

CU: A MODERN-LOOKING CHRISTMAS BOOK ENTITLED:
ELF

A Christmas book entitled "ELF" sits on a table, a drawing of 6'2" BUDDY THE ELF (the guy we've seen from all the trailers and posters) is on the cover.

We push in on the book and it magically flips open to the first page: a drawing of small Papa Elf in his wonderful work shop.

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - NORTH POLE - DAY
PULL OUT FROM THE BOOK TO REVEAL

The real life Elf and Workshop of the drawing we have just seen. PAPA ELF, 540 years old or roughly 55 in human years, is surrounded by scores of strange and specific tools and some scattered half-built toys.

PAPA ELF

So you're here for the story? Okay. Just let me wet my whistle.

He pours himself a shot of milk in a snowflake shot glass and downs it.

PAPA ELF

(like it's liquor)

Whoo! That's strong! Must be two percent! Elves love to tell stories, you probably didn't know that, did you? Well, there's a lot of things about us that people don't know. For instance, we can't tell a lie. It's physiologically impossible. Here's another interesting Elf-ism: There are three jobs available to an Elf. You can make shoes at night while an old cobbler sleeps...but it's not exactly the most rewarding work.

QUICK CUT
AWAY TO

Two ELVES hammering away at a pile of shoes as a fat shoemaker sleeps with a copy of "Hot Cobbler" magazine on his chest, a busty cobbler lady on the cover.

DISGRUNTLED COBBLER ELF

Lazy bastard couldn't even make a flip-flop...

EXT. ELF TREE - DAY

The exterior of a tree, we hear cooking going on inside.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

...you can bake
cookies in a tree. But
it's dangerous having
an oven in an oak
during dry season...

We hear a yelp and now a siren rings and then the TREE BURSTS INTO FLAMES, ELVES SCURRYING OUT.

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

PAPA ELF

But the third job.
Well, the third job
makes being an Elf
worthwhile. Some call
it "the show" or the
"big dance". It's the
profession every Elf
aspires to. And that's
to build toys in
Santa's workshop.

CUT TO:

A TRACKING SHOT OF SANTA'S WORKSHOP

The CAMERA whips by a crowd of bustling elves building dolls, toy horses, action figures, squirt guns...everything. There's even a row of X-boxes being assembled.

PAPA ELF

It's a job only an Elf
can do. Our nimble
fingers, natural cheer
and active minds are
perfect for toy
building. They've
tried using Gnomes or
Trolls but the Gnomes
drank too much and the
Trolls weren't toilet
trained.

CUT AWAY:

1) A drunk GNOME, stein in hand, vomiting below the table. 2) A TROLL wearing a diaper is chewed out by an Elf cleaning up the floor.

PAPA ELF

And no human could
ever do this work.
Their hands are too
big and they tend to
get testy when over
worked. In fact, no
human has ever set
foot in Santa's
workshop. That is
until about thirty
years ago. And in case

you haven't guessed
it, that's our story.
It was back in 1968. A
particularly
successful
Christmas...

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

A Christmas tree flickers. A nurse changes a
giggling ten month-old BABY's diaper.

NURSE

You're quite a
giggler, aren't you?
(lying him
down)

Well, it's time for
night-night.

She tucks the baby in and exits.

NURSE

(as she leaves)

Merry Christmas, my
angel.

CLOSE ON

The Rocking Crib. The BABY rises, giggling.
His eyes light up as he stands, holding the
gate of the crib.

Santa's black boots drop in from the chimney.
The baby shakes the gate. Quickly, Santa moves
to the Christmas tree, where he lays out
presents. There is an OFF-SCREEN CLANG! Santa
LOOKS UP and sees the empty crib. The gate is
down:

BABY'S POV

He gleefully skitters across the floor towards
a large, fuzzy teddy bear in SANTA'S BIG RED
BAG.

FADE TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

A bevy of ELVES with slightly larger 60's Elf
collars and sideburns celebrate another
successful Christmas. Several elves start
CHANTING for a speech. SANTA, seated in his
rocker, stands to applause. Merrily, he
gestures for quiet.

SANTA

Alright,
alright...Well, we've
had another successful
year. Prancer was able
to control his bladder
over Baltimore, and we
didn't forget
Delaware...

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

SANTA

And now after a lot of
hard work it's time

for a vacation,
starting now!
Santa looks at his watch as five seconds click
off. The elves all rest their heads on their
elbows.

SANTA
Alright! Vacation's
over! Back to work!
Time to start
preparations for next
Christmas.

The elves cheer and get back to work. When an
OFF-SCREEN COOING is heard.

SANTA
What in the name of
Sam Hill...?
More COOING. Perplexed, Santa looks down to
his bag just as a human baby, dressed only in
a diaper, crawls out and smiles.
Silence. The elves stare in awe at the strange
visitor. An ELF looks on the back of his
diaper and sees the brand name "Little Buddy
Diapers".

ELF TWIN #2
It's name is Buddy. He
must've...

ELF TWIN #1
...snuck into your
sack at the orphanage.
What do we do, Santa?
Santa looks befuddled.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)
Santa had a decision
to make. But
fortunately when it
comes to babies,
Santa's a push over.
So Buddy would stay
with an older Elf who
had always wanted a
child, but had been so
committed to building
toys, he had forgotten
to settle down. Yes,
Buddy was raised by
me, his adopted
father. My, how I love
that boy.

MONTAGE: BUDDY GROWING UP AS AN ELF
A giant baby is wedged into an extra-tiny
crib.
Super 8 home movie of Papa Elf holding a two-
year old baby that is almost as big as he is.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)
Tough Buddy grew twice
as fast, he wasn't any
different from the

other little elves. I
mean, not really...

Video Footage: of 7-year old Buddy riding a
really small tricycle around in circles at a
birthday party with a laughing Elf child on
his back and another Elf under his arm.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And though it is
against the Code of
Elves to lie, all
agreed that until
Buddy asked us, no one
was going to bring up
the fact that he was
actually a human
being.

A series of Polaroid photos showing Buddy, 12,
dunking a basketball over three elves.
Buddy in Elf school, wedged in a tiny desk.
The ELF TEACHER is pointing to the black board
where "THE CODE OF ELVES" is written.

ELF TEACHER

And before we learn
how to build the
latest in extreme
graphic chipset
processors, let's
recite the Code of the
Elves, shall we?
Number one?

ELF STUDENTS

TREAT EVERY DAY LIKE
CHRISTMAS!

ELF TEACHER

Number two?

ELF STUDENTS

THERE'S ROOM FOR
EVERYONE ON THE NICE
LIST!

ELF TEACHER

Number three?

We push in on Buddy as he recites...

BUDDY & EVERYONE

THE BEST WAY TO SPREAD
CHRISTMAS CHEER IS
SINGING LOUD FOR ALL
TO HEAR!

EXT. ELF HOCKEY POND - CURRENT DAY - DAY
An ANNOUNCER ELF is on a megaphorn, doing play
by play of an elf hockey team...

ANNOUNCER

(on megaphone)

Lum Lum across the
line, feeds it to Foom
Foom, behind the net,
looking, feeds
Blinky...Wait! Rimp-

correction, Wombo. I
think...and - uh-oh! -
here comes BUDDY!

QUICK CUTS

A smiling Buddy pounds tiny elves into the boards with brute force. The elves are helpless. Buddy finishes this off with a wicked slap-shot.

ANNOUNCER

(like an elf
Pat Foley)

He
SCOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOR
ES! And it's 14-zero
with eleven minutes
left in the first
period.

INT. ELF LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Post game, Buddy's in the locker room. Elves congratulate him and occasionally reach up to slap him on the butt.

POM POM

Good game, Buddy.

BUDDY

Thanks! Sorry about
your shoulder, Pom
Pom!

POM POM

No sweat. It's just a
collar bone!

They're all tossing their jock straps in the bin. Little Elf jocks land, and then a HUGE ONE, proportionately the size of a large serving tray. It's Buddy's.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

But as much as Buddy
was accepted by his
friends and family,
there were drawbacks
to being a human in an
elves' world.

RAPID FIRE:

A dozen shots of Buddy slamming his face into doorways, beams, cabinets. These shots look shockingly painful.

BUDDY

Ow...jeez...yikes...go
lly...charles dickens!
Sone of a nutcracker!

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The FINALE: Buddy attempts to put a star on top of the semi-tall Elf Christmas tree. But Buddy's pointy Elf slipper gets hung up in an ornament.

The elves step back, preparing for the inevitable: Buddy panics, wiggles his leg and

pulls the tree over on top of him, falling into the fire place and engulfing in flames. Pom Pom sprays him with a mini-fire extinguisher.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And no where were
Buddy's differences
more obvious than in
Santa's toy shop.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NORTH POLE - DAY
We see an assembly line of elves making Etch-a-sketches with wooden hammers. We pan finally to Buddy as an ELF SUPERVISOR APPROACHES.

BUDDY

Gee, I'm sorry, Ming-Ming. I'm gonna come in a little short on my quota today.

ELF SUPERVISOR

It's okay, Buddy. How many Etcha-Sketches did you get finished?

Buddy is about to answer. But then his face winces up. FIGHTING BACK TEARS.

ELF SUPERVISOR

How many, Buddy? It's okay, you can tell me.

Clearly tearing up now, Buddy sets his tiny wooden hammer to the side and reveals a box of his toys.

BUDDY

I only made...
(crying)
Eighty-five.

Eighty-five? He might as well have said zero. The elves all look at each other.

ELF SUPERVISOR

Oh, don't worry about it Buddy. This is a great start! You're only 915 off pace.

BUDDY

Oh, why don't you just say it Ming Ming?! I'm the worst toy maker in the whole world! I'm a cotton-head ninny-muggins!

ELF SUPERVISOR

Oh, you're not a cotton-head ninny muggins! We all have different talents, that's all.

BUDDY

Actually, it seems
like everyone has the
same talents. Except
for me.

ELF SUPERVISOR

That's not true, you
have lots of talents.
Special talents. Like,
uh...

Supervisor Elf looks around to the other Elves
for back up. They try to chime in.

ELF #1

You changed the
batteries in the fire
alarm!

ELF #2

(absurdly
positive)

You sure did! Triple
A's! And in six
months, you'll need to
check 'em again! Won't
he!

(everyone
agrees)

ELF #3

And you're the only
baritone in the Elf
choir. Without you,
we'd sound like a
bunch of...I mean, you
bring us down a whole
octave!

ELF #1

In a good way!

ELF SUPERVISOR

See? You're not a
cotton-head ninny
muggins. You're Ex-
traordinary!

BUDDY

Well, you know what?
I'm sick of being
extraordinary!

Upset, Buddy struggles to get his thighs out
from under his desk, and now runs off, tagging
his head on the door frame.

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

Buddy storms into his tiny house. Papa Elf
looks up from his work, surprised. Buddy can't
speak. He runs over and locks himself in the
bathroom.

INT. ELF BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

This bathroom is ABSURDLY SMALL, Buddy
squeezes in like Harry Houdini. The toilet is
the size of a Big Gulp cup. Buddy sits on it

and starts to sob. Washing his face in the tiny sink.

KNOCK KNOCK.

We INTERCUT with Papa Elf at the door.

PAPA ELF

Son? Are you okay?

BUDDY

Go away!

PAPA ELF

(shocked)

Buddy!

BUDDY

I'm sorry, papa. May I please have some Buddy time?

PAPA ELF

Open up, son. I think we need to talk.

The door finally creaks open, revealing a funny wide shot of him squeezed into this box of a room. He wiggles out. Still wiggling.

PAPA ELF

Come sit with your papa.

Papa sits on the couch, Buddy sits on Papa Elf's knee. Papa winces.

PAPA ELF

Alright, let's hear it.

BUDDY

Well, everyone knows you're Santa's Master Tinker. And Grandpapa was Master Tinker before you. And great Grandpapa before ye. I'm supposed to follow in your footsteps...but I'm always letting everyone down.

PAPA ELF

Well, there's something I should probably tell you, Buddy. And it's long over due...

(intense beat)

You see...um...

BUDDY

What is it, Papa?

Papa Elf looks into Buddy's beautifully innocent eyes. He can't bring himself to do it.

PAPA ELF

(changing the subject)

I need your help on something.

(adjusting
Buddy's weight)

Up up now, nice and --
ow, OW!... There we
are.

Papa Elf leads Buddy through a door to reveal the most amazing sight Buddy has ever beheld.

SANTA'S SLEIGH

A GLOW emanates from the hand-rubbed, red-lacquered wood chassis, illuminating the entire room.

BUDDY

Wow. Santa's sleigh!
(hesitates)

Can I touch it?

PAPA ELF

Touch it? You're going to help me make it fly, Buddy.

BUDDY

I thought the magical reindeer made the sleigh fly.

PAPA ELF

And where do the reindeers get their magic from?

BUDDY

Christmas spirit.
Everyone knows that.

PAPA ELF

Yes, but unfortunately, Christmas Spirit is becoming a very limited resource.

BUDDY

What do you mean?

PAPA ELF

(hard to break
the news)

Well, Buddy, as silly as it sounds, there are a lot of people down South who don't believe in Santa Claus.

BUDDY

(shocked)

What? Who do they think puts all their toys under the tree?

PAPA ELF

There's a rumor floating around that

parents are putting
them there.

BUDDY

That's ridiculous!
There's no way parents
could do that all in
one night! And what
about Santa's
cookies!? I suppose
parents eat them too?

PAPA ELF

I know...but every
year less and less
people are believing
in Santa, and today
we've got a real
energy crisis on our
hands. See how low the
Claus-o-meter is?

We see a gauge on the instrument panel of the
sleigh with CHRISTMAS SPIRIT LEVELS written
and a needle resting in the DANGEROUSLY LOW
red section.

PAPA ELF

That's why I installed
this little baby back
in the sixties.

Papa pushes a RED BUTTON, causing a JET ENGINE
to shudder with a high-pitched whir. Buddy is
amazed.

BUDDY

Oh my Gosh!

PAPA ELF

Watch the language
son.

BUDDY

Forgive me, Papa.
What's that?

PAPA ELF

A Viper turbojet with
358 cubic meters of
displacement, high
volume air intake and
customized spark
timing.

(off Buddy's
look)

I know, it's a little
less magical, but
everyone's still
getting their wish,
that's the important
thing, right?

(around him)

Listen, the motor
mounts are giving me
some wiggle. Do you

want to give the ol'
man a hand?

BUDDY
(coming around)

Do I?!

And just like that, father and son hunker down
and tinker together.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - TOY TESTING - THE NEXT DAY
We push past a tiny door marked TESTING. Elves
everywhere are testing toys. Buddy stands in
front of a conveyor belt pushing Jack in the
Boxes past him. He turns the crank producing
the 'POP GOES THE WEASEL' tune and a puppet
pops out scaring him every time. POP!

BUDDY

Ahh!
Another one: POP!

BUDDY

UHHHH!
This one doesn't pop for a beat and then: POP!

BUDDY
(biggest one
yet)

AHHHH!!
(to supervisor)

I'm going to take
five, okay Krumpet?

KRUMPET

Okay!

We follow Buddy as he approaches an Elf
kitchenette. But before he enters, he stops,
over-hearing a few Elves drinking cider and
talking behind his back.

FOOM FOOM

...and that EX-
traordinary bit! That
was quick thinking.

ELF SUPERVISOR

Hey, I feel bad for
the guy. I just hope
he doesn't get wise.

FOOM FOOM

Hey, he's believed he
was a real Elf for
this long, hasn't he?

WE SLAM INTO A CLOSE UP OF BUDDY'S SHOCKED
FACE

QUICK SERIES OF FLASHBACKS FROM BUDDY'S PAST
flash before his eyes not unlike 'the sixth
sense'.

AT THE SHOEMAKER: Buddy is painfully squeezing
into new shoes.

IN BED: Buddy tosses and turns - three beds
have been pushed together to make a human
twin-sized bed.

IN THE ELF SHOWERS: Buddy is struggling to wash under a three-foot high shower head.
THE ELF CHOIR PHOTO: Only Buddy's waist is visible, he's cropped out.
An exact replay of those rapid-fire shots of Buddy slamming his head into doorways, beams, cabinets.

BUDDY

Ow...jeez...yikes...go
lly...charles...Dickens!
Sone of a Nutcracker!

IN THE FACTORY: tinkering with a Ken Doll, Buddy moves the arms like his arms.
BACK ON BUDDY, queasy. His head spins as the CAMERA CIRCLES HIM. The room spins. Buddy's knees go weak.
Pom Pom hurries over, concerned.

POM POM

You don't look so good, Buddy. Are you okay?

Buddy tries to speak, but instead COLLAPSES RIGHT ON TOP OF POM POM, crushing him beneath his weight.

POM POM

(muffled under Buddy)

I'm okay, Buddy. Don't worry about a thing.
I'm warm.

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - TEN MINUTES LATER
Buddy wakes up from his sleep to find himself in Papa's workshop. FOCUS RACKS to Papa tending to his son.

BUDDY

Ooooooh. I had a terrible nightmare.

PAPA ELF

What is it, Buddy?

BUDDY

I dreamt I wasn't an Elf at all. I was a human. Oh, it was awful. I'm not a human, am I Papa?

PAPA ELF

I knew this day would come. You see, Buddy, I love you and nothing can ever change that. But the fact is, it wasn't a dream. You're not like the rest of us.

BUDDY

You mean I'm not an
Elf?

PAPA ELF

No, son, you're a
human being.

BUDDY

No wonder I'm always
freezing!

PAPA ELF

We decided it was best
to let you think you
were one of us.

BUDDY

But I thought elves
can't lie.

PAPA ELF

We can't. But Buddy,
you never asked! I
thought for sure when
you cracked six feet
it would come up.

BUDDY

(getting upset)

I thought I had a
glandular problem.

PAPA ELF

Your glands are fine.

BUDDY

(emotional)

So, you're not my
Papa?

PAPA ELF

Oh, I'll always be
your Papa. It's just
you have another Papa,
too. A biological
Papa.

Papa Elf opens a drawer and shows Buddy a
photo: a young couple are in love...

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

I then proceeded to
tell Buddy of how his
father had fallen in
love when he was very
young with a beautiful
girl named Susan
Welles, and how Buddy
was born and put up
for adoption by his
mother. And how she
had later passed away.
I told him his father
had never even known
Buddy was born. And
most importantly, I
told him where his Dad

was: in a magical land
called New York City.
Papa Elf puts a snow globe in front of Buddy
showing the Empire State Building with a sign
NEW YORK CITY.

BUDDY

Uhh! I feel confused
and sweaty! I need
some Buddy time!

Buddy runs off.

PAPA ELF

Buddy?! Buddy?!!

EXT. NORTH POLE - MINUTES LATER
Buddy runs and runs. He passes some ANIMATED
ANIMALS, a RABBIT, a RACCOON and a SQUIRREL.

RACCOON

Hey, Buddy! Want to
sing and pick snow
berries?

BUDDY

Not now Pipsy!!

He passes by an ANIMATED SNOWMAN in the front
yard of a toasty little cottage.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(a faint
whisper)

Oooohhh! Buddy...

BUDDY

Hi, Jim. What's wrong?

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(very quietly)

Uh, ow. Sorry...my
back's out of line
again. Do you mind
cracking it for me
again?

BUDDY

Sure, Jim.

Buddy comes from behind him, squeezes and then
we hear a CRACK.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(speaking at
full volume)

Ohhh, thank you,
Buddy. That's soooo
good. It's from all
the standing. They
never build me sitting
down. Hey? Why the
long face?

BUDDY

Well, Jim. It seems
I'm...I'm not an Elf.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

Of course you're not.
You're six-three and

had a beard when you
were fifteen.

BUDDY

Papa says my real
father is living in a
magical place far
away.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

At least you have a
father. I was just
rolled up one day. I
never had anyone to
play catch with. And
even if I did. I only
have sticks for arms.

BUDDY

I guess I am pretty
lucky after all.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

I bet your dad would
be so happy to see
you, he'd hug you and
never let go. I wish I
had a dad to hug. And
even if I did, I only
have sticks for arms.

BUDDY

I understand about
your arms, Jim.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

Well, you should do
all the things I
can't. Go see him. Hug
him. And play catch.
And scratch your ass.

BUDDY

I will. I'm gonna go
find my dad!

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - THE NEXT DAY

A triumphant swell of music as Buddy walks
through the workshop for the last time. Each
Elf he passes says goodbye.

BUDDY

Bye Choo-choo! Bye
Sunshine! Bye Tinkle
Winkle! By Puffy! Bye
Flade! Bye Gayle!

Santa steps into frame and puts his arm around
Buddy.

SANTA

So I hear you're going
on a little journey to
the big city?

BUDDY

Yeah, but I'm kind of
nervous. Jim told me

New York is really
different.

SANTA

Don't listen to Jim.
He's never been
anywhere. He doesn't
even have any feet.
I've been to New York
thousands of times.

BUDDY

Wow. What's it like?

SANTA

Well there's some
things you should
know: first off, if
you see gum on the
street, leave it
there. It's not free
candy. Second, there
are like thirty Ray's
Pizzas and they all
say they're the
original, but the real
one's on eleventh. And
if you see a sign for
a Peep show, it
doesn't mean they're
letting you look at
presents before
Christmas.

BUDDY

So much to remember...

SANTA

Don't worry, something
tells me this trip is
going to be good for
you.

(patting him on
the back)

It's time for my Buddy
here to spread his
wings.

BUDDY

I can't wait! Me and
Dad are gonna go ice-
skating and eat
sugarplums!

SANTA

That's the other thing
I wanted to talk to
you about. You see,
Buddy, your father...
Well he's on the
naughty list.

FAST PUSH INTO:

The NAUGHTY LIST, landing on "Walter Hobbs."

BUDDY

NOOOOOO!!!!

SANTA

I'm sorry, but it's true.

BUDDY

My stomach hurts. It feels like evil.

SANTA

Listen, Buddy, some people. They get mixed up about what's important in life. But that doesn't mean they can't change. Maybe your dad just needs a little Christmas spirit!

BUDDY

I'm good at that!

SANTA

I know you are.

Papa Elf steps forward, trying to hide the fact that he's tearing up. He and Buddy embrace.

PAPA ELF

I love you, Buddy. And I'll always be here for you.

(crying)

Now go on, get!

BUDDY

(crying)

Yes, Papa.

(crying and skipping)

Bye guys. I'll miss you. I really will.

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

Animals wave as Buddy heads off into the unknown.

ANIMALS

Bye, Buddy.

BUDDY

Bye lovable woodland animals!

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

Buddy sits on an ice flow. He drifts along the cold sea through a haze, transitioning from the MAGIC LAND of the north pole to the REAL WORLD.

EXT. SNOW FIELD - DAY

Buddy trudges through a massive snow field. Each step he takes goes down five feet deep, we DISSOLVE to a series of scenes showing this epic struggle. He wears a beard of ice. Exhausted, Buddy considers leaving himself for dead, but uses his last ounce of strength to

pull out the old PHOTO of his father, WALTER HOBBS.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - EMPIRE STATE BUILDING -
MEANWHILE

A large children's storybook publishing company. LARGE-SIZED book covers line the wall. "Max the Big Blue Cat", "The Adventures of Rabbit Gang & Pop", etc. This place runs like a well-oiled machine.

A huge corner office says 'WALTER HOBBS, EDITOR.'

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - DAY

Walter is the guy from Buddy's picture, only he looks a little older and a little meaner. A NUN stands in front of Walter's large desk.

NUN

You're taking the books back?

WALTER

Hey, you're the one who's behind on the payments, don't try to make me out to be the bad guy here.

NUN

We're trying to get yo the money, but it's been difficult to raise the funding...the children are sponsoring another bake sale next month. That should help.

WALTER

See, there's your problem. You can't expect a bake sale to make solid cash these days. Places like Dunkin' Donuts and Cinnibon are expanding their product base with alternative breakfast and desert items. Even Starbucks carries baked goods. You guys really need to start thinking out of the box.

(out window; to
NYC)

It's called capitalism, Miss Peters. If you can't

stand the heat, move
to Canada.

NUN

(begging)

The kids really love
the books.

WALTER

You don't need to tell
me that, I made them.
I'm the one who ran
the focus groups.

DEB, the secretary, pokes her head in.

DEB

Mr. Hobbs, your two
o'clock is here.

WALTER

Would you please use
the intercom? We
talked about this.

DEB

Do you want me to use
it now? I mean, I
already told you.

Walter purposefully ignores her. Deb leaves
frame and now we hear her on the intercom.

DEB (O.S.)

(from intercom)

Mr. Hobbs, your two
o'clock is here.

WALTER

(hitting
button)

Got it.

(to Nun,
compassionate)

Tell you what, I know
how much these books
mean to your kids over
there...

(beat)

I'll give you a three-
week extension.

NUN

(sarcastic)

Bless your heart.

WALTER

(too busy to
hear)

If I were you, I'd
stay away from
perishable goods.
Think consumer
services. That's hot
right now.

EXT. CANADA - DAY

Buddy is half-way there. He's now clearly in
the real world. He walks through a choppy,

muddy, snowy terrain past a rusted propane tank. A REAL LIVE RACCOON crosses his path. Buddy acts like it's a cartoon.

BUDDY

Heyyyy. What's your name? I'm Buddy!

Buddy corners the raccoon, trapping it. Trying to be nice. IT hisses like crazy. But Buddy is undeterred.

BUDDY

Sounds like someone needs a hug!

He lunges forward. Like lightning, the raccoon BITES Buddy in the face.

BUDDY

NUT CRACKERS!!!

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Buddy walks along the Highway, looks up, then stops in his tracks.

REVEAL: A sign that says NEW YORK CITY/LINCOLN TUNNEL. His eyes light up.

EXT. MANHATTAN - MORNING

We see Buddy timidly inch his way through the Lincoln Tunnel along the walkway, pressed up against the wall while traffic roars by. Like a stray cat, Buddy dodges through traffic. His feelings of wonder are starting to be replaced with fear. He exits to the sight of the towering skyline of New York City with the sun breaking over it. He sees the Empire State Building, then looks at his snow globe.

BUDDY

Whoa...

EXT. MID-TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER

Buddy is caught up in the rhythms of the street and begins noticing the mundane details of this new world with amazement: traffic lights. Steam. Scaffolding.

WIDE SHOT

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Buddy attempts to greet a sea of people, but New Yorkers ignore the guy in the Elf suit.

BUDDY

Hi.

(no response;
next person)

Happy afternoon!

(no response;
next person)

Salutations!

-- A woman tries to hail A cab. Buddy waves back.

-- Buddy looks up at awe at the animated billboard on the Lehman Building. A guy bumps into him.

WALKER

Why don't you watch
your ass, buddy!

Buddy nods, then sticks his butt out and looks
at it.

-- Buddy runs round and round A revolving door
and loving every moment.

-- A sign at a crappy diner "World's Best Cup
of Coffee!" Buddy is excited and enters. The
jaded BANGLADESHI STAFF stares at him blankly.

BUDDY

Wow! The world's best
cup of coffee! You did
it! Congratulations!

To all of you!

-- Gum on the ground. Yum! Buddy picks it up,
plays with it, then pops it in his mouth and
chews with A smile. Now his face suddenly
changes.

-- Two guys are handing out different flyers.
Buddy is given one. HE looks at it, then, in
Marx Brothers-like fashion, hands it to flyer
guy #2. Flyer guy #2 takes it, then gives
Buddy one of his own flyers. This delights
Buddy, who now repeats the ri

-- A dog walker picks up some dog crap with
newspaper. Buddy sees some other crap on the
sidewalk, grabs some newspaper and picks it
up. Buddy walks right behind the man and
offers it to him to be helpful.

REVEAL: Empire State Building!

Buddy holds up his Empire State Building SNOW
GLOBE and compares the skyscraper to his toy
one.

BUDDY

Dad...

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
ECU: The PUPPY AND THE PIGEON book is in
Walter's hands. A PRINTER faces him.

WALTER

A re-print? Do you
know how much that's
gonna cost?

PRINTER

Two whole pages are
missing. The story
makes no sense.

WALTER

You think a kid is
going to notice two
pages? All they do is
look at the pictures.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Buddy gets in the elevator with a bunch of
Republican-looking PEOPLE. He's whistling
really loud and happy, confusing them.

Another passenger gets on.

ACCOUNTANT

Can you press 67 please?
Unsure of what may happen, he pushes 67. The
number LIGHTS UP.

BUDDY

Hey, that's pretty.
Like lightning, he presses ALL 75 BUTTONS.

BUDDY

Look at that!

QUICK CUTS

The elevator doors open and close, floor by
floor. No one is smiling, except for
Buddy.

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
Walter and the printer continue.

WALTER

How the hell did this
happen, anyway?

PRINTER

Well, you signed off
on all the final
plates and...

WALTER

You know what? I don't
need to know. Let's
just get this solved.

INT. DEB'S DESK - CONTINUOUS
Deb stares dead pan at the Elf in front of her
desk.

BUDDY

Buddy the Elf, here
for a Mr. Walter
Hobbs, please.

DEB

You look hilarious.
Who sent you?

BUDDY

Papa Elf, from the
North Pole.

DEB

Papa Elf? That's rich.

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
Walter and the printer continue.

PRINTER

You really think we
should ship them?

WALTER

(sarcastic)

No, I want to take a
thirty-thousand dollar
bath, so some kid
understands what
happened to a friggin'
Puppy and a Pigeon.

(beat)

Ship them!

DEB (O.S.)

(over intercom)

Mr. Hobbs, it's me on
the intercom.

WALTER

Go ahead.

DEB (O.S.)

I think someone sent
you a Christmas-gram.

WALTER

A Christmas-gram? I
don't have time for a
Christmas-gram.

Over Walter's shoulder, we see Buddy step into
frame behind him. Sensing this, Walter slowly
turns around.

BUDDY

Dad?

Looking nervous and excited, he adjusts his
hat and vest.

WALTER

Oh, um, alright. Let's
get this over with.

We see a small crowd of people have gathered
by the door to watch the supposed singing
telegram.

BUDDY

I walked all day and
night to find you.

WALTER

(playing along)

Looks like you came
from the North Pole.

BUDDY

That's exactly where I
came from. Santa
must've called you.

WALTER

Yeah, I just got off
my cell with him. So?
Go on.

BUDDY

Go on with what?

WALTER

Are you gonna sing a
song or can I get back
to work?

BUDDY

A song? Anything for
you, Dad. Let's see...

(trying to make
up a song)

I'M HERE WITH MY DAD.
I'VE NEVER MET HIM AND
HE WANTS ME TO SING A
SONG. I WAS ADOPTED
AND YOU DIDN'T KNOW I
WAS BORN. BUT I'M HERE
AND I LOVE YOU, DAD!!!

He hugs him.

WALTER

Wow. That's weird.
Usually you guys just
put my name into a
Jingle Bells or
something.

BUDDY

It's me, your son!
Susan Welles had me
and didn't tell you,
but now here I am!
It's me, Buddy!

WALTER

Susan Welles?! Did you
just say Susan Welles?
What kind of Christmas
gram is this?

BUDDY

What's a Christmas
gram?

WALTER

(whispering)
Deb, we may want to
call security.

DEB

(whispering)
I already did.

Buddy leans in.

BUDDY

(whispering)
I like to whisper,
too.

EXT. STREET - FIVE MINUTES LATER
TWO SECURITY GUARDS have each of Buddy's arms
and are frog-walking him out the front doors
and onto the sidewalk.

BUDDY

My dad runs this whole
company! I bet he's a
genius.

SECURITY GUARD #2

Must run in the
family.

(they laugh)

I wouldn't come back
for a while if I were
you.

BUDDY

Yeah, it seemed like
he may need some
'Daddy time.'

(as he's
escorted)

You guys are strong!

SECURITY GUARD #1

Yeah, get lost.

BUDDY

I already am lost!

They throw Buddy's JINGLED hat at him and walk back inside.

BUDDY

Bye, Glenn. Bye Chris!

Buddy picks up his hat, dusts it off, then looks across the street and sees New York's version of ELF MECCA

REVEAL

EXT. GIMBELS DEPARTMENT STORE - CONTINUOUS
It's huge. Full of lights and music, Christmas at its grandest.

BUDDY

(face aglow)

Wow!

Buddy starts skipping across the street toward Gimbels when --

BAM! Buddy's hit by a CAB! He flies off-screen. This is totally shocking. Traffic stops. And now Buddy comes skipping back into frame.

BUDDY

I'm okay! Thank you!

EXT. GIMBELS - CONTINUOUS

The halls are decked. This is epic. Buddy walks through happy in his Elf suit. A PERFUME CLERK approaches.

PERFUME CLERK

Passion fruit spray?

BUDDY

Fruit Spray? For real?

Buddy opens his mouth and closes his eyes. The clerk just stares at him.

BUDDY

(mouth open)

Ready when you are!

The clerk looks around, then, mildly curious, sprays it in like Binacca. PSST!

Yuch! Buddy stumbles around blind, scraping his tongue off. About to throw up.

MONTAGE: Buddy Does Gimbels

ESCALATOR

Buddy stops at the edge of an escalator, afraid to get on, like a kid at the edge of a diving board. He's clogging tons of holiday traffic.

ANGRY MAN

(annoyed)

Are you going or what?

BUDDY

Um, yeah...

Buddy steps forward with one leg. And the escalator yanks him into the splits.

BUDDY

Jiminy Christmas!

PUBLIC BATHROOM

Buddy leaves the stall, then accosts a stranger.

BUDDY

Have you seen this toilet!? It's GI-NORMOUS!!!

(to another guy)

Look at this toilet!

STORE

Buddy grabs 3,000 candy canes and starts eating them with great intensity.

ELEVATOR

Buddy faces the wrong way in the elevator, face to face with a man.

ANGRY MAN

(about to punch him)

You think you're pretty smart, huh?

BUDDY

I'm not that smart, but thanks.

LINGERIE SECTION

Buddy sees a display of sexy nighties with a sign over it: For that special someone!

BUDDY

For that special someone? Hmmm...

A HARD-ASS ELF MANAGER walks over.

ELF MANAGER

Man, what in the hell are you doing fartin' around on the first floor?

BUDDY

Looking at shiny things.

ELF MANAGER

Shiny things?? Get your butt back up to the ninth floor before I put my foot up your green ass.

BUDDY

Okay.

INT. GIMBELS - 9TH FLOOR SANTA LAND - LATER

We PAN a LAME SANTA LAND. It's not very impressive. Buddy is doing a thorough inspection.

BUDDY

This snow looks fake.

ELF MANAGER

It's white, ain't it?

BUDDY

Snow doesn't just pile up unless it's moved

through the use of a
tool, such as a
shovel. I would give
this some natural
erosion, a slight wind
drift look.

ELF MANAGER

What the hell are you
talkin' about?
EROSION?! Don't touch
the damn snow. What
are you smiling at?
You think I'm a joke?

BUDDY

Oh, no, I'm just
smiling. Smiling is my
favorite.

ELF MANAGER

Well take it down a
notch.

Buddy tries to frown for a second, but his
lips quiver and hurt and now he's smiling
again, making the exact same face.

ELF MANAGER

Alright, smiley, sweep
the tin foil off this
path. Santa's going to
be here tomorrow.

BUDDY

SANTA?!

(eyes wide)

OH...MY...GOD!!!!

(suddenly
skeptical)

Wait. Santa Claus?

ELF MANAGER

Yeah. Where've you
been?

BUDDY

The North Pole.

ELF MANAGER

Ha. Ha. Start elfing.
(as he leaves)

And don't touch the
snow.

He walks off, looking back, annoyed. Now
something grabs Buddy's full attention.

BUDDY'S POV

SLO-MO - JOVIE DAVIS. 20s, a petite beauty,
dressed as an Elf. She glides like a vision to
the Christmas tree where she hangs balls from
a ladder. Buddy stares up at her.

JOVIE

Are you enjoying the
view?

BUDDY

Yes I am! I was
standing over there
and I thought you
looked pretty so I
came over to tell you
that you look pretty.

JOVIE

Why're you messin'
with me? Did Krumpet
put you up to this?

BUDDY

I'm not messing with
you. It's nice to meet
a human who shares my
affinity for the Elf
culture.

JOVIE

I wouldn't call it an
affinity. I'm just
trying to get through
the holidays.

BUDDY

Get through? Christmas
is the greatest day in
the whole wide world!

JOVIE

Well someone's been
drinking the Kool Aid.
(Buddy doesn't
get it)

Believe me, after a
few years of this,
you'll learn to tune
it all out.

BUDDY

Uh-oh. It sounds like
someone needs to sing
a Christmas Carol!

JOVIE

(confused)

Are you serious?

BUDDY

The best way to spread
Christmas cheer is
singing loud for all
to hear.

JOVIE

Well, thanks, but I
don't sing.

BUDDY

Oh, it's easy! It's
just like talking,
only louder and longer
and you move it up and
down.

JOVIE

Well, I can sing. I
just don't sing.
Especially in front of
other people. I could
never do that.

BUDDY
Never? If you can sing
by yourself, you can
sing anytime, there's
no difference.

JOVIE
Actually, there's a
big difference.

BUDDY
No there isn't. Watch.
(suddenly
singing loudly)

I'M IN A STORE AND I'M
SINGING! PEOPLE ARE
HERE AND I'M IN A
STORE!!

Everyone looks at him like he's...well, Elf.
Jovie seems a little uncomfortable.

BUDDY
THE STORE IS ALL SHINY
AND I'M IN A STORE!!
(then back to
normal)

See?

JOVIE
(bewildered)

Wow.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(over
loudspeaker)
Attention, Gimbels
will be closing in ten
minutes. Please make
your final purchases.

All the elves look relieved. Their day is
over.

J
OVIE
Dismissed.

BUDDY
You're leaving? But
Santa's coming.

JOVIE
(she laughs at
his 'joke')
Yeah, I'll see you
tomorrow, um, what's
your name?

BUDDY
Buddy.

JOVIE
Jovie. See ya.

With that, Jovie walks off. Buddy looks around as the half-baked Santa Land empties out.

QUICK SERIES OF CUTS

The doors being locked, employees exiting, lights flickering off.

A SECURITY GUARD WALKS DOWN AN AISLE

Behind him, Buddy does a commando roll through the aisle. Then pops up next to some toys.

Buddy starts pulling all sorts of things off the shelves: paint, robots, a fire truck...he looks at a logo.

BUDDY

They have Elves in Taiwan?

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

EMILY has prepared a beautiful dinner. She is an attractive, upper East-side woman.

Walter fills a plate. Their son, MICHAEL, 10, eats without enthusiasm, detached.

WALTER

I'm gonna go eat in my den, okay? I've got a bunch of stuff to go over.

EMILY

Are you sure?

WALTER

Yeah, I'm way behind on a bunch of stuff.

He goes to kiss her on the forehead, she doesn't offer it. So he kisses the top of her hair...and now leaves.

MICHAEL

Can I eat in my room?

EMILY

No.

MICHAEL

Why not? Dad's eating in his den.

(smart ass)

I have a bunch of homework to go over...I'm way behind on a bunch of stuff.

EMILY

You're eating here.

MICHAEL

Fine. But I'm not going to talk.

EMILY

Yes you are. You're going to tell me how your day was.

(beat)

How was your day?

Michael stares tight-lipped. This infuriates Emily.

EMILY

(suddenly)

HOW WAS YOUR DAY?!

MICHAEL

It was fine! Okay?

Good.

INT. WALTER'S DEN - LATER

Walter is looking at an OLD YEAR BOOK. He studies a picture of a young, beautiful 'Susan Welles.'

EMILY

What're you looking at?

Walter hides the book.

WALTER

Nothing. It's for work.

EMILY

You know, it'd be nice if we ate together as a family once in a while.

WALTER

I'm sorry. I've gotta work. How do you think I feel? You think I like to work?

EMILY

Actually, I do.

(beat)

I'm really worried about Michael. He's getting detached and cynical. They're not supposed to do that until they're teenagers.

WALTER

Well he is thirteen years old.

EMILY

He's ten.

(exasperated)

I don't know what's going on with you, but I've just about had it.

WALTER

Had it with what?

That was the wrong answer.

WALTER

Emily. Wait. I'm sorry. I've been under a lot of stress at work.

EMILY

If you say the word
WORK one more time,
you're sleeping at the
Marriot.

WALTER

(a tiny ounce
of charm)

The chicken thing was
delicious.

EMILY

It wasn't a chicken
thing. It was salmon,
zucchini, string
beans, carrots, cherry
tomatoes, asparagus,
mushrooms and olives.

WALTER

Well it was good.

INT. GIMBELS - SANTA LAND - 7 AM

Buddy is finishing his decorating. We pull out
wide: No Santa Land has ever looked more
beautiful. The most expensive merchandise has
been used as bricks and mortar. A huge glitter
sign says "WELCOME SANTA! LOVE, BUDDY!!!"
Now, off in the distance, WE HEAR THE FAINT
SOUND OF AN ANGEL SINGING.

Buddy perks up, training his ear, he slowly
rises to his feet, as if following a
butterfly, he meanders through the deserted
aisles, more and more hypnotized as the
angelic singing gets louder and louder and
clearer and more beautiful.

Buddy pushes through the bathroom door,
totally consumed by the greatest voice in the
world.

REVEAL

Jovie is in the shower stall. Singing half of
the classic duet, "BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE".
Buddy stands, hypnotized, outside the shower
curtain, quietly joins in and sings the
accompanying duet to himself. Eventually he
can't help himself and belts out the chorus.
Jovie is silent and quickly twists off the
shower and opens the curtain, wearing only a
towel.

JOVIE

AHHHHHHHHH!!!

BUDDY

AHHHHHHHHH!!!

Jovie KICKS BUDDY in the NUTS and escapes.
Buddy holds his crotch, confused and
frightened.

EXT. GIMBELS - MORNING

A busy Manhattan morning. People are going
back to work.

PAN TO

Behind the glass, an idyllic Christmas scene.
Buddy is curled up in the faux snow, asleep --
mouth open and drooling, sweaty from the sun.
A MAN SQUINTS

At him through the window amazed at how life-
like Buddy is. Buddy itches his crotch, then
awakens to the staring man.

BUDDY

Ah! Holy fudge!

Buddy yawns and stretches ridiculously.

BUDDY

Good morning,
everyone!

(looking off)

POV

Walter is walking along the sidewalk with his
brief case.

BUDDY

Dad!!!

Walter thinks he hears something, but
continues. Buddy pounds hard on the window,
trapped like a tiger. His voice echoes.
Muffled like Dustin Hoffman in THE GRADUATE.

BUDDY

(muted)

DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAD!

Walter glances over, then stops in his tracks.
It's Buddy. He runs.

INT. LOBBY - LATER

Buddy skips past the security guards with a
box. Caught off guard, they have to lunge to
grab him.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Hey!

BUDDY

(yelling back;
fun)

Hey!!

(beat)

Hi, Glenn. Hi Chris! I
just want to give my
dad this present. I
think he's mad at
me...but he won't be
after THIS.

SECURITY GUARD #1

You better leave that
with us.

SECURITY GUARD #2

Yeah, he's real busy.

BUDDY

Oh, okay. Well, please
tell him it's from me,
and that I love him so

much and that he's the
greatest Dad in the
world and that I love
him. Okay?

SECURITY GUARD #1

Okay.

INT. GIMBELS - SANTA LAND - DAY

Buddy re-enters his new, transformed Santa
Land. His face glows with satisfaction.

REVEAL

It's a smash hit. The visitors are ecstatic.
'Look at that!' 'Can you believe it?' etc.
Everyone loves it. Except the Elf Manager, who
complains to a co-worker.

ELF MANAGER

Who the hell took a
dump in housewares?

Jovie walks up to Buddy.

JOVIE

Hey. I want to talk to
you.

Buddy is now terrified by her.

BUDDY

Oh, uh, um, okay,
uh...

(she lets him
squirm)

What do you want to
talk about?

JOVIE

What the hell do you
think?

BUDDY

I know a pig who can
run eleven miles an
hour.

JOVIE

Why were you in the
woman's locker room?

BUDDY

(sheepish)

I heard you singing.

JOVIE

Singing? Right. I'm
sure it had nothing to
do with me being
naked. I should call
the police.

(beat)

What were you doing
here so early in the
morning?

BUDDY

(re: epic Santa
Land)

Making this.

JOVIE

You made this?

BUDDY

Yes...why were you here?

JOVIE

They turned my water off.

(she studies him)

You were standing there with your eyes closed. What is that, some kind of thing you do?

Buddy looks to the floor, and now up and into her eyes.

BUDDY

You have the most beautiful voice in the whole world.

Jovie looks at him, his innocence is contagious.

JOVIE

(sincere, compassionate)

You really were just listening to me, weren't you?

BUDDY

I'm sorry.

The Elf Manager walks over.

MANAGER

This is Santa Land, not stand-around-and-wear-pointy-ass-shoes land. Get busy. Santa's here.

BUDDY

SANTA?! Santa is HERE?!

Buddy sees the back of Santa enter a closed off gazebo. Children are already crowded around.

BUDDY

(happier than ever)

SANTA!

Buddy rushes towards Santa through the crowd, his eyes wide, almost breathless with excitement. Quickly he brushes off his uniform and straightens his cap.

BUDDY

Santa, it's me! Buddy!

Buddy slides the curtain open to reveal: a MAN dressed as Santa. The kids cheer. Buddy's smile drops.

BUDDY

Who the heck are you?

GIMBELS SANTA

Why, I'm Santa Claus.

BUDDY

Are not!

GIMBELS SANTA

Well, of course I am.

Ho Ho Ho!

BUDDY

(furious)

If you're Santa, then
tell me. What song did
I sing for your
birthday this year?

GIMBELS SANTA

Why you sang, uh,
Happy Birthday?

BUDDY

(to the kids)

He's right.

'Santa' struts past Buddy and takes his chair.

GIMBELS SANTA

(under his
breath)

Why don't you cool it,
zippy.

(to the kids)

Ho Ho Ho!

The voice is wrong, the smell is wrong.

BUDDY

You're lying! I know
it!

Buddy attacks. He grabs Santa's bear and it
comes right off. Buddy looks at the beard in
shock, like a horror movie.

BUDDY

(at the beard,
horrified)

AAHHHH!!! Imposter!

He's an imposter!!!

His beard is fake!

Come on, kids, get
him!

The kids all pile on, wrestling Santa, loving
it. Now the manager dives in and tries to
help. Some parents and other elves try to
contain the disaster in panic.

Jovie giggles. She is confused but intrigued
by this mysterious stranger.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - GREENWAY PRESS - DAY

Walter sits behind his desk staring at the
note that accompanied the package from Buddy.
The package sits on the desk, still wrapped in
a Gimbels box. The note says "Dad, this is for
you because you are my special someone."

Walter unwraps the gift, then holds up a RED SLINKY NIGHTIE with fur where the nipples would be.

Deb enters and he scrambles to hide the nightie.

DEB

Hey the -- what's that?

WALTER

What's what?

(beat)

Intercom!

DEB

Right.

She leaves. Walter looks deeper into the box and sees a card. It's the old photo of a young Walter next to his smiling girlfriend - on the other side is a crayon drawing of Buddy.

DEB (O.S.)

(from intercom)

Walter, the police are on line one.

WALTER

The police?

(grabbing phone)

Hello? My son?

Michael? Is he okay?

(listening)

An Elf? He's not my -- you know what? Keep him there. I'll be right down.

Deb peeks in.

DEB

What's going on?

WALTER

Nothing. I need to go.

(lying)

I need to swing by my apartment real quick...they're delivering a chair.

DEB

(smart ass)

A police chair?

WALTER

It's a regular chair.

Okay?! Cancel my appointments.

INT. JAIL - DAY

A scary jail cell. Buddy looks around from his cot. Everything is cold and hard and ugly and mean.

And now he STARTS TO CRY. He sticks his face into the pillow and cries hard.

REVEAL

Another convict shares the cell with him. He stares at Buddy with disgust. But now, slowly, it's contagious. The CONVICT CAN'T HELP IT AND HE STARTS TO CRY TOO. Buddy hears the cell door clang open.

REVEAL

Walter stands at the open jail cell door.

BUDDY

Dad!!!

Buddy wipes his tears and rubs his face.

Trying to look like a good son.

The convict wipes his tears away too, sitting up straight. But now starts crying again.

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

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

Walter is about to burst but holds back, until they're clear of the station.

BUDDY

I'm so happy! I knew you'd come! I love that you came and I love you Dad! Know how much I love you?

(spreading his arms wide)

This much. Except my arms would have to be way longer, like pterodactyl wings --

WALTER

Alright, pal. Who the heck are you and what's your problem?

BUDDY

I'm Buddy. Your son.

WALTER

I already have a son!

BUDDY

Then who am I?

WALTER

Where did you get this picture?!

He holds up the picture he included in the gift.

BUDDY

Papa Elf gave it to me.

Walter shakes Buddy violently by the lapels. Buddy's scared.

WALTER

Is this some kind of game? What do you want, money?!

BUDDY

I just wanted to meet
you...and I thought
that, maybe, you might
want to meet me...

Walter senses an element of truth in here
somewhere.

WALTER

(serious)

You really believe
this, don't you?

BUDDY

I thought we could
make ginger bread
houses and eat cookie
dough and go ice
skating and hold
hands. I'm sorry if I
made you mad.

WALTER

(conflicted)

Come with me.

Their silhouettes walk together away from
camera. Buddy REACHES OUT TO HOLD HANDS, but
Walter's hands stay in his trench coat...Buddy
is still holding his hand out. Walter suddenly
SMACKS BUDDY'S HAND DOWN.

INT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE - AN HOUR LATER
Buddy sits on the examining table as Walter
watches.

PROP NOTE: Del Close's skull sits on a shelf
in the B.G.

Buddy reaches into a jar of cotton balls and
starts eating them quickly one at a time. Like
cotton candy nuggets.

WALTER

Don't eat those.

Buddy goes to eat one more, Walter tries to
grab his arm but Buddy fakes him out and eats
it anyway.

BUDDY

Am I sick?

WALTER

YES.

(beat)

But that's not why
we're here. We're here
to test whether you're
my son or not.

BUDDY

Why am I sitting on
paper?

Buddy pulls the roll and paper spills out
everywhere. The doctor and Walter try to stop
him, but get tangled up.

DOCTOR

So it's clean for each
patient that comes in.

Try to sit still. I'm
going to perform
something called a
'finger prick.'

BUDDY

(happy)

Finger prick!

(to the Doctor)

Can I wear your head
lamp?

DOCTOR

No.

BUDDY

Why?

DOCTOR

Just sit still.

BUDDY

Why is there a
skeleton on the wall?

DOCTOR

I don't know but there
just is.

BUDDY

What's his name?

WALTER

He doesn't have a
name!

BUDDY

If I squint, he looks
like a pirate flag.
Arrgh!

DOCTOR

Walter, I can't do
this if he's going to
keep moving around.

WALTER

I'm sorry Ben. Buddy!
Please!

BUDDY

(whispering)

He got mad at me.

WALTER

Buddy the sooner you
sit still, the sooner
we can clear up this
horrible mess.

BUDDY

After this, can we eat
sugar plums together?

WALTER

Sure! We'll eat sugar
plums, and make ginger
bread houses, and
paint eggs!

BUDDY

That's Easter not -

The Doctor gives Buddy's finger a tiny prick.

BUDDY

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!
!!!!!

Buddy shoves the doctor over and stumbles
around holding his finger and crying.

BUDDY

Boot straps! Snow
flickers! Son of a
cobbler!

INT. WAITING ROOM - LATER

Buddy holds his finger with a cotton ball for
a moment. Then suddenly eats it.
Now he taps his finger and flips it around
like it's dead, then turns to a LITTLE GIRL,
7, who is playing with her doll as her MOTHER
fills out paperwork with the nurse.

BUDDY

My finger has a
heartbeat.

GIRL

It won't hurt so much
after a little. What's
your name?

BUDDY

Buddy.

GIRL

I'm Carolyn.

BUDDY

And what do you want
for Christmas?

CAROLYN

A Suzie-Talks-A-Lot.

BUDDY

I'll put in a good
word with the big man.

CAROLYN

Thanks. Your costume
is pretty.

BUDDY

Oh, it's not a
costume. I'm an Elf.
Well, I'm a human,
technically. But I was
raised by Elves.

GIRL

(totally
unfazed)

Oh. I'm a
human...raised by
humans.

BUDDY

Cool.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS
Walter is waiting for the results.

WALTER

Well?

DOCTOR

Well...

(beat)

It's a boy.

The blood drains out of Walter's face.

WALTER

It's impossible.

(feeling faint)

Is the test ever
wrong?

DOCTOR

No.

WALTER

My God. What'm I
supposed to do? You
saw the guy, he's
certifiably insane!

DOCTOR

Walter, I've read
about some things that
suggest Buddy's
behavior isn't
necessarily that
unusual.

WALTER

The man skips.

DOCTOR

It's rare, but there
have been documented
cases of people like
your son.

WALTER

His name's BUDDY.

DOCTOR

Well, BUDDY's been
denied a proper
childhood with you.
It's possible he may
feel he was never
fully nurtured,
causing an alternative
personality to
develop.

WALTER

An Elf.

DOCTOR

Yes.

(beat)

I think he's trying to
return to a position
of child-like
dependency.

WALTER

So, let's get him some
pills or whatever.
I'll pay for them,
it's not a problem.

DOCTOR

I think what he really needs is you. This is an extreme case. A rejection now could be especially traumatic.

WALTER

So, what do you want me to do, breast feed him?

DOCTOR

What if you let him visit you? Meet the family, that sort of thing. It may help him feel like he's a part of your life.

(off Walter's look)

He's your son Walter, it's not like he's going to just go away.

EXT. EMILY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Emily is leaving work, locking up the door. She turns to find Walter standing there at the bottom of the steps, hands in his pockets, smiling.

EMILY

What are you doing here?

WALTER

I was in the neighborhood. I thought I'd walk you home.

EMILY

You thought you'd walk me home?

They begin to walk together.

WALTER

What, is that so weird?

EMILY

I've worked here for four years. You've never walked me anywhere.

WALTER

Well it's a nice night.

EMILY

What's wrong?

WALTER

Why does something have to be wrong? I just said, it's a nice night, I mean really!

EMILY

Okay, okay, I'm sorry.
(taking his
arm)

Thanks, this is really
nice.

On Walter as he walks.

WALTER

Okay, something's a
little wrong.

INT. HOBBS'S RESIDENCE - LATER
They're arriving home.

EMILY

Oh, God...that's well,
it's...it's Wonderful
Walter. You have a
son.

WALTER

Wonderful. That's one
way to put it.

EMILY

Oh c'mon. This is
incredible. It may be
a little complicated,
but it's nothing we
can't handle.

WALTER

He thinks he's an Elf.

EMILY

I'm sorry, what?

WALTER

He thinks he's a
Christmas Elf.

EMILY

Oh, I'm sure he
doesn't really
think...

Walter swings open the door to the apartment
to reveal:

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

BUDDY HAS BEEN BUSY. The place is a recycled
winter wonderland. Yards of old garland has
been meticulously strung throughout the
apartment. Elaborate construction paper
Christmas murals cover the walls. His sense of
decorating is impeccable. Emily is floored.
MEANWHILE...in the kitchen, Buddy scoops globs
of frosting into his mouth at a furious pace.

WALTER

Buddy?

Buddy looks up, drooling.

WALTER

This is Emily.

EMILY

(muffled, mouth
full)

Emuree!

Swallows frosting hard. He jumps up and gives her a big hug.

BUDDY

Walter hasn't told me
anything about you!!!

Meanwhile, Michael, their son, has arrived.

MICHAEL

Why is mom hugging
Robin Hood?

INT. DINING ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

Walter, Emily, Michael and Buddy are seated
around the dining room table eating spaghetti.

BUDDY

...then I traveled
through the seven
levels of the candy
cane forest, past the
castle of the
abominable snowman and
past the sea of
swirly, twirly
gumdrops. And then I
walked through the
Lincoln tunnel. Can
you pass the Coke
pretty please?

Michael hands over a two-liter. Instead of
pouring it in his glass, Buddy chugs the
entire thing. The family watches, amazed.

EMILY

So, where exactly have
you been for the last
thirty years?

WALTER

The North Pole. He's
an "Elf". That's where
elves live.

BUDDY

He's right. Can you
pass the maple syrup,
pretty please.

EMILY

I'm sorry. I didn't
set out any syrup.
It's spaghetti.

BUDDY

That's okay, I think I
have some...

Buddy pulls some syrup out of his breast
pocket and pours it over his spaghetti. Walter
and Michael share a disgusted look, the first
time they've been in agreement on anything in
a while.

EMILY

You like sugar, huh?

BUDDY

Is there sugar in
syrup?

EMILY

Yes.

BUDDY

Then yes! We Elves try
to stick to the four
basic food groups:
Candy, candy canes,
candy corns and syrup.

EMILY

So, will you be
staying with us, then?

WALTER

Emily.

BUDDY

You mean I can stay?

WALTER

Emily!

EMILY

Oh, don't be silly. Of
course you can. How
long do you think
you'll be with us?

BUDDY

Well, I hadn't really
planned it out, but I
was thinking, like,
forever?

WALTER

EMILY!?

EMILY

WHAT?!

WALTER

May I speak with you
in the kitchen for a
moment?

EMILY

Um, sure. Excuse me,
Buddy.

Left alone, Buddy stares at Michael. Michael
ignores him. Turning his whole chair away.
Buddy looks around for a moment. And now
suddenly BURPS so loud and long, it's insane.

BUDDY

Wow, did you hear
that?

Yes, Michael did...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Walter argues with Emily in hushed tones.

WALTER

Are you crazy? He
can't stay here.

EMILY

Clearly he has some
serious issues. We

can't just kick him
out in the snow.

WALTER

Why not? He loves the
snow! He told me
fifteen times!

EMILY

Seriously Walter! He's
alone in New York.
What's he supposed to
do?

WALTER

That's his problem.

EMILY

He's your son. That
means it's our
problem.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Buddy and Michael sit in silence. Buddy isn't
sure what to say.

BUDDY

I love you.

MICHAEL

Eat me.

BUDDY

Eat you? OKAY!

(playing, like
the jungle)

I'm a Lion! Roar!

CHOMP!

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Buddy is on the living room couch. Walter is
tucking him in, trying to leave.

BUDDY

Goodnight, Dad.

WALTER

Goodnight.

BUDDY

Tuck me in?

WALTER

What?!

BUDDY

I can't fall asleep if
I'm not tucked in.

WALTER

I'm not tucking you
in!

BUDDY

I promise I'll go
right to sleep.

WALTER

(reluctantly)

Fine...

BUDDY

TICKLE FIGHT!!!

Walter fights him off, pissed.

WALTER

No. Buddy. Stop!

BUDDY

Sorry.

WALTER

Just lay down and go
to sleep, okay?

BUDDY

Do you want to hear a
story?

WALTER

No. When this light
goes off, you are not
getting up.
Understand?

BUDDY

Understand.

(Walter flicks
off light)

Dad?

(flicks light
on)

WALTER

What?

BUDDY

I love you.

WALTER

Go to sleep.

BUDDY

Do you love me?

WALTER

Yeah sure. Now go to
sleep.

BUDDY

How much do you love
me. Like on a scale
from one to ten?

WALTER

Well, I haven't known
you for very long, but
I would say my
feelings
are...significant.

BUDDY

(to himself;
satisfied)

Significant

WALTER

Good night.

The lights go out for the last time. Walter
closes the door and Buddy is alone in the
DARK.

BUDDY

(in the dark)

Dad.

(long beat)

Dad?

(long beat)

DAD?

(long beat)

DAD?!

(longer beat)

DAD!!!!

The door suddenly swings open and light shoots into the room.

WALTER

WHAT!!!

BUDDY

Hi.

Walter slams the door. It's dark again.

BUDDY

Dad?

INT. HOBBS' KITCHEN - MORNING
Buddy has prepared a huge batch of spaghetti. The table is set up like a deranged thanksgiving feast. Buddy, the host, hurries around the kitchen as Emily eats.

EMILY

This sure is something, I'm usually the one making breakfast.

BUDDY

Want some more spaghetti?

EMILY

Um, sure, why not.

Buddy dumps more spaghetti on her plate. Then sprinkles it with candy snow caps.

EMILY

So how'd you sleep last night?

BUDDY

Great. I got a full forty minutes and still had time to build a rocking horse.

We see a painted and trimmed rocking horse in the corner.

EMILY

My gosh, you built that? Where did you get the wood?

WALTER (O.S.)

Why is the TV on the ground?

REVEAL:

The ENTERTAINMENT CENTER has been completely dismantled to provide wood for the rocking horse. Sawdust and paint litter the living room.

Walter walks into the kitchen, flabbergasted.

EMILY

Good morning, honey.

(she kisses her
husband)

Buddy made us
breakfast, isn't that
nice?

Walter looks at the...spaghetti. So many
things to say, but no place to begin.

EMILY

He packed us lunches
too.

REVEAL:

THREE BAGS of spaghetti have each person's
name written in calligraphy.

EMILY

Well, I gotta run.
Thanks for breakfast,
Buddy.

(grabbing her
bag)

And the lunch!

She kisses him on the cheek and leaves.

BUDDY

Bye Emily!

Buddy takes a huge spoon and lifts three
pounds of spaghetti into frame.

BUDDY

(to Walter)

So, how many scoops?

WALTER

I'm going to stick
with coffee for now.

Now MICHAEL ENTERS. He doesn't care to notice
the weird food.

MICHAEL

(to Walter,
awkward)

I need my allowance.

WALTER

(awkward)

Did you do the
recycling?

MICHAEL

Yeah, I did, okay?

Walter peels off a twenty and Michael
immediately shoves it into his pocket.

BUDDY

How come you guys
don't hug? We always
hug in the morning.

WALTER

(lying)

We hugged earlier.

MICHAEL

(partner in
crime)

Yeah, we hugged
already. Bye.

BUDDY

Bye!

Walter and Buddy are now alone.

WALTER

Listen, Buddy, I
wanted to talk to you.

BUDDY

Good, I wanted to talk
to you too. I've
planned our whole
day...

He's made a list on the Etch-a-sketch.

BUDDY

First we make snow
angels for two hours,
then we go ice-skating
and then we eat a log
of toll house cookie
dough as fast as we
can and then, to wrap
up the day, we
snuggle.

WALTER

Buddy, I have to go to
work.

(beat)

And another thing, if
you're going to be
staying here, you
should think about
getting rid of the
costume. We've got
neighbors and people
around here, you know?

BUDDY

(looking at
himself)

I've worn this my
whole life.

WALTER

Yeah, well, you're not
in the North Pole
anymore.

Buddy is unsure.

WALTER

You said you wanted to
make me happy, didn't
you?

BUDDY

More than anything.

WALTER

Then lose the
tights...as soon as
possible.

BUDDY

As soon as possible?

WALTER

As soon as possible.

BUDDY

(sighing)

Yes, papa.

Walter turns and faces camera, pouring coffee.
Behind him, Buddy TAKES HIS GREEN TIGHTS OFF
and stands there NAKED from the waist down.
(The audience is spared the details).
From the rear, Emily re-enters the kitchen and
sees Buddy from behind.

EMILY

I almost forg ---

AHHHHH!!!!!!

Walter spills his coffee and turns to see
Buddy from the front.

WALTER

AHHHHHHH!!!!

BUDDY

(as if it's a
game)

AHHHHH!!!!

EXT. MANHATTAN - LATER

Walking to work, Walter answers his cell
phone.

WALTER

(answering his
cell)

Walter Hobbs.

BUDDY (O.S.)

(from phone)

It worked! It's you!

We intercut Buddy at home, he's shocked by the
technology.

WALTER

How'd you get this
number?

BUDDY

Emily left an
emergency list.

WALTER

Is there an emergency?

BUDDY

There's a horrible
sound coming from the
evil box by the
window! It sounds like
this: ERIEKKKCTH!

Walter's ear is trashed before he can pull the
phone away.

WALTER

It's not evil. It's
the radiator. The heat
makes noise when it
comes on.

BUDDY

No it's not. Wait yes
it is, you were right.
Everything's fine!

WALTER

I'm hanging up now.

BUDDY

Okay, I love you, I'll
call you in five
minutes, I love you!

WALTER

You don't need to call
me, Buddy, okay?

BUDDY

Good idea. You call
me.

WALTER

Okay, I'm hanging up.

BUDDY

I have a present for
you when you get home!

WALTER

I'm hanging up.

BUDDY

I love you!

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE PRIVATE SCHOOL - LATER
Dozens of kids stream out of school.
Michael is in the middle of the crowd when he
hears his name from across the street.

BUDDY (O.S.)

MICHAEL! MICHAEL!

He looks over and sees Buddy cutting through
traffic.

MICHAEL

(turns away in
embarrassment)

Oh man.

BUDDY

It's me, your brother!
Hey, Michael!

Kids start to notice and begin laughing,
Michael can't bare it. Michael walks away,
ignoring Buddy.

BUDDY

Michael! Wait up!

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER
Michael is walking through the park, Buddy
trails twelve feet behind, sort of hiding
behind trees. But not really.
Michael finally turns and confronts him.

MICHAEL

LEAVE!

BUDDY

How about I leave,
then you count to ten
and come find me?

MICHAEL

This isn't a game,
spaz. Leave NOW. For
REAL.

BUDDY

You really want me to
leave

MICHAEL

Yes.

BUDDY

(sad)

Oh. Okay. I'll uh,
leave, then. I'm
sorry.

Just then, a SNOWBALL WHACKS MICHAEL IN THE
SHOULDER.

EDGE OF THE RAVINE

A big bunch of JACKASS WANNA-BE teenagers look
down at them and laugh.

MICHAEL

Oh, no. These guy are
bad news. We better
get out of here.

Thump! Michael gets hit in the head.

BUDDY

Ow! PEANUT BRITTLE!
SON OF A NUTCRACKER!

Now a barrage of snowballs rain down upon them
and they dive behind a fallen tree trunk as
snow missiles rip into the barricade.

BUDDY

Dive!

MICHAEL

(genuinely
worried)

There are too many of
them!

BUDDY

We can do this! Make
as many snowballs as
you can!

Michael quickly sculpts two snowballs.

WE PAN BACK

To see Buddy has already rounded out a pile of
THIRTY.

BUDDY

Ready?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

WIDE SHOT

We can't see Buddy, but we can see the
snowballs shooting out of his bunker like a
machine gun. A Nolan Ryan fastball ever 1.5
Seconds.

A series of targets explode with precision as
this blur of snowballs hits guts, butts, nuts
and faces. A kid raises a snowball and it
immediately explodes out of his hand. This is

the one thing Buddy's actually better at than hockey.
Michael stands to launch one. Exposing himself.

BUDDY

Noooo!

Michael is frozen with shock as a HUGE KID winds up and releases a snowball right at him. Buddy fires a snowball that hits the incoming snowball exploding both of them in mid-air like a patriot missile. They both sit panting.

BUDDY

He's bunkered in! I'm going to flank around from the East. If I don't make it, tell my Dad I love him.

Buddy jumps and charges - and now Michael follows. Buddy descends upon the guy, launching a flurry of snow. The guy finally raises his arms and steps up slowly in surrender.

Buddy looks at the GUY WITH HIS ARMS UP, then winds up and explodes a snowball off his chest at close range.

SNOWBALL GUY

Ow!

(holding his chest)

Hey, I surrendered!

BUDDY

(to Michael)

What does surrendered mean?

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER

Walter does some paperwork, then hits the intercom.

WALTER

Can you bring me in a bottle of water please?

DEB (O.S.)

(from the intercom)

Fulton Greenway is on his way in.

Fulton Greenway? Walter immediately loses blood in his face.

WALTER

Fulton Greenway? Why didn't you tell me?

DEB (O.S.)

He just showed up. What size water?

WALTER

When's he coming in?

DEB (O.S.)

Now.

WALTER

What do you mean now?
Walter buttons his suit and checks his
reflection for nose hairs.

DEB (O.S.)

I mean now. What size?

FULTON GREENWAY (O.S.)

Hobbs!

FULTON GREENWAY, the cut-throat looking owner
of the company enters the office. This guy
owns Greenway Press, among other things.

WALTER

Fulton! What a great
surprise!

FULTON GREENWAY

I haven't seen you
since the retreat.
You're looking good.

WALTER

Thanks, you too. So,
to what do I owe the
pleasure?

FULTON GREENWAY

Well, to be honest, I
got a call from my
niece.

WALTER

Your niece. I don't
think I've met her.

FULTON GREENWAY

She's six.

Fulton tosses 'THE PUPPY AND THE PIGEON (the
flawed book from earlier) onto Walter's desk.
Uh oh.

FULTON GREENWAY

She wants to know how a certain puppy and a
certain pigeon escaped the clutches of a
certain evil witch.

WALTER

Believe me, we've
already started
looking at new
printers. This one's
obviously gotten
sloppy.

Greenway holds up the proofs, signed by
Walter.

FULTON GREENWAY

Maybe it isn't the
printer who's gotten
sloppy.

WALTER

(forcing a
laugh)

What a disaster, huh?
Twenty-five years in

publishing, never seen
anything like it.
Well, I guess you
can't bat a thousand,
right?

Fulton Greenway nods skeptically. Walter
adjusts in his seat.

FULTON GREENWAY

I got news for you,
even if those two
pages were in there,
that book still would
have sucked. I read
it. I'll tell you, I
wish all the pages
were missing.

(Walter's
dying)

Have you seen the
numbers from this
quarter?

WALTER

They should be coming
in today.

FULTON GREENWAY

(holds up the
numbers)

They're in!

WALTER

That good, huh?

FULTON GREENWAY

The Pigeon and the
Friggin' Puppy is
tanking hard, Hobbs.
My people estimate
we'll be posting a
minus eight for this
quarter. A minus eight
cannot happen.

WALTER

Well, we'll bounce
back. We always do.

FULTON GREENWAY

We're not going to
'bounce back.' We're
going to get a new
book before the end of
the quarter.

WALTER

Before the end of this
quarter?

FULTON GREENWAY

I'll be back in town
on the twenty fourth.
At that time, I'd love
to hear, in great
detail, exactly what

your plans are for
this new book.

WALTER

But that's Christmas
Eve.

FULTON GREENWAY

And?

WALTER

Hey, no problem. It'll
be fun to have you in
the loop.

INT. GIMBELS - LATER THAT DAY

Buddy and Michael are goofing around inside
Gimbels. Buddy pegs him with a dodge ball.
Michael laughs and pegs him back.

MICHAEL

(looking at toy
bugs)

Hey, look at this,
it's a big mosquito!

BUDDY

What's a mosquito?

MICHAEL

They land on your arm,
then stick their
needle face down
through your skin,
suck your blood out
and then fly away.

BUDDY

That's a scary toy.

MICHAEL

It's not just a toy.
They're real. They're
everywhere in the
summer.

BUDDY

(horrified)

OH MY GOD.

EXT. GIMBELS - CONTINUOUS

They leave the toy section and walk toward the
SANTA LAND that Buddy built. We see the sign
has been awkwardly changed to 'Welcome, Santa.
Love GIMBELS.'

BUDDY

I wish Dad were here.

MICHAEL

Why?

BUDDY

He's the greatest Dad
in the world.

MICHAEL

Are you kidding? He's
the worst dad in the
world.

BUDDY

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

All he does is work.

BUDDY

Working is fun.

MICHAEL

Not the way he does
it. All he cares about
is the money. He
doesn't care about me,
he doesn't care about
you, he doesn't care
about anybody.

BUDDY

Well, he is on the
naughty list.

AND NOW WE SPOT JOVIE

From a distance. She looked adorable before,
but this time we're serious.

MICHAEL

You like her?

BUDDY

Like who?

MICHAEL

The girl you're
staring at.

BUDDY

Um, yes.

MICHAEL

Why don't you ask her
out?

BUDDY

Out to where?

MEANWHILE

Jovie has spotted Buddy. She gives him a shy
wave. And now she's WALKING OVER to them.

BUDDY

(flipping out)

We should leave. I
need to leave.

MICHAEL

Don't leave! Ask her
out!

BUDDY

Out?

MICHAEL

On a date, you know,
to eat food.

BUDDY

(Jovie's almost
there)

Food.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

If she says yes,
you're in. It's like a
secret code girls
have.

JOVIE

Well look who it is.

BUDDY

Hi Jovie. This is --

Michael has ditched out. Buddy is on his own.

BUDDY

...that's my brother,
Michael, over there.

JOVIE

I was wondering if I'd
ever see you again.
So, did Gimbels give
you your job back?

BUDDY

No, but it worked out
pretty good. They gave
me a restraining
order.

JOVIE

You really should get
out of here.

BUDDY

But I really wanted to
see you. You're
beautiful and I feel
warm when I'm around
you. You make my
tongue swell up.

Jovie is embarrassed.

JOVIE

You are the weirdest
guy I've ever met in
my life.

BUDDY

Weird, like, good?

JOVIE

(smiling)

I haven't decided.

BUDDY

So, do you want to eat
food?

JOVIE

Do I want to eat food?

BUDDY

You know...

(winking)

The code...

JOVIE

(letting that
slide)

I just took my lunch
break.

BUDDY

(defeated)

Oh, right. I follow.

JOVIE

(then)

But I'm free Thursday
night.

A wry smile slowly breaks across Buddy's face.
And then he suddenly explodes.

BUDDY

(celebrating;
ridiculous)

YEEEESSSSSSSSSS!

INT. HOBBS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Walter enters and sees Buddy and Michael as
they hoist an enormous FOURTEEN FOOT TALL
CHRISTMAS TREE into the corner. It scrapes the
ceiling as they wedge it in place.

WALTER

What the hell is that?

MICHAEL

A Christmas tree!

WALTER

A Christmas tree?

MICHAEL

Buddy chopped it down
in the park!

Buddy smiles at Walter, Walter does not smile
back.

INT. WALTER AND EMILY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael and Emily are having a heated
discussion.

EMILY

I don't know what
you're so worked up
about. They're just
having a little fun.

WALTER

Fun? Felonies are fun
now? I thought
felonies were
felonies?

EMILY

Okay, the tree thing
was bad. We'll have to
plant another one. But
at least

Michael's happy for once.

(beat)

It's amazing what a little attention will do.

WALTER

What's that supposed
to mean?

EMILY

Well, you haven't
exactly been there for
him lately. He's a kid
Walter, he's not going
to raise himself.

WALTER

Oh! So let's allow a
deranged Elf-man to

raise him. Great idea!
Maybe we should pull
Michael out of school
so they can commit
felonies full time!

EMILY

I think you're
jealous.

WALTER

Jealous? Of Buddy? The
man is wearing tights.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MEANWHILE

Buddy uses a drill to secure the trunk to the
floor. ZZZRRrrrr. He then stands at a
distance. Like a high jumper, holding a star
for the top of the tree in hand.

POV

He eyes a mini-trampoline. Then the top of the
tree. And now looks at the star in his hand.
This has bad news written all over it.

MICHAEL

Are you sure about
this? Maybe we can get
a ladder.

BUDDY

A ladder? What's fun
about a ladder?

(concentrating)

Ready?

(taking off)

WATCH!!!!

Buddy runs, hits the trampoline, launches
himself way off target, shooting a sharp angle
into the nearest wall. BAM! HE falls behind
the couch and out of sight.

BUDDY (O.S.)

I'm okay.

(then)

I found a quarter!

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

WALTER

What was that noise?

EMILY

Sounded like Buddy
slamming into the wall
and falling behind the
couch.

WALTER

That guy's a
liability. There's no
way we're leaving him
alone here tomorrow.
He'll trash the place.
Maybe you should take
tomorrow off and, you
know, watch him.

EMILY

I can't just take off
work. I'm going
upstate tomorrow for
budget meetings.

WALTER

Well I can't stay
home. I'm one bad
pitch away from
getting fired.

EMILY

Why don't you take him
to work with you?

WALTER

Take him to work with
me?

EMILY

Yeah, I bet he'd like
it.

WALTER

Absolutely never.

SMASH CUT
TO:

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY
The ELEVATOR DOOR DINGS open to reveal Walter
& Buddy. Buddy sports a new suit. He looks
ever bit the professional as he enters with
his father.

CO-WORKER

Hey, Walter.

WALTER

Hey, Jack.

BUDDY

Hello, Jack!

Another co-worker, #2, nods hello.

WALTER

Hey, Sarah.

BUDDY

Hi, Sarah. I love that
purple dress. It's
purplie.

CO-WORKER #3

How's it going,
Walter?

WALTER

Hello, Francisco.

BUDDY

Hey, Francisco! That's
fun to say! Francisco!

WALTER

(whispering)

Could you at least
lose that damn hat?

BUDDY

I like the hat.

(off Walter's
look)

I could try, but I
really like it.

INT. HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walter sits down at his scattered desk. Deb
follows him in with his morning cup of coffee.

WALTER

Thanks, Deb.

BUDDY

Good morning, Deb! You
have a very pretty
face! You should be on
a Christmas card!

DEB

Uh, thanks.

She leaves. Walter watches as Buddy grabs ten
different books and immediately decides
they're boring.

BUDDY

(to himself)

Fran-cis-co.

WALTER

We're cutting down on
your sugar intake.

BUDDY

Why is your name on
the door?

WALTER

I bought that door. My
name's there so no one
else steals it.

BUDDY

Is that a joke, Dad?

WALTER

Yes.

BUDDY

This is your office,
isn't it?

WALTER

Well how about that?
He's understanding
sarcasm.

BUDDY

So what are we going
to build?

WALTER

This really isn't that
kind of work.

THE PHONE RINGS, Buddy beats Walter to it.

BUDDY

(super-fast
into phone)

Buddy the Elf! What's
your favorite color?

Walter hangs up the phone.

WALTER

Please don't touch
anything!

(beat)

Listen, Buddy, have
you ever seen a mail
room before?

BUDDY

(excited)

A mail room? No.

WALTER

Mail from all over the
world gets sorted all
in one place! And some
of the bins are shiny.

BUDDY

(dreaming)

Shiny...

INT. MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Yelling voices, loud machinery and blaring
hip-hop fill the place. YOUNG, URBAN WORKERS
in criminal apparel wrap and unwrap massive
parcels.

The elevator dings open to reveal Buddy,
alone, frightened. The floor manager, CHUCK,
spots Buddy.

FLOOR MANAGER

You Buddy?

(Buddy nods)

Well come on out of
the elevator then.

BUDDY

Okay.

Floor manager leads Buddy over to the main
work area.

FLOOR MANAGER

Welcome to the pit.

TREY, an enormous, bald African-American man
and CRAIG, a bald, wiry kid with a neck
tattoo, stop their sorting and look up at
Buddy with threatening glares.

FLOOR MANAGER

...over here is the
trench. All the mail
comes out of the
shooter. You scan and
find the floor each
piece is moving to.
Put her in the
canister and shove her
up the tube with the
same number, got it?

BUDDY

Yeah! I like tubes and
cannisters and
numbers. This place
reminds me of Santa's
workshop. Except here
it smells like

mushrooms and everyone
wants to hurt me.

INT. CONVERENCE ROOM - DAY

It's a writer's meeting. The three writers:
EUGENE, HUSKEY and MORRIS sit around a table
with Walter.

WALTER

So, we've got Greenway
coming in tomorrow.
Where are we at?

EUGENE

Well, Huskey and I
were brain storming
and we came up with
what I think is a
pretty big idea.

HUSKEY

You're going to love
this.

MORRIS

I heard it already and
I think it's
fantastic.

WALTER

(pleasantly
surprised)

Okay, great. Let's
hear it.

HUSKEY

Picture this...
(long dramatic
pause)

We bring in Miles
Finch.

WALTER

The Miles Finch?

EUGENE

(excited)

The Golden Ghost.

HUSKEY

We bring him in.

MORRIS

He's written more
classics than Dr.
Seuss. It may not be
easy, but we think
it's worth a shot.

WALTER

So, lemme get this
straight. You guys are
pitching me the idea
of another writer?

EUGENE

Yeah.

HUSKEY

Miles Finch.

Walter looks like he's about to get
angry...but then:

WALTER

I like it.

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - MAIL ROOM - CONTINUOUS
This is Buddy at his best. He stuffs and
launches mail into tubes with incredible speed
and efficiency. No one's ever seen anything
like it.
Almost without noticing, Buddy begins singing
to himself.

BUDDY

(singing)

On the first day of
Christmas, my true
love gave to me...

He feels Trey's stares and catches himself. He
turns to find a stone cold killer glare.

TREY

(beat)

A partridge in a pear
tree.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY
Walter and the writers are huddled around a
speaker phone.

EUGENE

My favorite book of
yours has to be Gus'
Pickles. It was
existential, yet so
accessible.

HUSKEY

It's a thrill just to
be talking to you on
our speaker phone.

WALTER

So what do you think?
Can you fly in
tomorrow morning?

A beat, and then Miles Finch's voice comes
over the speaker phone, mysterious and
brilliant.

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

(intercom)

I'll give you five
hours tomorrow, not a
minute more.

WALTER

(relieved)

Great.

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

I'd like a black S-500
to receive me at the
airport. I need the
interior of that car
to be 71 degrees.

WALTER

We can do that.

DEB (O.S.)

(over intercom;

BEEP!)

Walter! There's a
situation downstairs.

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

I'm sorry, what?

Hello?

WALTER

(in panic)

Deb, hang up! Miles
stay on!

MILES FINCH

I do not hold! Do not
put me on hold!

DEB (O.S.)

We have a problem in
the mail room.

HUSKEY

What's going on?

WALTER

(pointing to
Huskey)

Do not talk!

(into phone)

Deb, please hang up!

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

That's it, I'm gone!

WALTER

MILES! WAIT!

Dramatic pause. Is he gone?

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

I'll be there
tomorrow.

(phew!)

71 degrees...

He clicks off.

DEB (O.S.)

Sir, Chuck in the mail
room.

WALTER

Okay, okay! I'm going
to the stupid mail
room!

INT. MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Buddy's singing has spread like wild fire. The
whole mailroom is now singing a beautiful
rendition of THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS.
Everyone is circled around, cheering and
singing.

TREY

Eleven-pipers-
piping...

CRAIG

Ten-lords-a-leaping...

LAZY-EYED CREEP

Nine-ladies-dancing...

GANG BANGER

Eight-maids-milking...

TREY

Six-geese-a-laying...

EVERYBODY

FIVE GOLDEN RINGS!!!

REVEAL

Walter is watching this display. The workers begin to notice Walter standing. One by one, they stop, until Buddy is left to continue alone.

BUDDY

(as he squat-
thrusts)

On the twelfth day of
Christmas, my true
love...gave...to...

Buddy notices his dad and smiles. Walter does not.

EXT. JOVIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Buddy walks up to the buzzer panel until he finds the name Jovie Davis.

He presses the buzzer BRRR!!!! It scares the hell out of him. He jumps back and is then frightened to death as he is confronted by the sight of a display window full of Chinese roasted ducks. Still sporting heads. Jovie steps out.

BUDDY

(taking her in)

You look miraculous.

JOVIE

Miraculous? Thanks.

(they start
walking)

So what do you feel
like doing?

BUDDY

I have a few ideas.

JOVIE

Well, I'm up for
anything.

BUDDY

Really?

JOVIE

Sure.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Jovie sits blind-folded at the counter as Buddy sets up a cup of coffee before her.

BUDDY

Don't look. Just reach
out and take a sip.

JOVIE

(smiles)

What are you doing?

She takes a sip.

BUDDY

Well?

JOVIE

It tastes like a
crappy cup of coffee.

BUDDY

Ha ha.

He removes the blindfold.

JOVIE

It is a crappy cup of
coffee.

EXT. MID-TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER

Buddy is running around and around a revolving
door. Loving every moment.

Jovie watches, confused. Smirking slightly as
OTHERS wait and grow annoyed with him.

EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Buddy pulls her by the arm.

BUDDY

Check out the size of
this...

He shows her a pine tree decorated for
Christmas.

BUDDY

Can you believe it?

JOVIE

(nonplussed)

Come with me.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER - LATER

Jovie leads him around the corner.

REVEAL:

ROCKEFELLER CENTER. Buddy sees the GIANT
CHRISTMAS TREE for the first time.

BUDDY

Wow, that looks
wondrous.

They share their first genuine smile.

EXT. ICE RINK - LATER

Buddy and Jovie are skating, having fun. Jovie
accidentally slides, BUMPING BUDDY. Buddy
bumps her back. She bumps him back harder. It
escalates until she checks him off of his
feet. THEY FALL to the ice together, Jovie on
top, nose to nose.

They look into each other's eyes and Buddy
abruptly plants a kiss on Jovie's cheek.

BUDDY

Sorry.

JOVIE

You missed.

BUDDY

I missed?

JOVIE

Yeah.

With that, She leans in and kisses him full on
the mouth. Buddy's hear fills his whole chest.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NEXT DAY
Walter and the writers sit in silence,
waiting. Walter checks his watch. Still
waiting.

HUSKEY

I sure hope that car's
seventy one degrees.

EXT. MANHATTAN - CONTINUOUS
The door swings open with a purpose:
REVEAL

Buddy. The morning after. Steps into the door
frame like ELVIS. A changed man. WE follow him
down the street. Buddy's not skipping, he's
SKIPPING.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS
Walter and the writer's continue to wait.
Nervous hand wringing.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS
We see only the shoes of the infamous Miles
Finch march through the company, echoing
throughout the halls.
We see some of the workers' reactions.
This is epic.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS
More nervous waiting.

EUGENE

I should have brought
my camera.

More silence...and then:

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

Alright. Let's do
this.

REVEAL
Miles Finch is FOUR FEET TALL. He may be very
small, but in this business, he is a monster.

WALTER

Miles! Thanks so much
for coming. We're all
big fans. I'm Walter.
We spoke on the phone.

MILES FINCH

Yeah, yeah. Great.
Let's get the uh --
(i.e. Cash)

Taken care of so we
can get started.

Walter pulls out a small manila envelope
stacked with cash and slides it across the
table. The three other writers watch it slide
across, moving their heads like a tennis
match, until Miles stops it with his hand.
Miles checks the money and tucks it into his
vest pocket.

MILES FINCH

Okay, cool.

(right to the
point)
So what have you guys
got so far?

WALTER

(to Huskey)

Go ahead.

HUSKEY

(nervous)

Okay, well, we were
thinking something
like this: we open on
a young Tomato. He's
been through some
tough times on the
farm.

MILES FINCH

No tomatoes. Too
vulnerable. Kids are
already vulnerable.

WALTER

That's what we were
kind of thinking.

MILES FINCH

And no farms,
everyone's pushing
small-town rural. Any
farm book will just be
white noise.

WALTER

Okay. Well, we don't
have much time. Do you
have any ideas?

MILES FINCH

I've got five or six
strong starts. I'm
sure we can put
something very solid
together. No problem.

(Walter is very
happy)

There's one idea I'm
especially psyched
about. It's one of
those ideas where
you're just like YES!

WALTER

What is it?!

MILES FINCH

I'll start with the
cover, okay? Picture
this: A--

BUDDY (O.S.)

Dad!

Walter is still fixated on Miles, waiting for
his golden ticket. Finally he snaps out of it
and looks at Buddy.

BUDDY

I'm in love! I'm in
love! And I don't care
who knows it!

WALTER

Not now, Buddy. Why
don't you go...uh,
back to the pit? I'll
come visit you later,
okay?

Buddy goes to leave, but before he does, he
NOTICES A FOUR FOOT TALL MILES FINCH.

BUDDY

(looking at
little Miles)
You didn't tell me you
had Elvises working
here!

MILES FINCH

(icy stare)
Boy you are hilarious,
my friend.

WALTER

So what are you
saying, Miles? Let's
get back to the book.

MILES FINCH

(back on track)
Okay, at the top of
the cover is the
title, et this, ready?
A --

BUDDY

Boy, the candy canes
here in New York just
don't measure up to
Elf standards, do
they?

MILES FINCH

(another icy
stare)
Gee whiz, we're all
laughing our butts
off.

WALTER

Buddy! Please. Just go
in the basement!

BUDDY

Do you guys have an
Elf hockey league
here? I'm just
curious.

MILES FINCH

Hey, jack weed. I may
be "little," but I get
more action in a week
than you've had your

whole life. I've got
houses in LA, Hawaii,
Vail and Paris, with a
seventy inch plasma
screen in each one of
them. So I suggest you
wipe that friggin'
smile off your face
before I bite it off.

(leaning in)

You feelin' strong,
friend? Call me ELF
one more time.

BUDDY

(to his Dad)

Boy, he's an angry
Elf.

Miles suddenly ATTACKS! Buddy tries to avoid
him, but Miles is surprisingly strong,
flipping Buddy over the table.
Now out of nowhere, Buddy winds up like Popeye
and decks him across the face. Buddy looks at
his own fist in horror.

BUDDY

(looking at his
fist)

What have I done?

This gives Miles permission to deliver five
QUICK HOCKEY PUNCHES to the face. Buddy is
down for the count.

Miles stands, victorious and grabs his coat.

MILES FINCH

All of you can kiss my
vertically challenged
ass.

Miles takes the envelope of money out of his
jacket and pretends to toss it on the table,
pump faking. Then returns it to his vest
pocket and walks out.

WALTER

Miles! Wait!

BUDDY

(to himself)

A South Pole Elf.

Buddy rubs his chin and stands to face his
father.

BUDDY

You're really red.

WALTER

DAMMIT BUDDY! THIS
TIME YOU REALLY DID
IT! GET THE HELL OUT
OF HERE!!

BUDDY

(scared)

Where do you want me
to go?

WALTER

Go anywhere! I don't
care if you're crazy.
I don't care if you're
an elf!! I don't care
if you're my son!!!
JUST STAY OUT OF MY
LIFE!!!

This one stings hard. Buddy runs off, upset
like never before.

EXT. MANHATTAN - LATER

QUICK CUTS

Buddy walking through the city, devastated.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER

Walter is stressed, rubbing his face, pulling
his hair out, on the phone. He's losing his
career, and now he knows he's hurt Buddy.

WALTER

(into phone)

I can't really talk
right now.

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

INTERCUT with Emily.

EM

You're gonna be home
for dinner, aren't
you? I mean it is
Christmas Eve.

WALTER

It looks like it's
gonna be a late one.

EM

Oh. Do you wanna send
Buddy home early?

WALTER

(riddled with
guilt)

Oh, um, we'll talk
about it later. I
gotta go, okay?

Suddenly the three writers rush in. Walter
hangs up.

HUSKEY

Walter! Huge news. The
cleaning man just
found this!

WALTER

What is it?

Huskey hands over a black journal and Walter
flips through it.

HUSKEY

Miles Finch's
notebook! He left it
in the conference
room. There's three
great pitches in the
first page alone!

MORRIS

Plus we've got his
doodle-squiggles all
over the back cover!
We're not sure what
they mean, but they're
probably gold!

HUSKEY

I say we o with the
first pitch in there!
It's a slam dunk!

EUGENE

I agree, a home run.

MORRIS

Monster.

WALTER

How much time do we
have?

HUSKEY

Forty-five.

WALTER

Let's get some story
boards ready.

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - NIGHT
Buddy steps out of the closet...

REVEAL

He's wearing his ELF SUIT again. Never before
has an Elf looked so sad.

Buddy sits at the table and unfurls some long
paper. He dips a quill pen in to some ink and
writes in PERFECT CALLIGRAPHY.

WE HEAR BUDDY'S VOICE AS HE WRITES.

BUDDY (V.O.)

I'm sorry I ruined
your lives... And
crammed eleven cookies
into the VCR. I don't
belong here. I don't
belong anywhere. I
will never forget you.

Love, Buddy.

Buddy sets down the scroll, and now, as if
sealing it, sets his SNOW GLOBE down on the
crease.

Buddy walks out into the night.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

In his Elf Suit, Buddy trudges through the
stormy New York night. The wind viciously
blows. Buddy walks against it, the snow
blowing into him.

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - LATER

Michael comes home, carrying a bunch of
presents. He looks around the empty house.

MICHAEL

Buddy?

INT. GREENWAY PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Fulton Greenway and his crew sit at the end of the conference room, looking sharp as a tack. Walter is at the other end, looking even sharper.

GREENWAY

As you know, we need a big launch, fast. To get this company back on track. So, I think I speak for my fellow board members when I say...

(dramatic
pause)

This better be good.

Walter smiles, then re-checks his storyboards, beaming.

WALTER

I'm confident, sir. You will not be disappointed.

GREENWAY

Let's hear it.

WALTER

My pleasure. I'll start with the cover, okay? Picture this: A-

-

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Dad?!

Walter turns.

His son Michael is standing in the room.

WALTER

Michael?

MICHAEL

Buddy left!

WALTER

What?

Michael holds up the calligraphy scroll Buddy wrote. Everyone is confused.

MICHAEL

He wrote this note! He left his snow globe! He's gone!

WALTER

Okay, listen. Let me finish this meeting and we'll figure this out. Okay?

MICHAEL

Finish your meeting?!

(beat)

How'd I know you were going to say that?

Michael turns to leave, furious. Walter is torn...

WALTER

Michael! Wait!
Michael stops in his tracks, giving his dad a chance. Hopeful.

WALTER

(to the board)

Mr. Greenway, we have to reschedule this.

GREENWAY

We don't have time to reschedule! I want to hear the damn thing NOW!

(to Michael)

Son, this has to wait.

WALTER

No it doesn't. We'll do this some other time, Mr. Greenway.

GREENWAY

This isn't happening. You're going to sit in that chair and pitch me a hit friggin' book! NOW!

WALTER

Mr. Greenway, with all due respect, KISS MY ASS!

MICHAEL

Kiss my ass, too!!

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS
Walter and Michael walk down the hall, triumphantly, together.

GREENWAY (O.S.)

(in the distance)

If you walk out, Hobbs, you can never come back to Greenway!

EXT. THE 59TH STREET BRIDGE - NIGHT
Buddy's on the bridge, looking down. Contemplating the worst of all possible conclusions. WAVES crash and churn far below.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK WEST - CONTINUOUS
Walter and Michael are walking fast, searching, half-jogging. Losing hope. Where's Buddy?

EXT. 59TH STREET BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS
Buddy closes his eyes tight, then looks up, a tear streams down his cheek.
SUDDENLY SOMETHING CATCHES HIS EYE.
A distant point with a glowing trail of smoke. Buddy narrows his eyes to see as the point grows as it approaches. It slowly reveals itself to be SANTA'S SLEIGH!
Tangled with reindeer, fish-tailing, and CRASHING!

BUDDY

Santa?!

EXT. MANHATTAN - MEANWHILE

Walter is facing away from the park, in the sky behind him is the diving sled. Michael sees this all. His face is aglow.

MICHAEL

Oh...My...God!

WALTER

(missing it;
turning)

What was that?!

In shock, without a word, Michael takes off running toward the park.

WALTER

What happened?

(running after
him)

Michael, wait up!?

EXT. SANTA'S CRASH SIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Buddy, running, frantic, comes upon Santa's SLEIGH in the distance. The reindeer peacefully graze as Santa struggles with the smoking sleigh. The landing looks to have been rough as the sleigh has dug a deep fifty foot long trench in the snow and dirt. Santa frantically attempts to repair the problem with his head hidden under a hood panel. Smoke rises.

BUDDY

Santa!

Santa jumps out from under the hood clutching a TIRE IRON.

SANTA

Back off slick!!!

He then recognizes him.

SANTA

Buddy?? Is that you?

BUDDY

Are you okay?

SANTA

Boy am I glad to see you. The Claus-o-meter suddenly dropped down to zero. There's almost no Christmas Spirit in New York. The strain was too much, the engine broke free of her mounts. I need an Elf's help.

BUDDY

But I'm not an Elf, Santa. I can't do anything right.

SANTA

Buddy, you're more of
an elf than anyone
I've ever met, and the
only one who I would
have working on my
sleigh.

BUDDY

Really?

SANTA

Really. Will you fix
the engine for me,
Buddy?

BUDDY

I will. Papa taught me
how.

SANTA

You'll have to find it
first, she dropped off
back there a ways.

Buddy runs off into the woods.

INT. JOVIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jovie walks out of the kitchen as NEW YORK ONE
drones quietly on the TV. IT features a
breaking NEWS STORY set in CENTRAL PARK. A
REMOTE REPORTER is on the scene.

REMOTE REPORTER

New York One has been
unable to confirm
anything, but it's
obvious that something
has happened in
Central Park.
Authorities are
clearing out the park
and all entrances have
been barricaded. As
you can see, quite a
crowd is starting to
gather.

The camera pans and we see a huge crowd is
gathering outside Central Park, held back by
barricades and police.

The female reporter steps over to a Latino
man, who holds his 5-year old son in his arms.

REMOTE REPORTER

Sir, you say you were
able to get a first-
hand look at what
happened? Tell me,
what did you see?

LATINO MAN

I was walking along,
and I saw a huge
flash, and then
something came
swooping down...

REMOTE REPORTER

Something? Do you mean
an airplane or a
helicopter?

LATINO MAN

It wasn't like that.
IT sounds crazy, but
it looked like, uh...

He's too embarrassed.

LATINO CHILD

It was Santa's Sleigh!

REMOTE REPORTER

(dismissive)

Aren't you a cutie.

(listening to
earpiece)

This could be a big
hoax. I'm now told we
have some amateur
footage of a strange
man dressed as an Elf.
Let's take a look.

ON THE SCREEN

A zoomed-in blurry image of Buddy running. He
trips and falls on his face like an idiot.
Then scrambles up and runs into the woods.
Sort of like that old Big Foot Footage, if he
had done a face plant. It ends in a freeze
frame of Buddy's FACE as he looks over a
shoulder.

They re-play the footage over and over and
over again.

JOVIE

(seeing Buddy)

Oh my God.

EXT. ENGINE SITE - CENTRAL PARK -
CONTINUOUS

Walter and Michael stop at a smoking object in
the snow. It's SANTA'S MISSING ENGINE.

WALTER

What the...

BUDDY (O.S.)

You found it!

Michael and Walter look up to see Buddy
approaching them. Michael runs to him with a
hug.

MICHAEL

Buddy! You're here!

BUDDY

(in a hurry)

There's something I've
got to tell you guys!

WALTER

(ignoring;
focused)

No. Me first. There's
something I want to
tell you right now! I

take back everything I
said. You may be a
little...how do you
say... chemically
imbalanced. But you've
been right about a lot
of things. I promise
you, I'm going to be
making some changes in
my life. I don't want
you to leave... I need
you. You're my son and
I love you.

They hug. This means more Buddy than anyone
could ever know.

SANTA (O.S.)

(from a foggy
distance)

Buddy?! How are we
looking?? We gotta
move!

WALTER

Who was that?

EXT. SANTA'S CRASH SITE - CONTINUOUS

Buddy leads them to the clearing. Pulling back
a tree branch to reveal:

TRUTH

Santa's GROUNDED SLEIGH and nine grazing
reindeer. Shocked awe.

MICHAEL

(can barely
speak)

Cool...

Walter cannot yet deal with this reality. His
eyes getting wider and wider...about to faint?

TV COVERAGE - CONTINUOUS

REMOTE REPORTER

Dick, according to
authorities, the area
has been cleared. Only
the Central Park
Rangers remain in the
park.

EXT. BELVEDERE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

TRACKING CLOSE UP OF HOOVES

All lined up along a ridge. FOUR BLACK MARES
breathe steam into the night air. Their RIDERS
are silently staring into the night. They wear
black leather boots and trench coats.

Chrome helmets sit atop faces shrouded in
shadow. A silver eagle badge reads CENTRAL
PARK RANGERS. They look down upon the sleigh,
quite a distance away.

REMOTE REPORTER (V.O.)

These forces are
highly trained, but
rarely see action.

Some have accused them
of being too "gung ho"
when called into duty.
And their crowd
control tactics at the
Simon and Garfunkel
concert in '85 were
much criticized.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

JOVIE IS RUNNING down the street, heading into
Central Park.

EXT. GREAT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

Buddy works on the engine while Walter and
Michael try to wake up from this strange
dream.

MICHAEL

So...you're...real?

SANTA

(re: sleigh;
working)

Hold this for a sec.

WALTER

This is not happening.

Walter and Michael, stunned, hold the hood up.

MICHAEL

Buddy's really an Elf?

BUDDY

Actually, I'm adopted.

MICHAEL

I can't believe it.

SANTA

Tell me, what did you
want for Christmas,
Michael?

MICHAEL

I wanted a skateboard.

Santa pulls out a scroll. He points to his
name in calligraphy on a THICK LEATHER-BOUND
BOOK.

It's THE LIST.

SANTA

(verifying)

Not just a skateboard,
a Real Huf Board with
high 145 Thunder
Trucks. 52 millimeter
Spitfire Classic
Wheels and bolts from
Diamond and some Swiss
Bearings.

In this moment, Walter and Michael both really
believe.

ECU

We see the CLAUS-O-METER move up a little.
The sleigh SHUDDERS and RISES, then falls to
the ground.

MICHAEL

What happened?

SANTA

Before our Viper
engine days, this
thing used to run
solely on Christmas
Spirit. You two
believe in me. You
made my sleigh fly.

MICHAEL

They fly away! Quick!
Before they catch you!

SANTA

I wish I could. I'm
afraid I need more
than the Spirit of
just you two.

MICHAEL

Hold it. If you're
really Santa, we can
just get the news
cameras in here and
everyone will believe
in you, then your
sleigh will fly,
right?

SANTA

Christmas Spirit is
about believing, not
seeing. If the whole
world saw me, all
would be lost. The
paparazzi have been
after me for years.

Michael spots the RANGERS on the crest in the
distance.

MICHAEL

Look!

They all look up in fear as the riders
disappear into the woods. Buddy pulls Walter
aside. Michael follows.

BUDDY

Santa needs your help.

MICHAEL

But, what can we do?

BUDDY

I got an idea.

He whispers a PLAN to Walter and Michael.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

The Rangers gallop through the darkness of the
woods toward the sleigh.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

Michael SNATCHES the LIST from Santa and runs
into the woods.

SANTA

My List!
Buddy stops Santa from chasing. He takes
command.

BUDDY

Santa, let him go.
You'll get it back.
Now, listen to me. I
need you to give
Walter your hat and
coat.

SANTA

But Mrs. Claus made
them for me...

WALTER

Hurry! Do you have any
idea what would happen
to Santa Clause in
prison?!

Santa complies and Walter dons the over-sized
ensemble.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRICADES - CONTINUOUS
REMOTE REPORTER spots Michael running out of
the trees.

REMOTE REPORTER

A young boy has just
come running out of
the park...Let me see
if I can get a
comment...

(to Michael)

Did you see anything?

MICHAEL

It's the real Santa!
His sleigh can't fly
cause nobody believes
in him!

REMOTE REPORTER

(blowing him
off)

Now, this is feeling
more and more like
some kind of elaborate
Christmas hoax.

MICHAEL

This isn't a stunt.
It's true! Everyone
out there, Santa needs
us to believe! I can
prove he's real. This
is Santa's LIST!

He pulls out the LIST and reads:

MICHAEL

Lynn Kessler wants a
Powerpuff Girls play
set! Mark Webber wants
an electric guitar!

SERIES OF CUTS TO:

Lynn and Mark. Each with their eyes wide open, believing, giving Santa power.

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Emily still in her coat with groceries is watching Michael on TV in the apartment.

EMILY

Michael!

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Michael reads the list into the camera.

MICHAEL

Stan Tobias wants a
powerpumper water
rifle. Carolyn
Reynolds wants a
Suzie-Talks-A-Lot...

SERIES OF CUTS TO:

Carolyn, the girl from the Doctor's office, at home watching on TV.

CAROLYN

Thank you, Buddy!

MICHAEL

Dirk Lawson wants a
day of pampering at
Burke-Williams spa.

WE CUT TO:

A ROUGH-LOOKING BIKER, 35, in a bar. His biker friends all look at him.

BIKER

Must be another Dirk
Lawson...

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL

Dave Keckler wants
some Pony High Tops!

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

The female Remote Reporter attempts to step in.

REMOTE REPORTER

That's quite enough
little fella.

MICHAEL

What's your name?

REMOTE REPORTER

(smiling)

I'm Charlotte Dennon.

MICHAEL

Lemme see. Charlotte
Dennon wants a
"Tiffany engagement
ring, and for your
boyfriend to stop
dragging his feet and
commit already!"

Off the Reporter's look, we...

SMASH CUT
TO:

The SURGE IN CHRISTMAS SPIRIT makes Santa's Sleigh RISE A FOOT OFF THE GROUND. We see the gauge go forward a bit.

SANTA

We got power!

Santa snaps the reigns. The sleigh starts to lumber forward. Buddy still struggles with the engine under the sleigh.

BUDDY

I don't have the engine fixed yet!

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

The reporter stands speechless as the ANCHORMAN talks into her earpiece...

INT. NEW YORK ONE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The Anchorman is confused.

ANCHORMAN

Charlotte? Charlotte? We seem to be having some technical difficulty with our remote unit. Now for weather on the ones...

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

The Reporter stands staring at Michael as the lights are TURNED OFF on the remote unit.

MICHAEL

No!

REMOTE REPORTER

(stunned)

How did you know that?

MICHAEL

I'm telling you, it's Santa! We have to get the cameras back on! He needs our help!

This giant scene at the barricades has gone dark. The crowd offers scattered boos. Emily consoles Michael.

CROWD (O.S.)

Let the kid read! What do I want?!

The crowd stands around, confused. Jovie runs up to Michael and Emily, winded.

JOVIE

Where's Buddy?!

MICHAEL

He's with Santa. The sleigh won't fly. No one's believing! We need to get these cameras back on!

Jovie looks around. Trying to think of a plan. Inspired, she climbs atop a horse's carriage and looks out over the crowd. She's intimidated.

JOVIE

(to herself)

The best way to spread
Christmas cheer is
singing loud for all
to hear...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS
Walter, standing watch, sees the MOUNTED
POLICE CHARGING.

WALTER

Get out of here!
They're coming!
There's enough
Christmas spirit to
start moving!

Buddy jumps in. The sleigh slowly hovers
forward a foot off the ground, in a herky-
jerky way. The MOUNTED RIDERS come at Walter
who wears Santa's hat and coat. He attempts to
be a decoy.

WALTER

Hey! I'm right here!
Ho ho ho! You got me!
I surrender!

They ride right past him and after the sleigh.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS
Buddy and Santa swerve past trees, scraping
bark and smashing branches. Santa catches a
glimpse over his shoulder of the Rangers in
hot pursuit.

SANTA

Grab the shot gun
under the seat and
give 'em some heat!

BUDDY

What?!

SANTA

A joke, Buddy. Lighten
up! Listen, there's
barely enough magic to
make this thing move.
Keep working on the
engine!

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS
Above the huge crowd that has gathered at the
barricade, we see Jovie standing on top of a
car roof. Timidly, she begins singing, her
sweet voice cracking with fear.

JOVIE

You better watch out,
you better not cry,
you better not pout.
I'm telling you why...

Walter finally arrives. He joins his family,
watching Jovie.

WALTER

(to Emily)

He wasn't lying.

EMILY

Merry Christmas.

They hug.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Buddy, risking his life, working on the engine at high speed. Smoke and sparks billow out. Santa struggles to maintain control. They hit a bump and some toys fly out of the back. A Jack in the Box rattles by Buddy, POPPING OPEN.

BUDDY

Ah!

They find themselves blocked by a giant FOUNTAIN with the Rangers close behind.

BUDDY

I've almost got it!

SANTA

We need power, now!

Buddy tweaks the engine. It HOWLS TO LIFE and the urge of power BLOWS THE SLEIGH FORTY FEET INTO THE AIR, clearing the fountain.

BUDDY

(in triumph)

YES!! I DID IT!! I'M
THE GREATEST ADOPTED
ELF IN THE WHOLE WIDE
WORLD!

SANTA

Good job, Buddy!

But now the belly of the coach nails the winged statue atop the fountain, yanking the whole engine back out of the sleigh. YOINK! The machine whirls and shoots off the trees. The engineless sleigh crashes down to the bricks.

SANTA

That's it. With no engine, we're toast.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

JOVIE

He sees you when
you're sleeping...

Emily is the first to join in. And now Michael sings too. And now some others...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Still with some Spirit power, the sleigh scrapes along the paved mall, sending sparks showering into the night air as the horses close in.

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

The WHOLE CROWD sings. The Remote Reporter sees this and puts her finger to her earpiece.

REMOTE REPORTER

(to the studio)

Dick, come back to remote 3. I think I've got something here.

JOVIE & THE CROWD

He knows if you've
been bad or good, so
be good for goodness
sake...

CAMERAS TURN BACK ON.

REMOTE TRUCK'S LIGHTS POP BACK ON. Again, the
scene is aglow.

REMOTE REPORTER

(into cameras)

Charlotte Dennon, back
at Central Park.
Although we're still
unclear about what led
to this holiday rally,
hundreds of New
Yorkers have
spontaneously gathered
together and broken
out into song. A
curious Christmas Eve,
to say the least.
Let's listen in...

BRIEF CUTS AROUND THE CITY

The Broadcast is being watched...

- We see the MAILROOM guys in A bar singing
along in perfect harmony.
- the THREE WRITERS are singing.
- the DOCTOR is singing.
- the GUARDS from the Empire State Building
are singing.
- the TEENAGERS who threw snowballs sing.
- the ELF MANAGER from Gimbels sings with co-
workers.

ELF MANAGER

(as his friends
sing)

Do what you want, I
ain't singing a damn
thing.

EXT. THE MOVING SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

Santa's sleigh is being rail-roaded. Right
into the barricades. No steering, no lift...up
in the distance, we see they are headed for a
collision.

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

As Emily and Michael sing along, Michael looks
up at Walter and notices something peculiar.
He busts his father.

MICHAEL

Wait! You're NOT singing!

WALTER

Yes I am.

MICHAEL

No you're not. You're
just moving your lips.

WALTER

Michael! Please, I
have a terrible voice.

MICHAEL

Dad!!!

Then, in spite of himself, WALTER BELTS OUT
THE CHORUS in such an awful voice, it draws
looks from the singers around him. As the bad
notes rise into the chilly night air...

WALTER

(terrible)

Santa Claus is coming
to town!

EXT. THE MOVING SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

Walter's singing somehow does the trick. The
CLAUS-O-METER shoots to the MAX!

A dash light BLINKS "HO HO HO" as the gauge
hits the red zone. Santa howls in approval.
The SLEIGH flies up into the night air and
over the barricade, reporters and on-lookers.
The rangers slide to a stop, foiled at last.
As the shadow of the sleigh zips high over
them, the whole crowd joins in, singing their
hearts out. Jovie can't believe it. She sings
even stronger.

A VOICE BOOMS OUT from a mysterious silhouette
into the magical winter night...

SANTA

Ho, ho, ho. Merry
Christmas!

Santa's sleigh whips down Sixth Ave. and into
the Manhattan night sky. And silhouettes
against the moon.

FREEZE FRAME

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And so, with a little
help, Buddy managed to
save Christmas.

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - CHRISTMAS DAY

Walter, Michael, Buddy, Emily and Jovie sit
happily gathered around their Christmas tree.
Wrapping paper everywhere.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And his spirit saved a
lot of other people,
too. It was quite a
Christmas, and quite a
New Year.

INT. WALTER'S NEW COMPANY - DAY

Walter is stenciling the name 'HOBB'S
PUBLISHING'.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Walter started his own
independent publishing
company. His first
book was written by a
brand new critically

acclaimed children's
author...

INT. GIMBELS - DAY

The 'ELF' book from the beginning of the movie
is Buddy's. He's doing a book signing. The
place is packed.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

The book was called
'Elf'. A fictional
story about an adopted
Elf named Buddy who
was raised in the
North Pole. Went to
New York, ate
spaghetti, worked in a
shiny mail room and
eventually saved
Christmas.

Buddy and Walter ice skate together at
Rockefeller Center in the middle of the night.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And every year, on
Christmas day, after
all the presents are
opened by children
around the world,
Buddy and his Dad make
up for lost time...

Buddy still tries to hold his hand. Walter
slaps it away.

INSERT

We see an Elfish hand applying white out to
Walter's name on the List.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Walter even made the
jump from 'naughty' to
'nice'.

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - DAY

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And, as for me, I
can't complain. Buddy
comes up to visit from
time to time.

RAPID FIRE FINALE OF BUDDY SLAMMING HIS HEAD
INTO DOORWAYS, BEAMS AND CABINETS.

BUDDY

Ow! Yikes! Golly!
Charles Dickens! Sone
of a Gnome!
Fiddlesticks! Snow
Flickers!

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Jovie, in real Elf clothes, sets a pitcher of
milk in front of Papa Elf. She sits beside
Buddy who cradles a NEWBORN BABY in his arms
wearing a pink Elf hat that says SUSIE.

This is the last image of the movie and also the last image of the book. It freezes and now becomes a drawing and we pull out to see it's the last page of Buddy's ELF book, which magically flips closed.

We're back in the bookstore from the very first scene. A little kid grabs the book out of the window.

FADE TO BLACK.

Credits