CABBIE

Police blocked off the area pal. This is as close as we're gonna get.

Walter and Michael quickly get out the cab, Walter pays him and then looks up to the Empire State Building--

WALTER

. . . Oh no.

WALTER'S POV

Buddy stands atop the huge electric Christmas tree.

A NEWS HELICOPTER

flies circling the area.

NEWS CAMERA POV

Inside the helicopter, a NEWSWOMAN speaks to the camera:

NEWSWOMAN

Chuck, apparently it's a man dressed as an elf. A man dressed as an elf and he's standing atop the Empire State Building. We've got initial reports that there was some kind of falling out at Macy's, but nothing as yet has been confirmed. Repeat nothing has been confirmed--

OBSERVATION DECK

a dim EXECUTIVE leans close to the restrained Fulton.

DIM EXECUTIVE

Sir this really isn't very good for publicity.

Fulton slowly, angrily looks at him.

THE NEWSWOMAN

on camera:

NEWSWOMAN

Now we are getting word that the jumper is a man named Buddy Elfiwitz--

The newswoman is flicked to another station, apparently we are watching a TV--

JOVIE (O.S.)

Wait! Wait! Put that back!

INT. RANDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Randy lies slumped on the couch, a beer in one hand, the remote in the other. Jovie rushes over to him grabbing the remote and flicking back the channel--

THE TELEVISION

a jittery helicopter shot -- the spotlight illuminates Buddy atop the electric Christmas tree.

NEWSWOMAN (V.O.)

I would imagine Mr. Elfiwitz obviously wants to make some kind of statement, dressing up like an elf and doing this on Christmas Eve.

Jovie is stunned as she watches.

RANDY

What? You know that guy?

Tears start to well up in Jovie's eyes, until she lets out a scream:

JOVIE

Buddy!!!

EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

Buddy turns quickly to the observation deck.

Walter stands with Michael looking up at Buddy.

WALTER

Don't do it Buddy.

BUDDY

(teary-eyed)

Why are you here?

WALTER

Because. . . because I'm, I'm your father.

BUDDY

My father? You're not my father! You don't care about me! All you care about is making money.

WALTER

Okay I deserve that. But I was mad and I was wrong. I saw you standing up here just now and, and--

BUDDY

And what? You saw your meal ticket swaying in the breeze.

WALTER

No I saw my son swaying in the breeze. That's what I saw. My son. You're my son Buddy.

BUDDY

You expect me to believe that? I might not be the smartest guy in the world, but I'm not an idiot! Do you hear me? I'm not an idiot!

WALTER

You're right, you're right. I am. I'm the idiot. I'm the one. I didn't know how to have a son Buddy. But I think, I think--I think I'm ready to learn.

BUDDY

You're ready to learn? And what about the job thing?

WALTER

I don't care about the job Buddy. I don't care about Greenway. I don't care about the book. I care about you. And I can't lose you Buddy. I lost your mom a long time ago, I can't lose you now.

BUDDY

But I'm, I'm just a misfit.

WALTER

Buddy, this is Manhattan. We're all misfits.

Buddy looks down at him wavering, then he turns back to the city.

WALTER

Buddy please, give me a second chance. Please. I mean isn't giving what Christmas is all about?

BUDDY

Christmas?

Buddy looks hard out into the city -- the snow falls -- he steps dangerously forward--

BUDDY

I don't believe in Christmas.

A BLAST OF WIND

Santa's sleigh rockets past Buddy, descending quickly like a crashing plane.

The people on the roof, mouths agape, stand in silent disbelief.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP, THE NORTH POLE

Sirens WHOOP--

Mr. Elfman and another Senior ELF stand over a large circular ball showing Santa crashing into Central Park. The Senior Elf turns angrily to Mr. Elfman:

SENIOR ELF

I thought you gave Rudolph the non drowsy formula dust?!

MR. ELFMAN

Oh my god, I musta mixed up bottles!

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer, looks bleary-eyed and drowsy, his nose barely dim, he SNEEZES--

The sleigh tangled around the cast iron "Alice in Wonderland" statue -- Alice now bent off her mushroom. Santa pushes himself out of the snow.

THE NEWS HELICOPTER

shaken from the sleigh, tries to straighten itself out. The newswoman trying to maintain cool, talking to the camera, as the helicopter bobs dangerously.

NEWSWOMAN

We don't know what just past us! But it was flying at an incredible speed! An incredible speed and apparently out of control. We'll--

EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

an executive looks through an observation deck telescope:

EXECUTIVE

They're in the park! They crashed in the park!

Buddy listened stunned.

BUDDY

(to himself)

Santa.

He has to do something, he looks around--

HIS POV

the news helicopter steadies itself below him.

Wide-eyed, he jumps--

Walter rushes to the fence:

WALTER

Buddy!!!

THE CROWD

below GASPS.

Buddy catches hold of the helicopter's landing bar. The newswoman looks down in disbelief to the dangling Buddy.

BUDDY

Central Park please.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

A COP has Santa hands spread against the back of his police car, he pats him down:

COP ONE

Yeah I don't care who you are. You can't just go around destroying public property. You know how fast you musta been going to level this statue?

SANTA

Pretty fast?

COP ONE

Yeah that's right, pretty fast.

Another COP looks at the sleigh and the reindeer:

COP TWO

You got a license for this thing here?

SANTA

Officer you don't understand--

COP TWO

And what about these retarded looking horses?

SANTA

Officer, it's Christmas Eve--

COP ONE

Yeah I know it's Christmas Eve. It's Christmas Eve and we're out here dealing with idiots like you when our families are spending the night alone. So if you think you're getting off on some Christmas cheer, think again fat man.

He starts taking out his handcuffs.

SANTA

Officer please, you can't arrest me!

COP ONE

Oh no? Who's gonna stop me?

GREEN FEET

land with a THUD behind the officer. The officer turns to see Buddy

COP ONE

Ah Christ, here come the elves.

SANTA

Buddy?!

BUDDY

Officer you have to let this man go. If you don't, there won't be a Christmas.

COP ONE

Alright that's it. The both a yas are coming in!

The other officer quickly approaches Buddy.

BUDDY

Officer I'm warning you.

COP ONE

You're warning me?!

The news helicopter hovers above, it's spotlight on the scenario below.

NEWSWOMAN

Buddy's now having words with the officers, I can't tell exactly what's going on, but--

The officer goes to grab Buddy.

BUDDY

Okay I warned you.

Buddy grabs the officer and slams him into the police door. Quickly he tackles the other officer.

NEWSWOMAN

Oh dear, it's a fight!

INT. POLICE PRECINCT

An older CAPTAIN, watches the broadcast -- Buddy fighting with the other officer. He angrily rises out of his chair, grabbing the dispatch speaker:

CAPTAIN

Attention all units--

Police cars launch out of the precinct.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A cab carrying Walter and Michael slaloms dangerously through traffic.

Walter and Michael slide back and forth on the leather seat.

The cab slams to a halt on the south end of the park -- Walter and Michael are slammed into the protective glass. The CABBIE turns around.

CABBIE

Okay Jack, that's fifty bucks. Empire State Building to Central Park in under a minute. I'll let you in on a little secret, I got a special engine in this bad boy, it's illegal, but it's special.

Walter tries to catch his breath:

WALTER

Can you take us into the park?

CABBIE

Yeah I can--

WALTER

No I mean through the actual park?

CABBIE

Through the park? What are you nuts?

WALTER

It's worth another hundred bucks.

CABBIE

Alright then.

He slams the cab into drive onto the curb--

EXT. CENTRAL PARK

Santa is finishing untangling and straightening the reindeer.

Buddy is finishing handcuffing the unconscious officers to the wheel of their police car.

Headlights hit Buddy and Santa, they look up--

THEIR POV

a car speeds towards them fast across the snow.

Buddy steps in front of Santa, as if to protect him again.

The car comes to a sliding halt as Walter and Michael pop out.

Buddy is relieved. Walter starts towards Buddy--

CABBIE

Hey, hey!

Walter pulls out a hundred and hands it to the Cabbie.

WALTER

Thanks.

CABBIE

No problem. Merry Christmas.

The Cab slaloms away. Walter walks up to Buddy. He stands looking at him, face to face.

WALTER

You know, you really don't have to jump off of buildings to get my attention. I meant what I said back there Buddy. You're my son.

Buddy looks at him for a beat, emotion coming over him, he leaps into his arms. They hug.

MICHAEL

stares in disbelief at Santa adjusting the reigns on his sleigh. Santa notices him watching and smiles at him.

SANTA

Well hello there. You must be Michael.

MICHAEL

Umm. . . yeah.

SANTA

I heard you didn't believe in me, that's very disappointing Michael. Very disappointing.

MICHAEL

Well now, now that I have the facts in front of me--

Santa begins laughing his jolly LAUGH--

BUDDY AND WALTER

release their hug, staring wistfully at each other for a moment.

Buddy turns back to Santa bringing Walter.

BUDDY

Santa. This, this is my Dad.

SANTA

Hello Mr. Hacket, you must be very proud.

Walter is momentarily speechless--

SIRENS are heard fast approaching. They turn--

THEIR POV

a half dozen police cars slalom quickly towards them.

They stare at the approaching police cars for a moment.

BUDDY

Maybe we'd better go.

HOOVES

pound through fresh snow.

Santa drives the sleigh through the park -- the police in hot pursuit, their colored lights spinning behind them.

Walter, Michael and Buddy sit in the sleigh behind Santa. Michael enjoying every second, Walter not. Buddy moves up to speak to Santa:

BUDDY

What's wrong? Why don't we just take off?

SANTA

It's Rudolph. He's not up to flying speed!

Rudolph, eyes watering, nose flickering red, huffs and puffs through the park.

A CAB

pulls off to the curb of Fifth Avenue at 76th Street. Jovie gets out of the cab, handing the Spanish CABBIE some money.

JOVIE

You sure he came here?

SPANISH CABBIE

That's what the newslady say lady.

Santa's sleigh comes crashing out of the park, whirring past Jovie -- Jovie glimpses Buddy -- as the sleigh goes down Fifth Avenue followed by the trailing police cars.

SPANISH CABBIE

You see.

The cabbie takes off for another fare.

JOVIE

(calling after the cab)

No. Wait! Wait!

The cab's gone. Jovie jumps into the street desperately hailing another cab. Another cab pulls up -- she hops in:

JOVIE

Follow that sleigh.

Walter's "special engine" Cabbie smiles:

CABBIE

You got it.

He floors it -- thrusting Jovie back with the G-force--

SANTA'S SLEIGH

passes traffic, moving quickly down Fifth Avenue--

The police are on their radios:

CAR ONE

In pursuit of a sleigh, repeat, suspect in a red sleigh--

CAR TWO

Yeah that's right. Santa Claus is coming to, to 72nd and Fifth.

THE NEWS HELICOPTER

flies above the chase.

NEWS WOMAN

I've never seen anything like this in my life! They're chasing Santa--

TOP OF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

a radio plays the news woman's report. Fulton looks triumphantly through a telescope:

FULTON

Now this! This is publicity!

THE SLEIGH

Buddy approaches the perspiring Santa, doing the best he can to keep the reindeer moving:

SANTA

They're gaining on us. They're really gaining on us! Good gracious, they'll stop Christmas.

BUDDY

Stop Christmas?!

Buddy moves back to Santa's red bag, he searches quickly through it, and finding something -- he pulls out a "Johnny Gun".

BUDDY

Nobody's stopping nothin'.

Walter looks at him nauseously:

WALTER

Oh god.

Buddy perches the "Johnny Gun" over the back of the sleigh, aiming it at the police cars.

CAR ONE

He's got a gun! Repeat, he's got a gun!

Buddy starts firing paint pellets at the cars -- hitting the hoods -- pedestrians -- other cars--

The police start FIRING back, but with real bullets--

"THE MITZVAH TRUCK"

rumbles down Fifth Avenue blasting Israeli MUSIC -- several long-bearded, orthodox RABBIS sit inside -- The sleigh whizzes past them, Buddy firing out the back, the police firing at the sleigh. The rabbi's shake their heads.

THE RABBI DRIVER

Goyum.

THE SLEIGH

Buddy runs out of pellets and ducks back into the sleigh to reload.

Walter, now very pale, leans to Buddy:

WALTER

Buddy I know this is a bad time to start giving parental advice. But they're not firing fake bullets! They're firing real bullets! Do you understand that?! Real bullets!

MICHAEL

Aw this is so cool.

BUDDY

Don't worry Pop. The situation's under control.

Buddy finishes loading with a CLACK of the paint pellet clip into the gun and pops back up to the back of the sleigh.

He flicks up the gun's sight, aims carefully and--

PAINT SPLATTERS

all over the lead police cars windshield.

DRIVER

Damn it! Damn it! I--I can't see a thing!

The police car SLAMS into a construction area -- other police cars SLAM into him--

Buddy yells down to Walter and Michael triumphantly:

BUDDY

Ya see!

Walter peeks over the sleigh, Michael pops up.

THEIR POV

no police cars.

A slight grin of relief on Walter's face until--

A new squad of police cars swerve around the corner.

Walter's grin disappears. He glances at Buddy.

BUDDY

They sure have a lot of those don't they?

WALTER

Yeah. They've got a few.

Buddy quickly moves up to Santa.

BUDDY

How we doing?

SANTA

Not good. I don't know how much longer we can--

A cab suddenly whips off a side street and careens off the side of the sleigh -- Buddy and Santa try and maintain their balance as the cab straightens itself out--

THE CAB

Jovie rises, hair in her face, from the cab floor.

JOVIE

Well, I guess that was a short cut.

The cabbie, enjoying every second of the ride, tries to maintain the road:

CABBIE

You know it.

Buddy looks to the cab and sees Jovie rolling down her window.

BUDDY

Jovie?!

JOVIE

Buddy!

WALTER

Aw geez--

The cab rides next to the sleigh. They yell to each other through the wind, snow and traffic.

JOVIE

Buddy, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I made a awful mistake. I don't want to go back to my old life! I don't want to go back to the way things were! I want to be with you.

Buddy looks down at her incredulously:

BUDDY

You want to be with me?!

JOVIE

Yes Buddy, I want to be with you!

BUDDY

What about the tattoo guy?

JOVIE

We're done Buddy. I don't want him. I want, I want you.

BUDDY

Why?

JOVIE

Because, because you're just not like the other guys Buddy. You're, you're magic. You haven't found another date for Christmas Eve have you?

BUDDY

No.

JOVIE

Well then, I'd love to join you. If, if you'll have me.

Buddy stares down at her undecided.

JOVIE

Maybe we can get a soda or something.

Buddy smiles and reaches out his hand to Jovie. Jovie smiles and carefully opens her door. She hands the Cabbie a twenty:

JOVIE

(to the Cabbie)

Thanks for the ride. Could we possibly get a little bit closer?

CABBIE

Yeah, sure thing.

The Cabbie swerves left into the sleigh, throwing Jovie out of the door, she SCREAMS -- but is caught by the arms of Buddy -- her feet still linger in the cab as she is stretched between the two -- Jovie looks fearfully ahead--

HER POV

a MAN on a motorcycle is directly ahead of her, they're gaining on him fast.

CABBIE

Aw man, isn't that always the way.

Buddy quickly gives a quick yank pulling her into the sleigh, the motorcycle is passed and the cabbie swerves away with a wave.

THE SLEIGH

Jovie, frightened to death, lies panting heavily on the floor of the sleigh. Buddy non-chalantly picks her up for introductions:

BUDDY

Dad, Michael this is Jovie.

WALTER

Pleased to meet ya.

MICHAEL

Hey.

Jovie manages a smile and jittery wave.

SANTA (O.S.)

Buddy!

BUDDY
(to Jovie)

Be right back.

Walter and Michael stare at the jittering Jovie.

WALTER

So are you from around here?

Buddy rushes up to Santa.

SANTA

There's no way Rudolph's taking off! It's just not gonna happen! We're not gonna make it!

Buddy, thinking hard, looks back at the closing police cars. Things look bad. The noise fades down to only a slow, distorted wind--

BUDDY'S POV -- SLOW MOTION

Michael looking expectantly at Buddy--

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I'm sorry I ever doubted you Buddy.

ECHOES into Walter looking proudly at him--

WALTER (V.O.)

You're my son Buddy.

ECHOES into Jovie looking at him lovingly--

JOVIE (V.O.)

I want you. You're magic.

"You're magic" echoes into REGULAR MOTION and SOUND--

Buddy quickly glances down to his waist. Reaching under his shirt end, he fumbles for something, and then, he pulls out something -- the tied pouch of "Magic Dust". He smiles.

BUDDY

(confidently to Santa)

Don't worry. We'll make it.

Buddy quickly moves past Santa onto the top of the sleigh and leaps onto the reign between the back two reindeer. He disappears.

SANTA

Buddy!

Walter, Michael and Jovie stand in great concern.

BUDDY'S HAND

reaches onto the harness of the reindeer and pulls himself up between the two. He clenches the "Magic Dust" between his teeth and proceeds to pull himself along the reigns between the reindeers -- the snow and wind blows furiously in his face.

Rudolph, obviously on his last legs, pants furiously along.

THE POLICE CARS

are closing fast. An OFFICER diligently loads his gun inside an approaching police car.

SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Elves silently look into the ball with great concern.

TOP OF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

the executives look silently through the telescopes.

BUDDY

using all his strength climbs over the reigns, progressing slowly towards Rudolph, only four reindeer away -- a bump -- Buddy swings under the reigns, holding on for dear life, only a few inches off the street.

Walter holds Jovie and Michael.

Buddy continues on, under the reigns, pulling himself along, his hands slipping from the sweat and the snow--

HIS POV

Rudolph is only a few feet away. But other squad cars some thirty feet away barricade the end of Fifth Avenue, just before the Washington Square Park Arch.

Buddy struggles on, pulling himself up and close to Rudolph as--

The police cars start to close on both sides of the sleigh. They pass Walter, Michael and Jovie--

Buddy unbinds the "Magic Dust" string with his teeth and with his last effort, lunges forward, tossing the sparkling dust all over Rudolph--

THE POLICE CARS

Even up with Santa, have guns trained on him from both directions.

POLICE OFFICER

Freeze it fat boy!

Santa raises his arms, just as--

THE DUST

magically glows over Rudolph -- his nose bursts into a magnificent red, his hooves quickening -- they pull away from the chasing police cars and speed towards the police car barricade--

BUDDY'S POV

the barricade only feet away -- Rudolph with a burst of speed takes off above the cars. Buddy falls, hanging onto the reigns as they fly over the cops and through the Washington Square Park arch. The barricade COPS look on in disbelief.

The trailing cops also look on in disbelief -- then down to the barricade in front of them.

OFFICER

Ah geez.

The police cars SLAM into the other police cars.

THE FLYING SLEIGH

Buddy struggles on the reigns, the moving hooves going past him to and fro -- he manages to pull himself up, panting, sweating, he climbs aboard Rudolph.

Walter and Jovie look down in awe -- the city below.
Michael is leaning over the side.

MICHAEL

Wow, this is so cool! You can see the whole
city from up here! Look there's where mom
works! Mom!!! Hey Mom!!!

MANHATTAN ADOPTION

Emily rocks a COOING baby in their crib. The sleigh passes
in the window behind her to the baby's delight.

THE SLEIGH

Walter pulls Michael back inside:

WALTER

Michael, you're mother's got enough problems.
Let's, let's just enjoy the ride.

Santa's sleigh whips through the Manhattan night sky. And
over:

London, Big Ben. India, The Taj Mahal. Brazil, The Virgin
Mary. . .

The sleigh silhouettes against the moon, Buddy still on
Rudolph -- FREEZE FRAME.

TITLE OVER FRAME --

"IT WAS A LONG NIGHT. . ."

Beat.

"BUT SANTA DID HAVE SOME HELP"

A ROOFTOP

Walter, Michael, Jovie and Buddy fill Santa's bag as he
prepares to drop down a chimney--

Carolyn, the girl from the doctor's office sleeps -- Buddy
quickly wraps a "Suzie Talks A Lot" doll, smiling, he tosses
it into Santa's bag--

POP!!! Champagne streams out of a bottle--

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Elves, standing on platforms, pour champagne on Buddy and his guests.

Buddy is besieged with congratulatory handshakes. Mr. Elfman walks begrudgingly:

MR. ELFMAN

You did a, a, a really--Ya did good.

BUDDY

Thanks Mr. Elfman, that's nice of you to say. Say, and I hope it works at for ya when this year's performance is reviewed by the board. It would be a shame if you lost your tenure. But then again, these things happen. Gotta run.

Buddy moves out of frame as champagne is dumped on the grimacing Mr. Elfman.

Buddy runs up and kneeling hugs Cindy and Stanley. Tears of joy.

BUDDY

Mom! Dad!

STANLEY

We knew you could do it son.

BUDDY

Thanks Dad.

CINDY

Oh it's so good to have you back.

BUDDY

It's good to be back mom.

Walter approaches, Buddy rises.

BUDDY

Mom, Dad, this is him. This is my other Dad.

WALTER

You must be very proud.

CINDY

Oh yes. And you must be too.

WALTER

Oh yes, that's my little Buddy.

Buddy approaches Jovie, who now is wearing a green derby.

JOVIE

Why Mr. Elfiwitz you really know how to show a lady a good time.

BUDDY

Well I, try my best.

They kiss in front of a huge Christmas tree. CHEERS and rice throwing.

Cindy stares critically:

CINDY

Who's she?

WALTER

Oh that's Jovie. She's very nice.

CINDY

Does she come from a good family?

STANLEY

Don't meddle.

CINDY

Who's meddling? I'm asking a question. Can't I ask a question?

Walter walks away as the Elfiwitz's continue to argue. He approaches Michael who is BLOWING a noise maker.

WALTER

Hey--

Walter pulls a "Johnny Gun" from underneath his jacket and hands it to Michael.

WALTER

I saved one from the trip.

Michael looks at it happily shocked.

WALTER

Just don't tell your mom okay. She'll kill us. Deal?

MICHAEL

Deal.

Walter puts his arm around Michael's shoulder and picks up a noise maker. They both BLOW--

Jovie stands on stage in her green derby singing: "Santa Claus is Coming to Town". The elves dance and celebrate.
 FREEZE FRAME -- The song continues:

TITLE --

"AND SO, EVERYTHING SEEMED TO WORK IT'S WAY THROUGH."

FREEZE FRAME -- Walter, Michael and Emily sit happily gathered around their Christmas tree. Wrapping paper everywhere.

TITLE:

"WALTER AND MICHAEL BLAMED THE WRAPPING PAPER MESS ON A STRAY CAT AND THE HACKET'S ENJOYED THEIR MOST WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS."

FREEZE FRAME -- Fulton has his arm chummily around Walter, they both smoke cigars.

TITLE --

"MR. GREENWAY, ON BUDDY'S INSISTANCE, GAVE WALTER HIS OLD JOB BACK. AND EVEN A SUBSTANTIAL RAISE."

FREEZE FRAME -- Buddy on a crowded subway in his elf suit, reading a newspaper -- others look at him suspiciously.

TITLE:

"BUDDY, HE COMMUTES TO THE CITY EVERY MONTH OR SO FOR STORY MEETINGS"

FREEZE FRAME -- Buddy and the Hacket family play a game of twister.

TITLE:

"AND TO SPEND TIME WITH THE HACKETS."

FREEZE FRAME -- Jovie, now in an elf suit, sits behind Buddy on a sleigh as they whiz past two angry snowmen.

TITLE --

"BUT THE REST OF THE TIME BUDDY SPENDS ELFING AROUND WITH JOVIE."

FREEZE FRAME -- The Elfiwitz kitchen. Cindy standing over pot, points into a recipe book, for her pupil Jovie.

TITLE --

"THE ELFIWITZ'S EVEN ACCEPTED HER AS ONE
OF THEIR OWN."

FREEZE FRAME -- A split screen of the two happy families.

TITLE --

"AND SO ALL WAS WELL."

Beat.

"UNTIL, OF COURSE, THAT NEXT CHRISTMAS."

The families DISSOLVE TO:

A colored drawing of the same image -- a drawing one might
find in a illustrated children's book. Pan down to the
TITLE--

"BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY."

A hand closes Buddy's "Elf" book. The MUSIC rises.

FADE OUT