

IT ALMOST WASN'T CHRISTMAS

By

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and

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Please Note:

Network asked for title change to the following:

IT NEARLY WASN'T CHRISTMAS

SHOOTING SCRIPT
Producers:
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IT ALMOST WASN'T CHRISTMAS

To MAJESTIC MUSIC, OPEN ON:

1 EXT. NORTH POLE - THE AURORA BOREALIS - NIGHT - MATTE PAINTING 1

The Northern Lights shimmer and glow spectacularly over the North Pole. SMOKE drifts up into the FRAME and we TILT DOWN TO REVEAL the smoke is coming out of one of the chimneys on a lovely house made of sparkly crystal and ice. CRANE DOWN into the chimney through the smoke past the warm fire crackling in the fireplace, and into that fabled place:

2 INT. SANTA CLAUS' DEN - NIGHT 2

We PAN AROUND this charmingly rustic, wood-paneled room, past

3 CLOSE ANGLE - A PORTRAIT OF SANTA 3

looking exuberant and jolly hanging over the fireplace,

4 INT. SANTA'S DEN 4

past a framed photo of Mrs. Claus sitting behind plates full of cookies and candy canes on an end table, past a picture of Santa and his Elves taken when they were young elfettes, and onto

5 MRS. CLAUS 5

-- a kindly-eyed, gentle woman of some girth -- bustling into Santa's Den bringing more plates of cookies on a tray:

MRS. CLAUS

Dear, the Elves are going crazy. It's
two weeks before Christmas. They need
you desperately back in the workshop.

Swiveling around in his favorite easy chair to eye his wife morosely is

6 SANTA CLAUS 6

himself, wearing red flannel longjohns, red suspenders, red pants and black boots. In marked contrast to his portrait over the mantle, Santa looks deeply depressed. He doesn't even give the plate of cookies a cursory glance.

MRS. CLAUS

Dear, the Elves need you.

SANTA

What for? There aren't enough stars
in the sky for people -- they want more
and more. They've gotten so greedy.

(sighing deeply)

Why am I knocking myself out for them?

Continued..

6 CONTINUED:

6

MRS. CLAUS
(handing Santa milk and a cookie)
Because they'd be terribly disappointed
and unhappy if you didn't.

SANTA
(he won't take the milk and cookie)
You're wrong. They don't care about
Santa Claus anymore.
(pointing to computer on his desk)
Just look at the number of "Believers" in
the Naughty or Nice computer.

7 CLOSE-UP: BAR CHART ON COMPUTER SCREEN

7

The bar charting the number of Believers is much smaller than the
bar chart denoting Non-Believers.

8 ON MRS. CLAUS

8

MRS. CLAUS
(peering at computer screen
in disbelief)
Oh my, that does seem rather meager.

Santa points to a table piled sky high with letters:

SANTA
See those letters. "Gimme, Santa!" "Please,
Santa!" "I want, Santa!" "Adam has one, Santa!"
They all want video games and talking bears
for themselves, but nobody seems to care
about anybody else any more. Know how many
letters I've gotten asking me for things for
other people?

Santa points to another table. It's barren.

SANTA
I used to inspire people to give to
each other. Now nobody believes in what
I stand for. I feel outmoded... like last
year's toy. I'm not needed. And you know
what -- I'm tired of caring when every-
body else doesn't.
(getting up from his chair)
I'm quitting. They can have Christmas
without me.

On Mrs. Claus shocked expression, CUT TO:

9 INT. LIVINGROOM, JENNIFER'S APARTMENT, NEW YORK CITY - EVENING 9

A small Christmas tree sitting on the coffee table is only half-heartedly decorated. Eight-year-old

10 JENNIFER BAXTER 10

stands on tip-toes as she adds an angel to the top of the tree. Even though she's a beautiful child with a smile that could light up heaven, her eyes betray a deep sadness. Suddenly, the phone rings and her eyes brighten with hope:

JENNIFER

Daddy!

Jennifer races down

11 INT. THE HALLWAY 11

and grabs the receiver. At the other end of the hallway, Jennifer's mother is bent over a drawing table set up in a convenient niche, surrounded by fabric swatches and fashion sketches pinned to the walls.

JENNIFER (into phone)

Daddy?!

(her face lights up)

I knew you'd call! When are you coming home?!

Hearing this,

12 LAURA BAXTER 12

turns from her work to look at her daughter. Laura is in her early 30s, with bright, intelligent eyes, dressed in "stylish clothes a working woman can afford" as her line is known along Seventh Avenue.

13 JENNIFER'S FACE 13

falls:

JENNIFER (into phone)

Why not?

CUT TO:

14 INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY - A PAY PHONE 14

JEFF BAXTER, Jennifer's Father, is the kind of Daddy every little girl dreams of: handsome and bright-eyed and loving. But there's something in his eyes: the vision of a dream unfulfilled that's quite haunting. He's standing at the pay phone dressed in a tuxedo:

Continued..

14 CONTINUED:

14

JEFF BAXTER (into phone)
I wish I could come home for Christmas,
sweetie, but I can't. They need me
at Wonder Records.

15 INT. JENNIFER'S HALLWAY

15

Jennifer looks like she's about to cry as her mother takes the
phone; she puts her arm around Jennifer as she talks to her husband:

LAURA BAXTER (into phone)
We both miss you terribly.

16 INTERCUT JEFF AND LAURA

16

JEFF BAXTER (into phone)
(he misses them too)
Me too, honey, but I'm in the middle
of a big project right now and I can't
get away.

LAURA BAXTER (into phone)
But it's our first Christmas apart, Jeff.
Jennifer's moping around the apartment.
It's really lonely here without you.
Maybe we should fly out?

JEFF BAXTER (into phone)
(quickly)
Honey, we don't have the money.

LAURA BAXTER (into phone)
(upset and irritated)
What's the point of working so hard
if we can't be together?

JEFF BAXTER (into phone)
We will. As soon as I can make it
happen.
(making up)
Snoogles..?

LAURA BAXTER
Oh..
(almost against her will)
Double snoogles.

Laura blows two kisses into the phone and hangs up. Jennifer starts
to cry.

JENNIFER
The other kids at school, their fathers
aren't going to be away for Christmas.

Continued..

16 CONTINUED:

16

LAURA BAXTER
(hugging Jennifer)
I know, darling.
(comforting her)
But Daddy's got an important job in
California. We'll see him soon...
(to herself)
I hope.

CUT TO:

17 INT. ENORMOUS SHOPPING MALL - LOS ANGELES - LATE AFTERNOON

17

Jeff hangs up the phone, an anguished, discouraged look on his face. He rushes out into the middle of the Mall, where he sits down at a piano under a huge hanging red velvet bow. Just then JEFF'S BOSS, an overbearing young man determined to rise to top management of the Mall as quickly as he can, appears at Jeff's side, eyeing his watch:

JEFF'S BOSS
It's no wonder you lost your job at the
record company, Baxter, you're never at
your piano.

JEFF BAXTER
I'm sorry, Craig, but I needed to talk
to my family and they turned off the
phone at my apartment.
(huffily)
Besides, I didn't lose my job, Craig,
they eliminated mine in a budget cut.

JEFF'S BOSS
Well, if you want to keep this job,
start playing. We want our customers
jolly!

Jeff forces a smile and begins to play Christmas music for the
harried Shoppers scurrying through the Mall.

18 INT. HALLWAY, JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

18

Laura is back at work when Jennifer stands by her drawing table:

JENNIFER
Mommy, why don't we go see Daddy? We
don't have to fly, we can drive. That
won't cost so much.

LAURA BAXTER
That old clunker of a car'd never make
it, Jenny. Besides I can't leave now,
you know that.
(more)

Continued..

18 CONTINUED:

18

LAURA BAXTER (Cont'd)

I've got to get these sketches finished
before Christmas. I have responsibilities.
When you grow up, you'll understand.

Jennifer's eyes start to fill with tears:

JENNIFER

I don't want to understand. I want
to spend Christmas with you and Daddy.

LAURA BAXTER

Jenny, we can't always get what we want.

They look at each other and Jennifer understands. Sort of.

LAURA BAXTER

(wiping Jennifer's tears)
Suppose I make us some hot chocolate?

JENNIFER

Okay.
(brightening)
Mommy, do you think if I wrote
Santa Claus, he'd bring Daddy home
for Christmas?

LAURA BAXTER

I wish he could, honey, but there are
some things even Santa Claus can't do.

Jennifer watches her mother walk down the hallway toward the
kitchen, then full of determination, she heads inside

19 INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM - EVENING

19

Jennifer sits at her desk, takes out some lined paper and a pencil,
looks out the window up at the stars in the night sky and starts
to print: D..E..A..R..S..A..N..T..A..

JENNIFER

I miss my Daddy so much. Mommy and
I haven't seen him for almost a year.
Could you find a way to bring our family
back together for Christmas? I know you're
awfully busy, Santa, but I'm not asking
for me. My mom is so lonely without him.
I promise to be good for ever and ever
if you do. Thank you. Your friend,
Jennifer Baxter.

(she looks over her letter)

P.S. God bless you, Santa.

Continued..

19 CONTINUED:

19

She folds the letter, sticks it in an envelope and licks it shut.
Then writes: S-A-N-T-A C-L-A-U-S N-O-R-T-H P-O-L-E on the outside.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. STREET - NIGHT - MAILBOX

20

Jennifer drops her letter to Santa Claus in the mailbox and dashes back inside her apartment building.

Suddenly, a mysterious WIND appears out of nowhere and opens the mailbox. Jennifer's letter flies out of the slot and up into the night. FOLLOW as it tumbles and swirls and finally disappears into the starry sky.

CUT TO:

21 INT. SANTA'S DEN - NIGHT

21

Mrs. Claus is still incredulous:

MRS. CLAUS

Quit Christmas?!!

(stunned)

I.. I can't believe I'm hearing this.

SANTA

Why not? Nobody else seems to care,
so why should I?

MRS. CLAUS

Because they need you. Now more than
ever!

Mrs. Claus extends her palm and Jennifer's letter flies down the chimney and into her hand. She opens it and hands it to Santa:

MRS. CLAUS

Read this.

SANTA (reading)

Dear Santa...miss Daddy...I'm not asking
for me...mommy's so lonely... Thank
you, Jennifer Baxter..

MRS. CLAUS

Sounds like somebody really needs you.

SANTA

One letter. Out of a world with 3
billion people in it.

Continued..

21 CONTINUED:

21

MRS. CLAUS
(pointing to pile of
"greedy" letters)
I just bet if you looked carefully
through those letters, you'd find other
people who need you too. What about all
the people who really do believe in you
-- you'll be letting them down.

SANTA
Well..

MRS. CLAUS
You're the Spirit of Giving. You're
needed in the world. Besides, what are
you going to tell the Elves? You know
how sensitive Philpot is.

There's a great clamor from the direction of the Workshop as

22 FOUR ELVES

22

come running -- stumbling and bumbling over each other -- into
Santa's Den. Two male elves: STUBBY, Mr. Apprehensive, and TROUPER,
Mr. Gung-Ho, and two female elves, the Spoiled-Princess MUFFIN and
the Betty-Boopish ROLY POLY. The male elves wear pointed hats,
woolen tunics, leather belts and boots with turned-up toes;
the female elves wear tunics with skirts.

STUBBY
What's all this noise about quitting?

MRS. CLAUS
Santa doesn't believe people really care
about him and Christmas any more.

ROLY POLY
(forlorn)
Upon my word it's most absurd!
This time of year it's clear I fear
No longer will be a time of cheer!

MUFFIN
(self-absorbed)
Well maybe now that I won't be working
my fingers to the bone, my nails will
grow back!

TROUPER
(to Muffin)
Now, now, Santa's got a right to a good
rest.

Continued..

22 CONTINUED:

22

STUBBY

I'm a toymaker. That's what I am. I
don't need any rest.

Instinctively, the other Elves make way as dashing into Santa's Den, tripping over his own big feet and crashing onto the floor at a wincing Santa's boots, comes

23 PHILPOT

23

six feet four inches of the clutziest elf of all time. Red-haired, red-bearded, bespectacled and endearing, Philpot is an elf "out of water": at birth like the other elves, one day he started growing and didn't stop.

TROUPER

(ignoring Philpot)

We'll just have to adjust.

Santa shakes his head and eyes Mrs. Claus as Philpot stumbles back up on his feet:

PHILPOT

Adjust?! Face some facts here, you
looney tunes elves! If Santa gives
up Christmas, we're in big trouble!

Adjusting his eyeglasses, Philpot accidentally knocks a plate of cookies off a table; he fumbles, manages to catch them and fumbles again. They crash to the floor. He picks them up and stuffs them in his mouth anyway.

SANTA

(wearily)

I'll find work for you. All of you.
Don't worry.

MRS. CLAUS

I've got an idea.

PHILPOT

(a mouthful of cookie)

I'm glad somebody does.

TROUPER

What'd he say?

PHILPOT

(swallowing the cookies)

I said -- I'm glad somebody does!
Try getting the elf-fuzz out of your
ears!

Continued..

23 CONTINUED:

23

MRS. CLAUS

(ignoring them; to Santa)

Why don't you go help this Jennifer Baxter bring her father home for Christmas? And while you're out among the people, I'll bet you'll find out they really do care.

STUBBY

Now that's a wonderful idea -- two weeks before Christmas and you're telling Santa to take a vacation!

MUFFIN

I'll go along. Miami? The Bahamas?

ROLY POLY

This idea I think
Has brought us back from the brink.

PHILPOT

(mimicking Roly Poly)

This idea I think stinks! Santa's got a job to do and he's got to be here to do it!

MRS. CLAUS

Now to be fair, Santa, we'll have to sew up a disguise for you. But I'll bet a week in the real world will restore your faith in people.

TROUPER

(raising his hand)

I vote yes.

As Philpot grabs Trouper's voting arm to bring it down, he knocks a book off a book shelf but manages to grab it.

MUFFIN

Me too.

Philpot glares at Muffin busily buffing her nails, then at the rest of the Elves. Roly Poly raises her hand. Then an apprehensive Stubby. Bowing to the inevitable, Philpot raises his hand too:

PHILPOT

Looks like the vote's in, Santa.

SANTA

(hesitating)

Well...

Continued..

23 CONTINUED:

23

MRS. CLAUS
(handing Santa a cookie)
I knew you'd say yes.

SANTA
I didn't... yet.

He looks at Mrs. Claus, at the Elves, at Jennifer's letter.
Then slipping Jennifer's letter into his pocket and taking the
cookie, he says to Mrs. Claus:

SANTA
How come you were so sure I'd give in?

MRS. CLAUS
After 323 years of marriage..?
(gently brushing a cookie
crumb off Santa's chest)
Now you must promise not to use any
magic while you're out among the people.
You know how it unnerves them so.
Besides, it wouldn't be fair to your
quest. You must let them prove to you
that basically they're good at heart.

Santa looks at his wife, somewhat exasperated.

MRS. CLAUS
Promise?

SANTA
(reluctantly)
Promise.

The Elves cheer. Mrs. Claus beams. Santa forces a smile and
reaches behind himself, slipping a crystalline Magic Snowflake off
of his desk and into his pocket. Just in case.

DISSOLVE TO:

24 MONTAGE - STOCK FOOTAGE - CHRISTMAS CROWDS

24

Store windows ablaze with Christmas displays. Shoppers crowding
stores. Salvation Army Santas. Crowds on the streets. And in
their midst -- being pushed and shoved and knocked into -- is

25 EXT. OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT STORE - AFTERNOON - SANTA IN DISGUISE

25

Dressed in dark clothes, he looks like your plump, grey-bearded,
grey-haired Uncle Harry. He's pushed aside by a harried MOTHER
who snarls:

Continued..

25 CONTINUED:

25

MOTHER

Watch where you're going! We're trying
to get a look here, d'ya mind?!

Santa watches dumbfounded as the Mother, her SON and his FATHER
push close to the display of toys in the department store window;
the Son points at a giant aircraft carrier loaded with guns and
missiles:

SON

That's what I want!

MOTHER

Maybe if "El Cheapo" here'll cough up
the cash..

FATHER

I don't like that kinda talk in front
of the kid. We're talking expensive
with this toy and we're over our limit
on both credit cards.

MOTHER

Gimme a break -- you always find money
for
(miming drinking)
what you want.

The Father glowers at his wife threateningly. Appalled by their
behavior, Santa can't stand it any longer:

SANTA

Look, I don't mean to intrude..

Husband and wife both turn to glare at him:

MOTHER

Then don't!

FATHER

Yeah, whose business is it of
yours anyway?

SANTA

I would think the holidays would
generate a little more understanding
and kindness toward each other..? Don't
you get the Christmas Spirit?

FATHER

All I get is more bills.

SON

(starting a tantrum)
Brad's parents are giving him one.
I want one too! I want it! I want
it! I want it!

Continued..

25 CONTINUED:

25

SANTA

If you don't stop yelling like that,
Santa Claus won't bring you any toys.

The little Boy kicks Santa on the shins. The Father hustles his family down the street. Santa stares after them, disgruntled, rubbing his sore leg when

26 A CAR

26

whizzes by, splattering Santa all over with dirty slush.

CUT TO:

27 INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON - ON THE TV

27

a bus is speeding across the West.

ANNOUNCER (v.o.)

Go Greyhound.

Jennifer looks from the TV to her Treasure Box sitting on her dresser. And gets an idea. She rushes into

28 INT. HALLWAY, JENNIFER'S APARTMENT

28

Laura is hurriedly finishing one of her sketches while she's talking on the phone cradled under her chin:

LAURA BAXTER (into phone)

Calm down, Larry, the sketches will
be ready, okay?! Okay!

She slams the phone down to find Jennifer watching her expectantly, holding her Treasure Box. She snaps, irritated:

LAURA BAXTER

What now?

JENNIFER

If I have enough money in my Treasure
Box, can we take the bus to see Daddy?

LAURA BAXTER

No, Jenny, we can't. I already told
you we can't afford it.

JENNIFER

(hugging her Treasure Box)
But maybe Daddy's lonely..

It's too painful for Laura, especially with all the pressure on her.

Continued..

28 CONTINUED:

28

LAURA BAXTER

Now honey, please, I don't want to hear any more about it. I've got a lot of work to do.

Jennifer looks so dejected that Laura instantly feels contrite:

LAURA BAXTER

I've got a great idea -- why don't you call Stacee? Maybe you can go play with her.

JENNIFER

(miserable)

Stacee went to see the Christmas Tree in the park with her Daddy.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. PARK - TWILIGHT

29

In front of the large Christmas Tree in the center of the park is a display of reindeer pulling Santa in his sleigh. Santa stops in front of the sleigh and sighs:

SANTA

Not this Christmas.

What looks like a HOMELESS BUM shuffles up to Santa:

BUM

(shivering)

Hey, Buddy, spare some cash?

SANTA

I..uh, don't carry any cash.

Suddenly the Bum whips a knife out of his pocket and threatens Santa with it:

BUM

Yeah, well I just bet an old geezer like you's got a wallet stuffed with money. Fork it over.

(looking around nervously)

C'mon!

Santa reaches into his pocket and pulls out his Magic Snowflake.

SANTA

This is all I've got, see.

The Bum slaps the Snowflake out of Santa's hand and it falls into the snow. Holding his knife on Santa, he starts rifling through Santa's pockets, but they're empty.

Continued..

29 CONTINUED:

29

Furious, he hits Santa on the side of the head, knocking him down into the dirty slush. As the Bum runs away into the evening, Santa slowly shakes his head.

CUT TO:

30 INT. SANTA'S DEN

30

Mrs. Claus is sitting in front of Santa's computer as a harried Philpot points to a crossed-arm Stubby standing next to him:

PHILPOT

I told this buffoon 25,000 male dolls
with dark curly hair, not 52,000 female
dolls with blonde straight hair!

MRS. CLAUS

Now now, boys..

The phone rings. Philpot almost knocks the phone off the desk grabbing it to hand to Mrs. Claus.

MRS. CLAUS (into phone)

Hello dear, having fun?

(shocked)

You were what? Mugged?!

The Elves look at each other: uh, oh. Wheels start turning in Philpot's mind.

MRS. CLAUS (into phone)

But you're alright, aren't you?

(relieved)

Good. Well, I don't blame you for
being upset, being treated so badly and
all. But you did promise to stick it out
for a few days, and dear, you've never
gone back on your word.

From the look on Philpot's face, we can tell he's up to something.

MRS. CLAUS

(a beat; she smiles)

That's why everybody loves you. You
won't regret it.

CUT TO:

31 JENNIFER'S TREASURE BOX

31

clutched under her arm as she strides purposefully across

32 INT. THE BUS STATION - EVENING

32

jammed with travelers. Jennifer's wearing her parka and a backpack; she stops in front of one of the ticket windows, looks up at the TICKET CLERK and musters her most grown-up voice:

Continued

32 CONTINUED:

32

JENNIFER

How much is a ticket to Los Angeles?

TICKET CLERK

(appraising her)

Well, depends if you're a little girl
or a grown up, and whether you're going
one way or round trip? Is this for you?

(Jennifer nods)

Just you, or your Mommy and Daddy too?

JENNIFER

Just me.

TICKET CLERK

I see...

Jennifer places her Treasure Box on the counter:

JENNIFER

We can count the money and see if I
have enough.

She starts to open it when the Ticket Clerk stops her:

TICKET CLERK

Hold it a second. I want to call and
find out if I can get you a special
fare. Just wait right here.

And he smiles at her. Jennifer nods, uncertain. She watches the
Clerk turn away from her to make his phone call. She makes a quick
decision and grabs her Treasure Box.

CUT TO:

33 INT. HALLWAY, JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

33

Laura opens her front door as far as the security chain will allow
to peer suspiciously at Santa standing outside:

LAURA BAXTER

Yes?

SANTA

I'm looking for
(checking letter)
Jennifer Baxter.

LAURA BAXTER

(getting more suspicious)
What do you want?

Continued..

33 CONTINUED:

33

SANTA
I have a letter from her.

LAURA BAXTER
(getting wary)
Who are you?

Santa thinks about it a moment and decides -- perhaps a little naively -- that honesty is the best policy:

SANTA
I'm Santa Claus.

Laura quickly slams the door in Santa's face and double locks it, calling out:

LAURA BAXTER
Jennifer!

She rushes down the hallway to Jennifer's bedroom and opens the door:

LAURA BAXTER
(looking around)
Jennifer..?

Laura starts to panic as she runs down the hall into the living room.

LAURA BAXTER
Jennifer?!!

Laura's absolutely frantic as she runs back to the front door, unlocks it and pulls it open as far as the chain will allow. The stranger is gone.

CUT TO:

34 INT. BUS LOADING PLATFORM - NIGHT

34

The destination sign atop the front of the bus reads: LOS ANGELES. A HEAVY-SET WOMAN shows her ticket to the BUS DRIVER who waves her onto the bus. Hunched over, Jennifer slips past the Bus Driver on the other side of the Woman.

35 INT. BUS

35

As Jennifer stands at the front of the bus, she's suddenly scared. Then she makes her decision. And with an excited, expectant look, she heads down the aisle.

36 FOLLOW JENNIFER

36

PEOPLE look up, stare at her; they're intimidating to a little girl.

37 ON JENNIFER

37

Apprehensive. Until she spots a kindly-looking grey-bearded man sitting by himself who seems to be waiting for her. She sits down next to Santa:

JENNIFER

Hi, I'm Jennifer Baxter and I'm going to California..

SANTA

..to see your Daddy for Christmas. I know.

JENNIFER

(startled)
You do?

SANTA

(quickly, shrugging)
Lucky guess.

JENNIFER

Where are you going?

Santa looks her over and shrugs:

SANTA

With you.

JENNIFER

Me? Why me?

SANTA

Because a little girl like you shouldn't travel alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

38 INT. BUS - THE BUS DRIVER

38

stands at the front, counting the passengers.

39 INT. BUS - ON SANTA AND JENNIFER

39

Santa is half-listening as Jennifer is about half-way through a very long story:

JENNIFER

You must've heard Daddy's jingle,
everybody knows it:

(singing)

"Ralph eats Bow Wow Chow
Woof Woof Woof!
It's Doggy-licious!"

Continued..

39 CONTINUED:

39

SANTA
(pained)
What a lovely song.

JENNIFER
Daddy hates it. He wants to write real
music. That's why he's in California.
He's working very very hard for Wonder
Records writing wonderful songs.

She starts humming a tune we'll become very familiar with by the
end of our story.

SANTA
Oh, that's very pretty.

JENNIFER
My Daddy wrote it. For me. It doesn't
have any words yet.

Jennifer opens her Treasure Box, taking out a packet of dog-eared
but obviously much-treasured postcards.

JENNIFER (continuing)
Look, he sent me a postcard from each
place he's been to. See.

She shows Santa a postcard from a cheap motel.

JENNIFER
This is when he first got to Hollywood.

Suddenly the Bus Driver is standing by their seats, eyeing Jennifer:

BUS DRIVER
Do you have a ticket, young lady?

Jennifer looks alarmed.

JENNIFER
I, uh.. sure.

BUS DRIVER
Good. Then you can give it to me.

Santa watches Jennifer as she looks around, panicky, trying to
figure out what to do. Santa reaches into his pocket and pulls
out..

40 TWO TICKETS

40

As he goes to hand them to the Bus Driver, Jennifer's letter falls
out of his pocket.

Continued..

40 CONTINUED:

40

SANTA

Here we go, two tickets to California,
I believe.

41 THE BUS DRIVER

41

eyes the tickets, then hands them back to Santa and heads for the
driver's seat. Jennifer is dumbfounded:

JENNIFER

Wha.. where..?

SANTA

I always keep an extra ticket handy
for emergencies.

JENNIFER

Well, tha.. thank you. Lots and lots.
(suddenly suspicious)
How come you know so much about me?

The bus engine roars to life. With a shudder, the bus slips into
gear and starts to move out onto the street.

JENNIFER

(getting worried)

You know, I shouldn't be talking to
you. My mother told me I shouldn't
talk to strangers.

SANTA

Well your mother's right, you shouldn't
talk to strangers.

JENNIFER

(starting to get up)

Maybe I'd better go..

Jennifer looks down and spots her letter on the seat.

JENNIFER

That's.. that's my letter. How'd you
get my letter to Santa? How did you
know I was going to see my Daddy.

She stares at him. Santa looks around nervously to see if anybody's
listening:

SANTA

Well I must admit it may appear a bit
funny that I have your letter...

Jennifer gazes at Santa, her clear, steady eyes never leaving him.

Continued..

41 CONTINUED:

41

SANTA (continuing)
..but I can explain.

JENNIFER
Go ahead.

SANTA
Well, the fact is..

Jennifer squeals gleefully:

JENNIFER
..you're Santa Claus!

And for the first time since we've met her, Jennifer actually
smiles! As Santa looks like he was caught with his hand in the
cookie jar, we

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

42 INT. SANTA'S DEN, NORTH POLE - EVENING

42

The five Elves are sitting around, worried and upset:

PHILPOT

We've got to do something!

STUBBY

(wringing his hands)
Like for instance what?

MUFFIN

Can you just imagine Christmas without
Santa Claus?

ROLY POLY

It'd be a crime.
Disaster time!

PHILPOT

We've got to go after him.

STUBBY

And drag Santa back home in chains I suppose?

PHILPOT

No. But we can protect him and make sure
everything goes right!

MUFFIN

Protect him? Protect ourselves, dumb dumb.

ROLY POLY

That's not the Spirit
I don't want to hear it
Such selfishness from an elf!

PHILPOT

That's exactly what turned Santa off in
the first place!

Philpot -- gesturing expansively -- knocks a teapot off the table.
Muffin manages to catch it in time. Stubby gives Philpot the eye.

MUFFIN

Okay, okay. But our jobs are on the line..
(with feeling)
And the fact is, deep down I love my job.
We've got to help Santa.

PHILPOT

Face it -- who else will hire an elf?!

Continued..

42 CONTINUED:

42

ROLY POLY
I add my voice
We have no other choice.
We're on the spot.
So Philpot
We'll deploy
While the rest of us finish the toys.

PHILPOT
(protesting -- but secretly pleased)
Me?!?

ROLY POLY
This elf votes to protect Santa from
himself.

The four Elves clasp hands and shake on it. After waiting a suitably modest moment, Philpot adds his hands to the group.

CUT TO:

43 INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM - EVENING

43

A distraught Laura -- trying to hold back the tears -- sinks onto the end of Jennifer's bed as a POLICEMAN takes notes.

LAURA BAXTER
(starting to cry)
You've got to find her. I'm worried
sick. First this strange man shows up
claiming he's Santa Claus and asking for
her, then I discover she's disappeared,
and my husband's across the country and
I can't reach him. You're my only hope.

POLICEMAN
(making a note)
Do you think this "strange man" had
anything to do with her disappearance?

LAURA BAXTER
I don't know what to think.

Suddenly Laura notices the empty spot on top of Jennifer's dresser.

LAURA BAXTER
Oh no!

POLICEMAN
What is it?

Continued..

43 CONTINUED:

43

LAURA BAXTER
(touching the spot on
Jennifer's dresser top)
She's taken her Treasure Box.
(turning to the Policeman)
I'll bet Jenny's gone off to find her
father!

CUT TO:

44 INT. BUS - NIGHT - JENNIFER'S TREASURE BOX

44

bouncing on her lap. PULLBACK to INCLUDE Santa sitting next to a wide-eyed Jennifer. Across the aisle, a MAN is reading a magazine whose back page advertisement features Santa Claus.

JENNIFER
You know, I've never run away from home
before. This is my very first time.

SANTA
(concerned)
Jenny... Is it okay if I call you
Jenny?
(Jennifer nods)
Your mother must be terribly worried
about you. We must call her the minute
we arrive at the next stop.

JENNIFER
But...

SANTA
No "but"s.

JENNIFER
She'll make me come home. And I don't
want to. I've got to see Daddy. Maybe
if he sees how much I miss him, Santa,
he'll come back home.

SANTA
Now Jenny, tell me the truth: you don't
really believe in Santa Claus?

JENNIFER
Of course I believe in you.

Hearing this, the Man with the Magazine across the aisle turns to look at them. Santa immediately gets embarrassed and shifts uncomfortably in his seat. As he does, the Magic Snowflake falls out of his pocket onto the seat between Santa and Jennifer. She folds her arms:

Continued..

44 CONTINUED:

44

JENNIFER
You can't fool me.

Light glistens off the Snowflake, its magic glittering sparkles catching Jennifer's eye. She picks up

45 THE MAGIC SNOWFLAKE

45

and stares closely at it: etched into its crystalline surface is the legend:

GOOD FOR ONE WISH

Jennifer turns it over; etched on the back is:

THINK JOLLY
North Pole Manufacturing Company

46 JENNIFER

46

confronts Santa with the proof: the Magic Snowflake.

JENNIFER
Right -- you're not Santa Claus!

Santa stares at the Snowflake; the jig is up.

SANTA
You're a very clever little girl, Jenny.
(shaking his head)
Too clever.

Jennifer smiles knowingly at him. He looks around conspiratorily:

SANTA
But you've got to promise you won't
tell anybody. Promise?

JENNIFER
(pointing at magazine ad
across the aisle)
But how come you're not wearing your
red and white suit?

SANTA
Because people aren't supposed to
recognize me. I'm on a secret mission.

JENNIFER
You are?!

Continued..

46 CONTINUED:

46

SANTA
I've come from the North Pole to find
something out without people knowing
I'm looking for it.
(Jennifer looks puzzled)
And to help a little girl find her
father.

A thrilled Jennifer throws her arms around Santa:

JENNIFER
I knew you wouldn't let me down!
(placing her hand over her heart)
And I promise I'll keep your secret.
Even if I don't quite understand it.

SANTA
(dryly)
Thank you. Loads.

JENNIFER
Of course you're gonna help me talk
my Daddy into coming back home...
(raising her voice slightly)
..aren't you, Santa?

Santa looks over nervously at the Man across the aisle.

SANTA
Hasn't anybody taught you blackmailing
people isn't nice?

Jennifer smiles innocently.

SANTA
Before we decide anything, you've got
to call your mother first.

JENNIFER
Hasn't anybody told you blackmailing
little kids isn't nice?

They stare at each other -- a standoff. Then they smile at each other as we CUT TO:

47 INT. BUS STATION, CLEVELAND - MORNING

47

A banner reads:

HELP ST. JOHN'S PARISH HAVE A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Continued..

47 CONTINUED:

47

WIDEN off the banner to see the interior of the Bus Station, full of hustle and bustle. PASSENGERS are rushing past a man dressed in a ratty, threadbare Santa Claus outfit with a stuffed parrot wearing a Santa Claus cap on his shoulder. This is

48 NAPOLEON THE GREAT

48

a big-grinning former circus roustabout with a thick mop of hair who could charm anything out of anybody, a true flim-flam man. Napoleon holds out a fistful of Church raffle tickets to passers-by, but no one's stopping to buy:

NAPOLEON

Help St. Johns! Help the Poor! Win a
Popcorn Popper - two bucks a shot!

The stuffed parrot -- named VELMA -- suddenly speaks up:

VELMA

Three lousy tickets in six hours?
Forget it! I thought a scam was
supposed to be easier than real
work. My claws are killin' me!

Suddenly we realize that Napoleon -- like a schizophrenic ventriloquist -- is talking for Velma. Santa and Jennifer emerge out of the crowd.

NAPOLEON

Shut your beak -- I spy a pigeon approaching.

VELMA

Looks more like a penguin to me.

Napoleon shoots Velma a dirty look as Santa and a mournful Jennifer approach; Napoleon steps into their path:

NAPOLEON

(gesturing floridly)
Would the kind gentleman and this lovely
young lady care to help St. John's have
a Merry Christmas? Gladden your hearts
for just a couple of dollars.

SANTA

We have a phone call to make right now.

JENNIFER

Do we really have to?

Santa urges an ever more reluctant Jennifer toward the phones.

NAPOLEON

Some people care about the poor.

Continued..

48 CONTINUED:

48

Stung, Santa stops in his tracks:

SANTA
You're very right, young man.

He starts rummaging through his pockets and remembers:

SANTA
I'm sorry, but I don't have any money
on me right now.

VELMA
We take credit cards.

Napoleon gives Velma a dirty look; Santa is looking askance at the stuffed parrot when a PLUMP WOMAN approaches Santa and pointing to the banner, asks him:

PLUMP WOMAN
I'd like to buy a raffle ticket please.

NAPOLEON
(thrilled, handing one over)
Two dollars, madam.

PLUMP WOMAN
(handing Santa the money)
You know, I never buy these things.
But somehow I'm suddenly feeling this
wonderful Christmas Spirit.

Suddenly a CROWD of people surround Santa, shoving money at him.
A PREGNANT LADY fishes through her purse:

PREGNANT LADY
I'd like a ticket for every member of
my family please.

NAPOLEON
How big a family do you have?

PREGNANT LADY
(handing Santa money)
There's eight of us.
(touching her belly)
Make it nine.

Napoleon quickly hands over nine tickets. With a glowing smile on her face, the Pregnant Woman leaves. Santa hands Napoleon all the money and starts ushering Jennifer through the crowd.

SANTA
We have to call your mother. Now.

Napoleon looks at the people thrusting money at him, then at the departing Santa as we CUT TO:

49 INT. LAURA BAXTER'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

49

A relieved, upset, incredulous Laura is on the phone:

LAURA BAXTER (into phone)
You're at the bus station in Cleveland!
With Santa Claus??!

50 INT. BUS STATION PHONE BOOTH - MORNING

50

Santa waits outside the phone booth as Jennifer talks on the phone:

JENNIFER (into phone)
I wasn't supposed to tell you that,
Mommy, it just slipped out. Please
don't tell Santa I told you about him
-- he's on a secret mission. And don't
worry, I'm real okay.

51 INTERCUT LAURA AND JENNIFER

51

LAURA BAXTER (into phone)
(alarmed)
Secret mission?! Did that man tell
you he was Santa Claus so you'd go with
him?
(frightened)
Is he there with you now?

JENNIFER (into phone)
Would you like to talk to him?

LAURA BAXTER (into phone)
Jennifer, that man came to our apartment
looking for you. I want you to find
a policeman and stay with him..

52 JENNIFER

52

isn't listening, she's handing the phone to Santa:

JENNIFER
She wants to talk to you.

Santa takes the phone in time to hear:

LAURA BAXTER'S VOICE (continuing)
..and don't let that man near you!

SANTA (into phone)
Mrs. Baxter? I insisted that Jennifer
call you.

Unbeknownst to Santa, Jennifer scoots away from him; fast on her
feet, she disappears from view.

Continued..

52 CONTINUED:

52

SANTA (into phone)
(calmly, continuing)
Now I don't want you to get upset --
(holding phone away from his ear)
Please, just hear me out...
(he sees Jennifer's gone)
Mrs. Baxter, Jenny just skipped off..
She is a handful, this one. I'll call
you later. And stay calm.

There's a loud protest from the phone before Santa hangs up.

CUT TO:

53 THE BUS

53

pulls out of the station just as Jennifer runs up to the locked
gate and pounds on the grating. She starts to cry. Suddenly
Napoleon and Velma are by her side:

JENNIFER
(sobbing)
I waved at the Driver to stop.. but
he didn't.

VELMA
Crybaby!

NAPOLEON
(to Velma)
Hush up!
(proferring a hankerchief)
May I be of help? Under the Big Top
I was known far and wide as Napoleon
the Great. At your service.

VELMA
And what about me, Buzzard Face. I'm
the brains of this duo. I'm Velma the
Magnificent.

Suddenly Santa -- out of breath -- rushes up to Jennifer:

SANTA
Jenny, don't do that anymore! Don't
ever run away like that again.

JENNIFER
(starting to cry again)
But the bus was leaving...

SANTA
Jenny, your mother is very worried about
you. She's coming to get you.

Continued..

53 CONTINUED:

53

VELMA

I'd worry too if all my kid did was
cry all the time.

NAPOLEON

Velma -- shut up!

A puzzled Santa eyes Napoleon and this stuffed bird; Napoleon shrugs
and turns on the charm:

NAPOLEON

Perhaps we could be of mutual service
to each other. I couldn't fail to
notice, kind sir, how business picked
up when you arrived back there, and
since you obviously need a place to
wait for this charming young lady's
mother to come pick her up, perhaps
you could perform a worthy kindness
for the poor people of St. John's
parish in the meantime...

SANTA

(wiping Jennifer's tears
with Napoleon's hankie)
What are you getting at?

VELMA

I think he wants you to help him sell
more raffle tickets.

SANTA

How much have you collected so far?

NAPOLEON

About 500 dollars. Thanks to you.

SANTA

Good.

(to Jennifer)

We'll tell the Station Manager where
you'll be so your mother can find us.
(taking Napoleon's arm)

Come on, my good man, let's take this
money to St. John's Parish.

Napoleon is thrown for a loop; he tries to dig in his heels:

NAPOLEON

But.. But..

SANTA

(pulling Napoleon along)
They'll be so pleased.

Continued..

53 CONTINUED:

53

Velma cackles, wondering:

VELMA

Y' mean there really is a St. John's
Parish?!

CUT TO:

54 A SIGN: ST. JOHN'S PARISH, CLEVELAND - NOON

54

ADJUST TO INCLUDE St. John's: poor as a churchmouse, but a haven
for the underprivileged residents of the parish.

55 INT. SOCIAL HALL

55

FATHER JOHN -- young, eager, idealistic -- is supervising a group
of PARISHIONERS putting together Christmas baskets for those even
less fortunate than themselves when Santa ushers Napoleon, Velma
and Jennifer inside. Napoleon is desperately trying to figure
out a way to escape when Father John approaches them:

FATHER JOHN

Yes, may I help you?

SANTA

(prompting Napoleon)

Go ahead.

VELMA

Yeah, tell him the good news.

His back against the wall, Napoleon is quickly trying to figure
out how he can turn lemons into lemonade:

NAPOLEON

As a matter of fact, we have
spectacularly wonderful news for the
beleaguered members of this lovely
parish. We have raised a goodly
sum of money for your poor.

JENNIFER

We sold lots and lots of raffle tickets!

FATHER JOHN

A raffle?

VELMA

Big bucks!

Napoleon shoots Velma a look, then continues:

Continued..

55 CONTINUED:

55

NAPOLEON

So your people could have a merry
Christmas.

FATHER JOHN

(stunned)

I can't believe our good fortune!
(shaking Napoleon's hand)

Thank you, thank you!

Napoleon flashes an uncomfortable smile as Father John pumps his arm:

FATHER JOHN

Mr...

NAPOLEON

Napoleon the Great -- as I was known
on the high wire -- at your service.

Father John extends his hand to Santa and looks inquiringly:

SANTA

Mr. uh.. Nicholas.

(shaking Father John's hand)

And this is Jennifer Baxter. We're
waiting for her mother to come pick
her up.

Jennifer's face drops. Napoleon -- improvising -- starts weaving
his spell with his golden tongue:

NAPOLEON

Now Father John, here I was, sellin'
just three lousy raffle tickets in six
hours and this nice kindly gentleman
comes along and people are fightin'
to put money in his hands. So I got
to thinkin', Father, that if we could
convince Mr. Nicholas to lend a helping
hand, we could probably sell all of
our raffle tickets and bring a very
Merry Christmas to your parish.

The Parishioners look up from their work in interest.

FATHER JOHN

(getting caught up in the idea)

I don't think we could impose on Mr.
Nicholas...

Napoleon's in his element now; he starts working on Santa:

Continued..

55 CONTINUED:

55

NAPOLEON

In fact, with that kindly face of yours,
I bet you could get some of the local
merchants to donate even better prizes
and we could sell even more tickets!

(standing back, taking a look)

Y'know, with that beard and that face
and that twinkle that creeps into your
eye from time to time, we could dress
you up in a Santa Claus outfit and I'll
bet people'd buy every one of those
raffle tickets in a flash!

FATHER JOHN

Oh, wouldn't St. John's have a merry
Christmas then!

The Parishioners are all excited.

NAPOLEON

(getting carried away)

We might even make Santa Claus outfits
for everybody in the Parish so they can
all go out and sell even more tickets!

(turning to the women)

What do you say, ladies, could we have
them by this evening?

LADIES (adlib)

Absolutely. Sure. We can work through
lunch.

NAPOLEON

What do you say, Mr. Nicholas -- mind
playing Santa Claus for St. John's Parish?

Santa is put on a spot. He looks at Jennifer, who crosses her arms
and reproaches him:

JENNIFER

Oh I'm sure he can play Santa Claus
very well if he wants to.

Santa looks at all the faces suddenly filled with hope.

SANTA

I'd be happy to help out.

(looking at Jennifer's
sad face)

But only if my friend here can help
me too.

Continued..

55 CONTINUED:

55

Jennifer's face lights up. Santa whispers to Father John:

SANTA

Until her mother gets here -- at any rate.

CUT TO:

56 EXT. TURNPIKE - AFTERNOON

56

TRACK past an older model car parked on the side of the road with smoke pouring out from under the hood and up to Laura Baxter talking into an Emergency Roadside telephone, huddling in her coat from the snow whipping past her; she's frantic:

LAURA BAXTER

What do you mean, no little girl has contacted the Bus Station Police?! She's got to be there, she's waiting for me to pick her up and I want to let her know I've been delayed.

(getting more frantic)

She's traveling with a man she says is calling himself Santa Claus and I'm getting -- No, this is not some kind of "joke". I'm standing out here in the freezing cold watching my car die. You think this is fun?!

CUT TO:

57 ST. JOHN'S SOCIAL HALL - DAY

57

We TRACK through a hall bustling with female PARISHIONERS busily measuring males for Santa Claus suits, cutting fabric, tacking and sewing. There's a happy buzz in the air as they look forward for the first time in a long period of gloom to better days.

CUT TO:

58 MONTAGE

58

Santa being fitted into a Santa Claus outfit.
Santa -- in uniform -- and Jennifer approaching a MERCHANT who gladly donates a Microwave Oven.
Santa -- surrounded by the Parishioners dressed in Santa Claus costumes -- posing under a banner: "The St. John's Parish Santa Claus Raffle!"
Santa selling tickets.
More tickets.
More money.
And Napoleon smiling, smiling, smiling as he counts all the money coming in.

CUT TO:

59 INT. ST. JOHN'S PARISH - EVENING

59

Father John pours a hot chocolate for Jennifer and himself:

FATHER JOHN

You're welcome to stay here until your mother gets here.

(establishing rapport)

You know, you're an awfully brave little girl. I don't think I could have run away from home when I was eight.

JENNIFER

That's the part of me that's like my Daddy. He's very brave. He left home and his job to follow his dream.

FATHER JOHN

(disappointed)

I have a dream too, but I haven't been able to make it come true -- yet.

JENNIFER

What is it?

FATHER JOHN

I want to bring a better life to my parishioners. They work so hard and they have so little.

JENNIFER

Well, this raffle is a start, isn't it?

FATHER JOHN

But is it enough? Is it enough..?

CUT TO:

60 INT. SOCIAL HALL - NIGHT - PILES OF DOLLAR BILLS

60

sitting on a table. Hands are rapidly counting the money.

VELMA (v.o.)

One thousand, two hundred and fifty-two, fifty-three, fifty-four..

Napoleon is trying to count the money without distraction:

NAPOLEON

Quiet, Velma -- I can't concentrate with you cackling.

Continued..

60 CONTINUED:

60

VELMA

Just stuff it in your pockets and let's
blow this joint before we get caught.
I hate cages.

Napoleon is shoving money into his pockets when Jennifer -- wearing her backpack and carrying her Treasure Box -- wanders into the social hall and stops short, shocked:

JENNIFER

Napoleon, what are you doing?!

Napoleon jumps, startled. He looks at Jennifer guiltily.

NAPOLEON

Counting the proceeds.

VELMA

It's the slammer for sure!

JENNIFER

I'm going to tell Santa on you!

Santa, his hands full of the money he's made selling tickets, enters the room all enthusiastic -- and stops short:

SANTA

Tell me what?

JENNIFER

Napoleon's stealing the raffle money!

SANTA

How could you! That money belongs
to the people here. I thought you were
a honest man. They're so poor, these
people -- they need this money. How
could you do this to them?

Napoleon stares at them, feeling ashamed. Miserable.

NAPOLEON

I.. I'm sorry. I really am..

VELMA

He really is.

SANTA

Then put the money back.

Napoleon hesitates -- he doesn't feel that ashamed.

Continued..

60 CONTINUED:

60

SANTA

You promise these people a Merry
Christmas and then you're going to
run off with their money?

JENNIFER

What a terrible person you are!

Napoleon doesn't say anything -- he just looks at them:

JENNIFER

Please put the money back.

VELMA

Put it back, put it back!

Napoleon glares at Velma and starts taking the money out of his
pocket and reluctantly puts it back in the raffle box when

61 A GROUP OF PARISHIONERS IN SANTA CLAUS COSTUMES

61

weary after a hard day selling tickets, enter the social hall to
discover Napoleon with his clothes stuffed with:

PARISHIONER

(pointing, horrified)

Our money!

They point at Santa with his hands full of more money!

PARISHIONERS

They're stealing our money! They're
crooks! Call the police!

NAPOLEON

No!

JENNIFER

Wait a minute, he's putting it back.

A Parishioner's on the phone:

PARISHIONER (into phone)

Officer, we have a burglary in process
at St. John's Parish..

In the confusion, Napoleon stuffs a pocketful of money in Jennifer's
backpack.

CUT TO:

62 INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT - A JAIL CELL DOOR

62

slamming shut in front of Santa, Napoleon and the rest of the
Parishioners in Santa Claus suits:

Continued..

62 CONTINUED:

62

SANTA

Wait a minute, there's been a terrible
mistake here!

PARISHIONERS

(pointing to Napoleon and Santa)
They were stealing the money.

An upset Jennifer is trying to get the POLICEMAN's attention:

JENNIFER

Napoleon was putting the money back!

POLICEMAN

The way I understand it, you all were
running an illegal raffle and you all
belong behind bars!

Santa is not amused as he grabs hold of the barred doors.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

62 INT. JAIL CELLS, POLICE STATION, CLEVELAND - DAY 62

An agitated Santa -- still in a Santa Claus suit -- is on the pay phone, watched over by SGT. DEVLIN, a tough-minded policeman.

SANTA (into phone)
You heard right, dear -- arrested! Me!
For theft, running an illegal gambling
operation and endangering the morals
of a child!
(losing his patience)
The world is in a lot worse trouble
than I ever thought.

63 INT. SANTA'S DEN, NORTH POLE - DAY 63

While Mrs. Claus is trying not to let Santa know it, she's very harried as ELVES scurry around carrying print-outs of toy orders for her signature. Computer screens are blinking, printers spewing forth more print-outs and telephone lines are blinking crazily.

MRS. CLAUS (into phone)
Dear, you've got to give it a chance..
(beat)
Well, what do you want me to do?
(beat)
I can't. With you gone, somebody's
got to run the factory.
(beat, throwing up her hands)
I can't. Philpot's disappeared.

64 BACK TO SANTA 64

Sgt. Devlin taps Santa on the shoulder:

SGT. DEVLIN
Time's up, buddy.

MRS. CLAUS' VOICE (over phone)
You'll just have to cope, dear.

SANTA (into phone)
I've got to go. The long arm of the law
is about to toss me back into jail --

Sgt. Devlin -- impatient -- takes hold of Santa's arm and hangs up the phone. As Sgt. Devlin walks him back to his cell, Santa asks:

SANTA
Tell me, do you believe in Santa Claus?

Continued..

64 CONTINUED:

64

SGT. DEVLIN
(opening cell door)
Sure, buddy, sure. And the Tooth Fairy.
And E.T. and Bozo the Clown and the Easter
Bunny and..

65 INT. JAIL CELL

65

Sgt. Devlin slams the cell door shut.

SANTA
That's what I figured.

The other Santas eye Santa balefully as one figure suddenly emerges from the corner of the cell somewhat unsteadily and more than a little hung over: J. PRESCOTT HEWES.

J. PRESCOTT HEWES
Well I believe in Santa Claus!
(sticking out his hand)
Put 'er there, buddy! J. Prescott Hewes!
(eyeing Santa's outfit)
And you must be Kris Kringle, right?

Prescott starts to chuckle, but quickly stops as he clutches his head.

SANTA
Celebrating Christmas early, Mr. Hewes?

J. PRESCOTT HEWES
(weaving)
Everyday's Christmas.
(looking at the other Santas)
Now these other guys, they're fakes.
(putting his arm around Santa)
But you, I can tell, you're the gen-u-ine
article.

Santa tries to extricate himself from Prescott's grasp because of his whiskey-sour breath.

SANTA
They're not fakes. They're good people
who tried to help other people.

J. PRESCOTT HEWES
(slapping Santa on the back)
Now that's exactly what the real Santa
Claus would say.
(swaying, looking around)
Where're your reindeer parked, Pops?
And those cute little people... y'know,
your Munchkins?

Continued..

65 CONTINUED:

65

SANTA
They're Elves.
(unhappily)
And heaven only knows.

CUT TO:

66 INT. MAIN ROOM, POLICE STATION - DAY

66

Jennifer -- still wearing her backpack full of money -- accompanies Father John, who is trying to reason with Sgt. Devlin.

FATHER JOHN
Can't I get my people out of jail?
It's almost Christmas.

SGT. DEVLIN
Sure. Bail 'em out.

FATHER JOHN
With what money? We're a poor parish.

JENNIFER
What about all the raffle money?

SGT. DEVLIN
We've impounded it. It's evidence,
and besides, it belongs to the people
who bought raffle tickets. I'm sorry,
Father, but my hands are tied.

FATHER JOHN
What are you going to do with this
child?

Jennifer grows apprehensive.

SGT. DEVLIN
We're still getting her mother's
answering machine.

Jennifer looks relieved; she tugs on Sgt. Devlin's sleeve:

JENNIFER
Can I see Napoleon now? You promised.

CUT TO:

67 INT. VISITING AREA, POLICE STATION - DAY

67

Jennifer is earnestly prodding a thoughtful Napoleon.

NAPOLEON
Apologize, huh?

Continued..

67 CONTINUED:

67

JENNIFER

He trusted you. And now he's feeling
real bad.

Napoleon keeps eyeing Jennifer's backback hungrily.

NAPOLEON

But I was puttin' the money back!

The money's so close -- and yet so far.

VELMA

The sucker gave it back.

JENNIFER

That's why I'm proud of you, Napoleon.

Napoleon stops short. No one's ever told him they're proud of him
before.

JENNIFER

So will you do it? Will you tell Santa
you're sorry?

NAPOLEON

Santa?

JENNIFER

(quickly)
I mean Mr. Nicholas.

NAPOLEON

(wheels are turning)
Santa..?

CUT TO:

68 INT. MAIN ROOM, POLICE STATION - DAY

68

Sgt. Devlin is busy at the duty desk.

PHILPOT

Excuse me?

Sgt. Devlin looks up to find six-foot four inches of Elf staring
at him:

PHILPOT

I've come to bail somebody out.
Santa Claus.

Sgt. Devlin is unfazed; in his job, he's seen everything.

SGT. DEVLIN

Which one? I've got a cellfull.

Continued..

68 CONTINUED:

68

Philpot takes a coin out of his pocket and drops it on top of the duty desk.

PHILPOT

How many can I get out with this?

It's solid gold; for the first time, Sgt. Devlin's thrown for a loop:

SGT. DEVLIN

(stunned)

All of 'em.

CUT TO:

69 INT. JAIL, POLICE STATION - DAY - THE CELL DOOR

69

slides open, revealing a still somewhat incredulous Sgt. Devlin:

SGT. DEVLIN

All right, all you Santa Clauses -- out! You've made bail.

PARISHIONERS (adlib)

Yeah! Terrific! Bravo! At last!

Napoleon starts to leave with the Parishioners; Sgt. Devlin stops him:

SGT. DEVLIN

Not so fast. You stay.

NAPOLEON

(stung)

Why?

SGT. DEVLIN

Nobody wants you bad enough to put up money for you.

SANTA

That's not a nice thing to say. This man may have flaws, but at heart, he's proved himself a decent human being.

VELMA

(eager to get out of jail)

Decent! Decent! Decent!

While Sgt. Devlin is distracted with this disagreement, J. Prescott Hewes sneaks out of the cell with the rest of the Santa-Parishioners.

Continued..

69 CONTINUED:

69

SGT. DEVLIN
(to Santa)
Tell it to the Judge.

SANTA
I will!

SGT. DEVLIN
January 8th. When Napoleon comes up
for arraignment. Now you wanna get
out of jail or stay, I don't have
all day.

SANTA
(turning to Napoleon)
I'll see what I can do.
(to Sgt. Devlin)
Who bailed us out?

SGT. DEVLIN
A very tall, very funny-looking person
wearing green pointy slippers and an
elf costume.

SANTA
Philpot? Here?

NAPOLEON
An elf?

SGT. DEVLIN
He's waiting for you in the lobby.

NAPOLEON
You really are Santa Claus?!
(as the cell door slides
shut in his face)
Don't tell me I just missed out on the
biggest score of my life!

VELMA
Figures!!

CUT TO:

70 INT. MAIN ROOM, POLICE STATION - DAY

70

Philpot is excited to see Santa, but a forlorn Jennifer seems ready
to burst into tears as she grabs onto him:

JENNIFER
Please, take me with you.

Continued..

70 CONTINUED:

70

SANTA

Jenny, your mother is on her way here
to get you. She must be beside herself
with worry.

JENNIFER

She'll just make me go home and we'll
never see my Daddy for Christmas!

SANTA

Jennifer, I'd like to take you with
me, but I can't. I don't have your
mother's permission.

JENNIFER

(her eyes misting)
But you're my only hope to get my family
back together again.
(fervently)
Please!

SANTA

(weakening)
Even if I agreed to help you -- and
I'm not saying I am -- how would we
get you there?

JENNIFER

You could fly me there in your magic
sleigh.

SANTA

(remembering his promise
to Mrs. Claus)
I.. I can't do that. The bus is long
gone. And you don't have enough money
for airfare.

J. Prescott Hewes steps out of the shadows.

J. PRESCOTT HEWES

Maybe I can help you, Pops.
(pulling a business card
out of his pocket)
I've got transportation.

Jennifer begs Santa with her eyes; as he looks at her
compassionately, we CUT TO:

71 EXT. FIELD - DAY - A HOT-AIR BALLOON

71

slowing filling with air. Hewes -- antique leather flying cap and
goggles on his head -- pats the balloon's gondola proudly:

Continued..

71 CONTINUED:

71

J. PRESCOTT HEWES
Ain't she a beauty!

Santa and Philpot stand there open-mouthed, watching Hewes adjust the fuel line feeding the heater under the balloon. Jennifer's all excited:

JENNIFER
We're gonna fly to California after all!

SANTA
Uhn-uhn. I draw the line at balloons.

J. PRESCOTT HEWES
(standing straighter)
I'll have you know that when I am sober
I am one of the great balloonists in
the United States of America.

Hewes turns up the flame and the balloon strains at its mooring.

HEWES
Trust me, Pops, I wouldn't fly in her
if she wasn't safe.

JENNIFER
Santa, please!

J. PRESCOTT HEWES
Looks like I'm the best -- and only
-- option you've got.

CUT TO:

72 INT. MAIN ROOM, POLICE STATION - DAY

72

An extremely-upset Laura confronts Sgt. Devlin at the duty desk:

LAURA BAXTER
How could you let her run away from
you?

SGT. DEVLIN
Lady, this is a police station, not a
day care center! And we've been calling
you four times an hour since we found her!

LAURA BAXTER
(exhausted, on the verge of tears)
My car broke down on the turnpike.
I had to take a bus to get here. What
was I supposed to do?

Continued..

72 CONTINUED:

72

SGT. DEVLIN

She's probably with the old man.
They seemed very close.

LAURA BAXTER

(incredulous)

Right -- Santa Claus!

SGT. DEVLIN

Hey Lady, what can I tell you -- he
was bailed out by an Elf. A very
wealthy Elf.

LAURA BAXTER

You're all lunatics, that's what I can
tell you!

A distraught Laura starts to cry when she hears a VOICE calling
her:

NAPOLEON (o.s.)

Hey lady! Over here!

Startled, Laura looks over. Napoleon and Velma are beckoning to
her from the holding cell.

NAPOLEON

You're Jennifer Baxter's mother, aren't
you? We know where she's gone to.

LAURA BAXTER

Where?

NAPOLEON

Bail us out and we'll help you find
her.

VELMA

Bail us out! Bail us out!

LAURA BAXTER

Help me find Jennifer? Why -- what
do you get out of it?

VELMA

Outta jail.

Laura regards Napoleon and this stuffed parrot with trepidation.

NAPOLEON

She's traveling with that old man who
says he's Santa Claus, right?

Continued..

72 CONTINUED:

72

LAURA BAXTER

Don't tell me he's got you believing
it, too?

VELMA

He's not Santa Claus! He's not Santa
Claus!

NAPOLEON

Well, he stole some money and blamed
us for it. I want to return it to its
rightful owners.

LAURA BAXTER

(upset)

My daughter's with a thief?!

NAPOLEON

(smiling his most trustworthy smile)

That's why you could use some help from
someone who understands

(gesturing at the bars)

the criminal mentality. You'll find her
faster if we help.

VELMA

Faster, faster, faster!

Napoleon tries to look honest as Laura thinks about it.

LAURA BAXTER

Well on the one hand, you're obviously a
lunatic. But harmless enough. On the
other hand, my daughter's in the
clutches of a crazy person...

(after a beat)

I'll put up your bail.

CUT TO:

SCENES OMITTED (73-77)

78 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY - EXTREME CLOSE UP - NAPOLEON

78

wearing goggles and leather hat, a white scarf flapping in the wind
behind him. WIDEN TO INCLUDE Velma sitting on his shoulder, also
wearing goggles, hat and scarf. Keep WIDENING TO REVEAL they're
speeding down the highway on a motorcycle. Laura is holding on
for dear life in the side car, a look of absolute panic on her face.

CUT TO:

79 EXT. ROAD BY THE FIELD - DAY - A PAY PHONE

79

While J. Prescott Hewes is finishing filling the balloon with hot air in the background, Jennifer and Philpot gather around Santa while he waits, holding the phone:

LAURA BAXTER'S VOICE (filtered)
..so leave a message at the beep. Beep!

SANTA (into phone)
Mrs. Baxter, I know you're terribly worried about Jennifer but she's fine. We've been waiting here in Cleveland for you, but you haven't shown up yet, and I don't want to leave her alone here, so I'm taking her to her father. If you want to contact me, call my wife at 900-555-POLE. She'll know where to find us. And please, Mrs. Baxter, don't worry.

JENNIFER
(yelling)
Hi, Mommy, I'm okay! I love you!

Santa hangs up the phone. Jennifer hugs him:

JENNIFER
Oh, Santa, I knew you wouldn't let me down.

Santa turns to Philpot:

SANTA
I want you to go back to the North Pole. Mrs. Claus needs you.

PHILPOT
Whatever you say, Santa.

80 REVERSE ANGLE - PHILPOT

80

He's crossed his fingers behind his back.

PHILPOT
(hopeful)
Does this mean you're coming back to Christmas?

SANTA
It means nothing of the sort.

81 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

81

As Napoleon's motorcycle speeds down the highway, Laura's eye is caught by a balloon straining at its mooring in a field across the way. And then she notices

82 LAURA'S POV - LONG SHOT 82

Santa and Jennifer heading across the field toward the balloon.

83 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY - TRAVELLING WITH THE MOTORCYCLE 83

Laura frantically taps Napoleon on the shoulder and points.

84 EXT. FIELD - DAY 84

Hearing the engine, Jennifer turns to see Napoleon's motorcycle veering onto the field, her mother in the sidecar. In a flash, she dashes for the gondola.

SANTA

Jenny, stop!

Santa chases after her.

84A EXT. FIELD - DAY - PHILPOT 84A

see what's happening and dashes after them.

86 EXT. FIELD - DAY - JENNIFER 86

races across the field toward the balloon, chased by Santa straining to keep up, followed by Philpot having even more trouble.

87 EXT. FIELD - DAY - LAURA 87

jumps out of the sidecar:

LAURA BAXTER

Jennifer! Baby! Come back!

Laura takes off, running toward the balloon.

VELMA

What are you waiting for, fleetfoot,
get moving!

Napoleon follows in hot pursuit.

88 EXT. FIELD - DAY - THE HOT AIR BALLOON 88

is trying to burst its bonds to the earth as Jennifer dashes past a startled J. Prescott Hewes and jumps into the gondola.

89 EXT. FIELD - DAY - BEHIND JENNIFER 89

Santa, huffing and puffing, is dashing toward her, followed by Philpot who looks like he's running a one-man three-legged race. Laura and Napoleon chase after them.

SANTA

Jenny, don't you dare!

Continued..

89 CONTINUED: 89

She yanks on the fuel lever and the balloon rises off the ground. before the stunned Hewes can stop her. Santa gasps, trying to catch his breath. Just as Hewes gathers his senses and goes to grab onto the gondola,

90 EXT. FIELD - DAY - PHILPOT 90

leaps for the balloon and stumbles into Hewes, knocking him against

91 EXT. FIELD - DAY - THE RESTRAINING ROPES 91

which slip free.

92 EXT. FIELD - DAY - PHILPOT AND HEWES 92

get all tangled in a mass of struggling arms and legs as the restraining ropes rise into the air.

93 EXT. FIELD - DAY - SANTA 93

barely has time to leap up and grab onto the gondola railing before the balloon takes off into the sky.

94 EXT. FIELD - DAY - SANTA'S LEGS 94

kick helplessly against nothing but air as below, on the ground, Laura and Napoleon run around in circles, Laura yelling:

LAURA BAXTER

Jennifer Baxter, you land that balloon
this instant!

JENNIFER

I don't know how, Mommy!

Napoleon shakes his fist impotently as

95 EXT. FIELD - DAY - THE BALLOON 95

floats off into the Western sky, Santa Claus hanging on for dear life.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT IV

FADE IN:

96 EXT. THE SKY - AFTERNOON - THE HOT AIR BALLOON 96

is floating over a changing, snow-covered American landscape, heading west from Cleveland across heartland America. Birds circle lazily against a sky turning all sorts of spectacular colors.

97 EXT. IN THE GONDOLA - AFTERNOON 97

The air is cold; Jennifer is huddled in the corner, hugging herself, trying to keep warm. Santa sits across from her, grumpy because he's hungry:

SANTA

If I'd known you were going to run away,
I'd've brought some food along.

Jennifer looks so miserable that compassion wins over hunger and Santa moves over next to her, holding Jennifer close to warm her.

JENNIFER

Santa, I'm sorry. I just thought that if I keep going to California, Mommy will follow me and then we'll be all together again. But I was wrong to run away, wasn't I?

SANTA

I'd say your mother has got to be absolutely frantic. And no doubt your father's probably beside himself.

JENNIFER

(her eyes starting to mist)
This was all a big mistake, wasn't it?

CUT TO:

98 EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON - NAPOLEON'S MOTORCYCLE 98

is pulled over to the side of the road; Laura -- hand above eyes -- scans the sky fruitlessly.

LAURA BAXTER

We've lost them.

NAPOLEON

Don't worry. We'll find them.

LAURA BAXTER

Oh sure. Where?

Continued..

98 CONTINUED:

98

VELMA
(cackling)
California.

CUT TO:

99 EXT. IN THE BALLOON GONDOLA - AFTERNOON

99

Santa and Jennifer huddle together for warmth.

JENNIFER
Will you do it for me?

SANTA
I'm really not in the mood.

JENNIFER
C'mon, it'll make you feel better.

Forcing himself to relax, Santa leans back, hands folded across his belly, his eyes start to twinkle and he lets loose with a spirited:

SANTA
Ho Ho Ho!

Jennifer grins.

SANTA
Well, I do feel a little better.

JENNIFER
(giggling)
That was great.
(suddenly serious)
Santa, you know, I'm real happy you're helping me find my Daddy and everything. But I was kinda wondering -- how come you're not up at the North Pole getting ready for Christmas?
(Santa is silent)
Are you gonna have enough time to do everything?
(Santa still doesn't answer)
What's up? You're awfully quiet.

SANTA
I've been thinking of quitting Christmas.

JENNIFER
(horrified)
You can't do that!

Continued..

99 CONTINUED:

99

SANTA

Why not? Most people these days don't seem to believe in me. They've lost the Spirit of Christmas. So you see, I've been feeling alot like I'm not needed...

JENNIFER

But I believe in you. And so did Mr. Hewes.

SANTA

I wish everybody felt like you do, Jenny. But with most people, just when I think there's a chance they really do care about each other, something bad happens. Like Napoleon and the raffle. He was just using us.

JENNIFER

But he changed because of you. He proved he cares. He just needed you to show him he was wrong.

SANTA

Okay. So three people believe.

Suddenly the balloon's heater begins to COUGH and SPUTTER.

SANTA

(looking up)

Oh no!

JENNIFER

What is it?

Santa gets up, checks the fuel gauge.

SANTA

We're out of fuel!

100 EXT. SKY - AFTERNOON - THE GONDOLA

100

starts to drop as the balloon starts to crumple.

101 EXT. SKY - AFTERNOON - IN THE GONDOLA

101

The balloon is descending rapidly.

JENNIFER

(grabbing onto Santa)

Do something!

Continued..

101 CONTINUED:

101

SANTA
(frantically looking
around the balloon)
I'm trying, I'm trying!
(spotting sand bags)
Ballast!

He struggles with one of the heavy sand bags as Jennifer starts to cry.

SANTA
Make yourself useful! Help me throw
this overboard!

She looks at Santa, not moving, a scared little girl.

SANTA
C'mon Jenny, I need your help.

Galvanized into action, she rushes to Santa's side and helps him throw the sand bag over the side.

102 EXT. SKY - AFTERNOON -- THE BALLOON

102

-- lighter -- slows its rapid descent. Sandbag after sandbag comes flying out of the gondola.

103 EXT. SKY - AFTERNOON - IN THE GONDOLA

103

Santa and Jennifer toss the last sandbag over the edge. The balloon is still descending pretty quickly.

104 THEIR POV - THE GROUND

104

is rushing toward them.

105 EXT. SKY - AFTERNOON - IN THE GONDOLA

105

Santa grabs onto Jennifer and holds her tight as

106 EXT. GROUND - THE BALLOON

106

makes a bumpy landing in the snow, crunching the gondola.

107 EXT. GROUND - AFTERNOON - IN THE CRUNCHED GONDOLA

107

Whew! Santa and Jennifer pick themselves up off the bottom of the gondola and look at each other.

SANTA
We make quite a team, don't we!

Santa smiles at Jennifer as they hug each other gratefully:

Continued..

107 CONTINUED:

107

SANTA
You're one brave little girl.

JENNIFER
I couldn't have done it without you,
Santa.

SANTA
I do come in handy once in a while,
don't I? But tell you the truth --
from now on, I'm sticking to reindeer.

DISSOLVE TO:

108 EXT. PAY PHONE OUTSIDE BANK, CRANSTON, KANSAS - LATE AFTERNOON 108
Santa's on the phone:

SANTA (into phone)
You don't have a Jeff Baxter listed?
Are you sure? This is Wonder Records,
isn't it?
(his face falls)
No, no, nobody else can help me. Thank
you.

109 EXT. BANK - LATE AFTERNOON - JENNIFER 109
is waiting for Santa outside the CRANSTON FIRST FEDERAL BANK.
She notices TWO BOYS, 10 and 13, sitting morosely on a pickup truck
parked in front. She waves at them. No response. So she walks over:

JENNIFER
Hi.

RYAN, the older boy, looks up at her, depressed:

RYAN
Hi.

JENNIFER
(all excited)
I'm Jennifer Baxter and I'm going
to California. I'm traveling with
Santa Claus and we flew here in a hot
air balloon except we ran out of fuel
and we crashed and we walked here and
now we're waiting for the next bus
to Los Angeles.

BRIAN
(chin on hand)
Gimme a break.

Continued..

109 CONTINUED:

109

They look down at their boots.

JENNIFER

What's wrong with you guys?

RYAN

The bank's gonna take our farm away.

BRIAN

(looking at door of bank)
In five minutes, I'm not gonna have
a place to sleep anymore.

JENNIFER

But it's right before.. before
Christmas!

CUT TO:

110 INT. BANK - LATE AFTERNOON

110

The BANKER -- a flinty-eyed, flinty-hearted man of 50 -- faces Ryan and Brian's father, CLYDE JESSUP -- a weather-worn, kind-eyed man in his late 30s -- across an imposing desk:

THE BANKER

I'm sorry, Clyde, but you leave me no
choice. You've missed your last four
mortgage payments.

CLYDE JESSUP

You know I'm good for it, Mr.
Castlebury. My grandfather started
this farm borrowing money from your
grandfather. Our families have been
in business for a long time. What can
I do when the weather turns against me?

THE BANKER

I'm sorry, Clyde.

Clyde gets up and starts to leave; then turns back to face the Banker:

CLYDE JESSUP

I've still got until Christmas Eve to come
up with the money, Castlebury, so don't start
printing up any For Sale signs yet!

CUT TO:

111 EXT. BANK - LATE AFTERNOON - JENNIFER

111

is still hanging out with Ryan and Brian as Santa puts his hand
on her shoulder; he's not sure how to tell her the news about her
father:

Continued..

111 CONTINUED:

111

SANTA

I.. uh.. left word for your mother on
her answering machine.

JENNIFER

But we'll keep going to California,
right?

SANTA

(smiling at her)

Guess we will. Except we need to find
a place to stay tonight.

Brian pulls on Santa's jacket.

BRIAN

Hey, are you Santa Claus?

SANTA

(giving Jennifer the eye)

Now whoever gave you that idea?

BRIAN

(pointing)

She did.

Santa looks at Jennifer who realizes she's made a big boo-boo, then
back at Brian:

SANTA

What can I do if she wants to believe
I'm Santa Claus?

Clyde Jessup exits the bank, his face determined. Brian runs up
to him:

BRIAN

Daddy, what happened, what happened?!

CLYDE JESSUP

We got us some time, kiddo. All I gotta
do is find \$5000 by December 24th at
3 o'clock and we're home free.

RYAN

(cynically)

Shouldn't be too hard, should it.

BRIAN

(indicating Jennifer and Santa)

Daddy, these people missed their bus
and need a place to stay tonight.

Clyde looks at Santa's kindly face and Jennifer's hopeful smile:

Continued..

111 CONTINUED:

111

CLYDE JESSUP
Well, we ain't got much but you're
welcome to share.

SANTA
That's awfully kind of you.

CLYDE JESSUP
(a wry smile)
Don't they say misery loves company?

CUT TO:

112 INT. JESSUP FARMHOUSE - EVENING

112

MARY JESSUP -- a drawn, hard-working woman -- puts dinner on the
table for her family and guests; behind them, in the living room,
the TV is playing.

MARY JESSUP
(joining them)
Sorry it's not more of a feast, but
times are lean around here.

CLYDE JESSUP
Still no reason why we can't thank the
Good Lord for what we got.

The family hold hands; Brian takes Santa's hand and Ryan reaches
for Jennifer, who isn't used to saying grace.

CLYDE JESSUP
For what we are about to receive, may
the Lord make us truly thankful.

JESSUP FAMILY AND SANTA
Amen.

They all look at Jennifer:

JENNIFER
Amen.

On the TV behind them, a commercial comes on for the Bannings'
Department Store ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SLEIGH RACE at SUN VALLEY LODGE.

BRIAN
Daddy, couldn't we ask God for the five
thousand dollars?

MARY JESSUP
I wish t'were that easy, Bri.

Santa catches sight of the television:

Continued..

112 CONTINUED:

112

ANNOUNCER (on TV)
So come on out to Bannings' Third Annual
Christmas Sleigh Race at Sun Valley Lodge,
and watch the winner collect Five Thousand
Dollars.

CLYDE JESSUP
I wish I knew where I could put together
that much money.

SANTA
(pointing at TV)
You could try winning that race.

Everybody turns to just catch a glimpse of the TV screen before the
commercial ends: "WIN \$5000 IN BANNINGS' THIRD ANNUAL CHRISTMAS
SLEIGH RACE AT SUN VALLEY LODGE!"

CLYDE JESSUP
I can't drive one of them things good
enough to win \$5000.

Santa looks at this down-on-its-luck family -- and makes a decision.

SANTA
Well I can.

JENNIFER
(panicking)
Not now. We don't have time.

SANTA
Now Jenny, who knows more about driving
a sleigh than I do?

The Jessups start getting the gleam of hope in their eyes.

JENNIFER
But you promised to take me to
California tomorrow.

SANTA
But Jenny, these people are having an
awfully bad time. I've got to help them.

Jennifer looks at the Jessups; she sees how much they need him in
their faces. She turns back to Santa, upset, on the verge of tears.

CLYDE JESSUP
(astonished)
You mean you'd enter the race to win
on our behalf?
(looking heavenward)
Thanks.

CUT TO:

113 INT. BANK - NIGHT

113

Castlebury is on the phone:

THE BANKER (into phone)
That's right, Mr. Bannings. I'll have
the Jessup property by Christmas and
then you'll be able to buy it all --
at a price, of course. That new
shopping mall's going to be a magnet
for the future growth of this town.
(smiling)
Quite profitable too!

NORBERT CASTLEBURY, a brutish 17, rushes into his father's office
breathless:

NORBERT CASTLEBURY

Pop!

THE BANKER (into phone)
Got to go -- my next appointment just
showed up.
(listening; reassuring)
It's a done deal. Count on it!

He hangs up and glares at his son:

THE BANKER
What is so important?

NORBERT CASTLEBURY
Some guy named Nicholas who's staying
with the Jessups has just entered
Bannings' Sleigh Race.

THE BANKER
(impatient)
So?

NORBERT CASTLEBURY
The Prize is five thousand bucks, Pop.
Five thousand dollars. Like in how
much Jessup owes you.

The Banker glances at the phone, then stares at his son:

THE BANKER
You win that race, Norbert.

NORBERT CASTLEBURY
I'll squash him like a fly.

THE BANKER
Do it.

CUT TO:

114 EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

114

Headlights flash across Napoleon's face as he races down the highway on the motorcycle, Velma on his shoulder. The wind whips through Laura's hair as she huddles in the sidecar, chilled. Napoleon eyes her, concerned:

NAPOLEON

Chilly, huh?

LAURA BAXTER

You'd think somebody who designs clothes for a living would've dressed more appropriately.

(worried)

If I've still got my job when I get back from California. My boss doesn't even know I'm gone.

CUT TO:

115 EXT. MYSTERIOUS POV - THE SUN

115

rising in the early morning sky. TILT DOWN to include a large barn. PAN left and right as if looking out for anyone watching, then begin a POV FORWARD TRACKING SHOT sneaking up to and into

116 INT. THE SLEIGH BARN - MORNING - MYSTERIOUS POV

116

where the sleighs for the race are being stored.

117 MYSTERIOUS POV - A HAND

117

appears in the FRAME holding a hacksaw. CONTINUE POV TRACKING up to the support of a sleigh as the hand begins sawing through the metal.

118 INT. BARN - REVERSE ANGLE

118

Norbert Castlebury's face is all red with exertion as he saws away.

DISSOLVE TO:

119 EXT. SUN VALLEY LODGE - DAY

119

The beautiful facade of this grand old hotel looks down on the Starting Line for the Big Race. There's lots of bustle and turmoil as teams of three horses are being fitted onto four sleighs. Santa's horses are skittish with excitement as the Jessups help Santa with the reins and bridle; he murmurs softly to the magnificent animals:

SANTA

Easy, fellas. Save it for when we need it.

(inhaling the cold, brisk air)

Good day for a race...

Continued..

119 CONTINUED:

119

Norbert swaggers over and sneers at Santa:

NORBERT CASTLEBURY

Hey, Grandpa, doncha think you're a
little too old and fat for this contest?

SANTA

We'll find out at the finish line, won't
we, young fella?

Norbert starts cackling hysterically; he's thought of a witticism
and it's cracking him up.

NORBERT CASTLEBURY

(poking Santa in his stomach)
Don' you think you're "weigh" outta
your league..?

SANTA

(ironically)
Ho.. ho.. ho...

Santa shakes his head, then climbs into his sleigh. The Jessup boys
jump up on the running boards:

RYAN

You're gonna win, I know it!

BRIAN

I said an extra-special prayer for you
last night before I went to sleep.

Clyde Jessup reaches up and shakes Santa's hand:

CLYDE JESSUP

Whatever happens, the wife and I appreciate
what you're doing for our family.

SANTA

Glad to.
(glancing over at Norbert)
As a matter of fact, I think I'm going
enjoy this.

Jennifer stands off by herself, still solemn, not happy. Santa
looks at her and waves. She turns away.

120 EXT. VIP GUEST SECTION - DAY - THE BANKER

120

leans back in his seat, supremely confident.

120A EXT. EDGE OF THE WOODS - DAY

120A

Peeking out from the woods is the rather enormous bulk of Philpot,
trying to hide behind a rather narrow tree so Santa won't see him.

121 EXT. STARTING LINE - DAY - THE CROWD 121

is building to a fever pitch as the prominent MR. BANNINGS, who looks like a man who wouldn't be satisfied until he owns everything in town, stands by the starting line holding a starter's pistol:

MR. BANNINGS

Bannings -- where "If you can't find it,
it can't be found!" -- welcomes you to
our Third Annual Christmas Sleigh Race
at beautiful Sun Valley Lodge.

122 EXT. STARTING LINE - DAY - SANTA AND NORBERT 122

eye each other.

MR. BANNINGS(v.o.)

At the sound of the gunshot, the race
will begin! Ready, gentlemen?

123 THE GUN 123

goes off!

124 EXT. STARTING LINE - DAY - THE RACE BEGINS 124

Hooves pounding, horses snorting, the sleighs explode from the gate. Santa's glorious horses rise up and over the white snow in powerful SLOW MOTION. They lunge forward with each surge of Santa's directions.

125 EXT. HILLOCKS - DAY 125

The four sleighs race over fresh-fallen snow.

126 EXT. GRANDSTAND - DAY 126

The crowd goes wild, cheering them on.

127 EXT. STARTING LINE - DAY - JENNIFER 127

watches, sullenly.

127A EXT. NARROW TREE - DAY - PHILPOT 127A

jumps around with excitement, still trying to conceal his bulk behind that small tree.

128 TRACKING SHOT - NORBERT'S SLEIGH 128

Norbert -- whipping his horses -- pulls ahead of the pack...

29 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA'S SLEIGH 129

passes some of the other sleighs.

- 130 EXT. WOODS - DAY 130
One of the sleighs' runner support strut collapses and the sleigh crashes into a snowbank, shooting up a massive roostertail of snow.
- 131 EXT. GRANDSTAND - DAY 131
The crowd gasps.
- 132 CLOSE ANGLE - SANTA 132
looks back, concerned, but he has to return his attention to the race. Santa pulls ahead of the competition in a rhythmic blur of shadows.
- 133 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA'S SLEIGH 133
MOVING ALONG as it rushes down, across and up a snowy gorge.
- 134 SANTA'S POV - NORBERT'S SLEIGH 134
gaining momentum, surging ahead of the pack like the four horsemen of the apocalypse..
- 135 TRAVELING SHOT - WOODS BY STREAM - ANOTHER SLEIGH 135
Another support strut collapses and that sleigh crashes, this time into an icy stream.
- 136 TRACKING SHOT - NORBERT'S SLEIGH 136
Norbert smiles a self-satisfied smile at the sight. Now it's just Santa and Norbert. He starts whipping his horses even harder. Norbert's horses -- eyes bulging, nostrils flaring, snorting -- strain to keep galloping at such a pace.
- 137 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA'S SLEIGH 137
Santa snaps his reins; his horses put their heart into it; they take off at full gallop.
- 138 ON JENNIFER 138
Almost against her will, she starts getting caught up in the action of the race.
- 138A ON PHILPOT 138A
He's so excited, he's biting his hand.
- 139 CLOSE ANGLE - NORBERT 139
He sets his face in grim determination as he urges his horses on without mercy.
- 140 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA AND NORBERT'S SLEIGHS 140
Santa's horses pass the back of Norbert's sleigh. Now the side. Now they're neck and neck...

- 141 CLOSE ANGLE - SANTA'S SLEIGH 141
Santa's support struts are taking enormous shocks as the runners flash over the uneven snow. Will they take it?
- 142 CLOSE ANGLE - JENNIFER 142
grabs onto Ryan, excited. Now her heart is with Santa.
- 143 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA AND NORBERT'S SLEIGHS 143
As Santa pulls alongside, Norbert snaps his whip at him.
- 144 CLOSE ANGLE - SANTA'S SLEIGH 144
Santa's runner support is starting to buckle as his horses pull ahead of Norbert's sleigh.
- 145 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA AND NORBERT'S SLEIGHS 145
Suddenly Santa's horses lunge skyward as if trying to hurdle an unseen mountain --
- 146 CLOSE ANGLE - SANTA'S SLEIGH 146
The runner support collapses --
- 147 CLOSE ANGLE - THE RUNNER 147
flies off into a snowbank --
- 148 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA'S SLEIGH 148
lists crazily, dragging the support through the snow. He falls behind.
- 149 CLOSE ANGLE - SANTA 149
fights for control as the horses charge ahead, manes flying, hooves slamming through the snow, dragging the damaged sleigh wildly behind them like a dead weight as they approach the Finish Line.
- 150 CLOSE ANGLE - NORBERT 150
smiles in triumph.
- 151 CLOSE ANGLE - JENNIFER 151
gasps as Santa's crippled sleigh approaches; she gets an idea and yells at Santa:

JENNIFER

Your nose thing! Your nose thing!
How you go up chimneys!

152 CLOSE ANGLE - SANTA 152
-- not hearing -- cups his hand by his mouth and yells to Jennifer:
SANTA
What..?!
153 EXTREME CLOSE ANGLE - SANTA'S FOREFINGER 153
touches his nose. Magic Sparkles spray from his finger.
154 TRACKING SHOT - SANTA'S SLEIGH 154
Santa looks at the Magic Sparkles, then back at Jennifer.
SANTA
Clever child! Hope Mrs. Claus'll
forgive me for breaking a promise --
And he presses his finger tightly against his nose.
155 ANOTHER ANGLE - SANTA'S SLEIGH 155
rights itself as Magic Sparkles take the place of the missing runner
and the sleigh speeds over the snow.
156 IN THE GRANDSTAND 156
The Crowd is building itself into a frenzy as they watch
157 SANTA'S SLEIGH 157
slowly catching up to Norbert's sleigh as they near the Finish Line.
157A ON PHILPOT 157A
He's so excited, he dashes out from his hiding place and rushes
after Santa's sleigh.
158 EXT. THE FINISH LINE - JENNIFER 158
runs toward the Finish Line. She can't contain her joy at seeing
Santa so gallantly driving his sleigh as she joins the Jessups:
JENNIFER
Isn't he wonderful!
CLYDE JESSUP
(daring to hope)
It does look like he might pull ahead...
159 SANTA'S SLEIGH 159
dashes toward the Finish Line.
160 CLOSE ANGLE - NORBERT 160
catches a glimpse of the Magic Sparkles under Santa's sleigh -- and
does a double-take.

161 SANTA'S SLEIGH 161
inches ahead of Norbert when suddenly a tree looms directly ahead --

162 SANTA 162
-- at the last moment -- swerves around the tree and his sleigh
crosses the Finish Line first!

163 EXT. FINISH LINE - THE CROWD 163
is on its feet, cheering. The Jessups and Jennifer hug each other
excitedly.

164 EXT. VIP SECTION - THE BANKER 164
slumps in his seat, defeated.

164A EXT. FINISH LINE - PHILPOT 164A
-- jumping up and down with excitement -- loses his balance and falls
backwards, gathering snow as he rolls downhill like a giant snowman,
before smashing into a display of Santa's Elves outside the Lodge.

DISSOLVE TO:

165 EXT. GRANDSTAND - DAY - A FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR CHECK 165
in Mr. Bannings' hand. He looks anything but thrilled as he hands
it over to Santa surrounded by Jennifer, the Jessups and the MANAGER
OF THE SUN VALLEY LODGE. But as the cameras flash, Mr. Bannings
quickly puts on a smile and watches tight-lipped as Santa hands
the check over to Clyde. The rest of the Jessups all hug
Santa excitedly:

SANTA
This should keep the wolf from your
door. Or at least Mr. Castlebury.

CLYDE JESSUP
(overwhelmed)
I don't know how to thank you.

166 EXT. FINISH LINE - DAY - THE BANKER 166
catches up with his son and starts slapping him:

THE BANKER
(derisively)
Squash him like a fly!

Norbert points at the broken runner on Santa's sleigh:

NORBERT CASTLEBURY
(whining, insisting)
But I sawed it off!

CUT TO:

167 INT. JESSUP FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

167

Mary Jessup packs a picnic basket with food. Brian helps Jennifer gather her Treasure Box and things as Ryan finishes talking on the phone.

SANTA

So when does this train leave?

RYAN

(replacing phone)

When you get there.

MARY JESSUP

It's just a spur line, but you can catch your bus on the other end.

Clyde still can't believe their good fortune as he tells Santa:

CLYDE JESSUP

I'm gonna pay back every dime,
Mr. Nicholas. I swear.

SANTA

No need to, Clyde. Tell you the truth,
that race was rather invigorating.
(patting his tummy)
I could use more exercise.

MARY JESSUP

I guess there really is a Santa Claus
after all.

BRIAN

(eyeing Santa)

There sure is.

JENNIFER

(to Santa, hopeful)

See -- people really do believe.

Santa eyes Jennifer meaningfully:

SANTA

But not enough to convince me people
really care.

As Jennifer looks at Santa, distressed, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

168 EXT. RAILROAD - DAY - THE "HEEBER CREEPER" 168

chugs through gorgeous, snow-laced mountain scenery.

169 INT. RAILROAD CAR - DAY 169

Santa and Jennifer are the only passengers. But once again, they're huddling together, because this railroad's cars don't have any windows and it's cold. Jennifer shivers. She looks absolutely miserable; she starts to cry.

JENNIFER

Are you still mad at me?

SANTA

Mad at you? Whatever for?

JENNIFER

For not wanting you to stay and win the race to help the Jessups? For just thinking about myself?

SANTA

I'm not mad at you Jenny. Just a little disappointed.

JENNIFER

(between sobs)

It's all.. my.. fault... There'll never be another Christmas with Santa Claus.

Santa tries to comfort her:

SANTA

No, Jenny, it's not your fault. It's just the way things are these days. Everybody's like that.

That only makes Jennifer cry even harder. Santa looks around, helpless, unsure what to do; he's used to making people happy, not making them cry. Suddenly, Santa hears deep wracking sobs from a few rows back in this supposedly deserted railcar.

He looks around, confused, trying to place the sound. Then he gets up, and heads toward the boo-hooing. He stops, crossing his arms:

SANTA

I should have known.

170 PHILPOT

170

is scrunched down between two seats, sobbing; he blows his nose noisily into a handkerchief.

171 SANTA

171

eyes Philpot balefully:

SANTA

Jenny's tale of woe get to you?

PHILPOT

No. I'm stuck between these seats and
it hurts!

Santa takes Philpot's arm and starts tugging on it.

SANTA

What are you doing here? You promised
you'd go back to the North Pole and help
Mrs. Claus finish the toy orders.

PHILPOT

What difference does it make if you're
not going to deliver them?

He eyes Santa reprovingly, who responds by giving Philpot's arm an
extra hard tug. With a loud PLOP!, Philpot comes unstuck from
between the seats.

PHILPOT

(with bravado)

So -- where are we heading?

SANTA

(turning Philpot)

To the North Pole. And don't worry
about us -- we'll be just fine.

As Philpot's lower lip trembles like a rebuked child, we CUT TO:

172 EXT. TRAIN STATION, EVERGREEN, COLORADO - AFTERNOON

172

Santa and Jennifer descend the train to find

173 A LIMOUSINE AND DRIVER

173

waiting. The Driver smiles crisply and opens the limo's door,
motioning for them to get in.

173A PHILPOT

173A

stares at them through the train window as

174 SANTA AND JENNIFER

174

exchange puzzled looks.

SANTA

Are you sure you're waiting for us?

Continued..

174 CONTINUED:

174

DRIVER

Absolutely. I was told you'd be on
this train and here you are.

(motioning they should get in)
Please.

Santa and Jennifer exchange another look and get in the limo.

CUT TO:

175 EXT. WOODFORD INDUSTRIES - LATE AFTERNOON

175

A sign in front of the factory identifies "WOODFORD INDUSTRIES" as
"Feeding America Healthy Food". The limo cruises up to the Main
Entrance and stops. The Driver gets out and opens the door for
Santa and Jennifer, then escorts them inside.

176 INT. WOODFORD'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

176

The Driver shows Santa and Jennifer into the lavishly-decorated
office of a CEO. The Executive Chair at the desk swivels around
from the computer and

177 ANDY WOODFORD

177

-- a nine year old pint-size version of a man who exudes wealth
and power, sort of his father-in-training -- stares up at them.

178 SANTA AND JENNIFER

178

are suprised, to say the least.

ANDY WOODFORD

Are you friends of my father?

SANTA

I don't think so.

ANDY WOODFORD

I'm Andy Woodford. This is my father's
factory. He makes vitamins and health
food. We're very rich.

JENNIFER

My Dad lives in California. We're going
to see him. He makes a lot of money too.
He writes songs.

Santa watches this little exchange dubiously.

Continued..

178 CONTINUED:

178

ANDY WOODFORD

(smug)

I've been there. Lots. My father has
business there.

(getting interested)

Is your Dad famous?

JENNIFER

Sure.

ANDY WOODFORD

(indicating Santa)

Is he your grandfather?

JENNIFER

Uh, not exactly.

DISSOLVE TO:

178A INT. WOODFORD INDUSTRIES - EARLY EVENING - JAMES WOODFORD

178A

-- the grown-up version of Andy -- strides into his office all
business:

WOODFORD

Sorry to keep you waiting, Herb --

He stops short as he notices Jennifer and Andy sitting enthralled
at Santa's feet as he finishes telling them a story:

SANTA

..and then one day Philpot just started
growing and he got to be the biggest
Elf Santa Claus had ever seen!

WOODFORD

You're not Herbert!

(staring at Jennifer)

You're not Kimberly!

(calling off-screen)

James!

Woodford's Driver scurries into the office.

WOODFORD

(pointing at Santa)

Who are these people?

DRIVER

Your brother-in-law and your niece.

WOODFORD

I've never seen these people before
in my life!

Continued..

178A CONTINUED:

178A

DRIVER

But.. but they were the only people
to get off the train.

ANDY WOODFORD

Daddy, this is Jennifer and Mr.
Nicholas. He tells neat stories!

SANTA

(getting up)
Well there's obviously been some
mistake.

WOODFORD

(broking no resistance)
Sit down.
(Santa obeys)
My son never thinks anything is neat.
What are you doing in Evergreen?

ANDY WOODFORD

They're going to California to see
Jennifer's father for Christmas. But
I want them to stay here. They're fun!

SANTA

(getting up again)
We really should be getting on our way.

WOODFORD

Sit down. There aren't any more buses
or trains or planes out of town until
tomorrow.

Santa sits again.

ANDY WOODFORD

Can they stay with us? Can they, Dad?

SANTA

I really don't think --

WOODFORD

I do. We've got plenty of extra rooms
at the house.

ANDY WOODFORD

(to Santa)
People don't stay with us very often.
They usually can't stand us.

CUT TO:

180 INT. WOODFORD'S FACTORY - EVENING

180

Woodford takes Santa and Jennifer on a tour of his factory. Through windows, they can watch WORKERS operating rows of vitamin-making and bottling machines at full speed. WAREHOUSE WORKERS bustle to and fro, driving pallets of boxed products.

SANTA
(looking around)
This is quite some factory you've built here.

WOODFORD
Just takes hard work and gumption.

Jennifer whispers to Santa:

JENNIFER
These people seem to be awfully nice, Santa.

SANTA
Well, maybe some people care about other people more than I thought.

JENNIFER
(getting excited)
Does that mean..?

SANTA
Maybe.

Woodford -- not able to give up center stage -- breaks in on them:

WOODFORD
Anything you'd like to know about our operation here?

JENNIFER
How come your factory's so busy even at night?

WOODFORD
Well, keeping America eating healthy is a full time job. We've got a lot of orders to fill.
(pointing at warehouse desk)
Wait here. We'll be going home in a few minutes, but I need to deal with an employee problem first. The Plant Manager tells me everybody's griping they have to work over the holiday.

SANTA
You -- you want your employees to work on Christmas?

Continued..

180 CONTINUED:

180

Uh-oh. Jennifer looks at Santa, who isn't pleased by this at all.

WOODFORD

The bottom line is: business is business. I've worked hard all my life -- and you don't see me complaining about working on Christmas!

JENNIFER

You own this place, Mr. Woodford.

SANTA

She does have a point. I'll wager some of your workers just won't come in to work. Christmas means a great deal to them.

WOODFORD

Then I'll fire them.

SANTA

You wouldn't -- would you?

Jennifer eyes Santa with dismay.

WOODFORD

On the spot.

He leaves them alone. Santa starts pacing, upset:

SANTA

Just when I was beginning to believe.

Jennifer looks very worried.

SANTA

Whenever I think people are going to surprise me and prove they really care about each other -- I find out they really don't care at all!

(a beat)

What good can I do?

As Santa seems lost in his disappointment, we MOVE IN on Jennifer whose eyes are shining with an idea and CUT TO:

181 INT. WOODFORD'S OFFICE - EVENING

181

A worried Philpot looks at an earnest Jennifer:

PHILPOT

Oh, those poor workers!

He slumps down into a chair -- and it tips over backwards. As Jennifer helps him up off the floor, she tells him:

Continued..

181 CONTINUED:

181

JENNIFER
But I've got this idea how we can save
Christmas.

SCENE OMITTED (182)

FADE OUT

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

183 INT. WOODFORD FACTORY - LATE NIGHT - TRACKING 183

The Workers are gone, the factory dark and quiet. Except for a light on in Mr. Woodford's office. We TRACK into

184 INT. WOODFORD'S OFFICE - LATE NIGHT 184

to find Jennifer, Philpot and the rest of the Elves in conference:

PHILPOT

So, you see, if we help the workers
make their quotas --

JENNIFER

Then Mr. Woodford will let them off
for Christmas --

PHILPOT

And Santa will realize people can be
nice to each other --

JENNIFER

And he'll change his mind about quitting
Christmas --

PHILPOT

And we'll all still have jobs!

The other Elves all look at each other.

STUBBY

(scratching his cheek)
Well...
(the Elves wait expectantly)
..I dunno.

MUFFIN

(filing her nails)
What do I know about health food. I
say we should be back at the North Pole
getting ready for Christmas!

ROLY POLY

No Christmas there'll be
With an unhappy.. uh.. uh..
(reaching for a rhyme)
..Santey.

Philpot shoots her a "gimme a break" look.

Continued..

184 CONTINUED:

184

TROUPER

We can do the work here and still get
back to the North Pole to finish up
for Christmas.

JENNIFER

(getting excited)
You can?

PHILPOT

Sure. One elf can do the work of ten
men!

In his exuberance, Philpot knocks a vase over; Roly Poly grabs it
before it falls to the floor.

TROUPER

How do you think all those toys get
made every year -- magic? Hard work
and sweat!

JENNIFER

So why don't we get started?

MUFFIN

(as they get to work)
I don't know about you, but I never
sweat...

As the Elves rolls up their sleeves, we DISSOLVE TO:

185 INT. WORKROOM, FACTORY - NIGHT

185

Pure chaos. Jennifer watches open-mouthed as the Elves scurry to
and fro, trying to tend machines that are working much faster than
they're used to.

186 TROUPER AND STUBBY

186

keep knocking into each other as they race back and forth trying to
monitor the vitamin-making machines. But the machines are working
too fast and vitamin-casings are flying everywhere.

187 THE VITAMIN-PACKAGING MACHINE

187

is spewing vitamin bottles out of the machine at an alarming rate,
the empty bottles smacking into Muffin and Roly Poly, who are trying
to reach the on-off control. They frantically try to maintain their
balance as they slip on the slick plastic bottles and fall to the
floor. Each time they get back on their feet, they're knocked
down like bowling pins.

188 PHILPOT

188

is trying to control the beet-juice bottling machine, which is busily filling containers with beet-juice on the speeded up assembly line. The machine is over-filling the bottles, spilling beet-juice all over the machinery.

Philpot struggles to bring the filling tube under control when the tube jerks loose and shpritzes him in the face.

189 JENNIFER

189

is absolutely horrified at the disasters in front of her. And then

190 SANTA

190

is standing behind her, eyeing her reproachfully:

SANTA

Jennifer, what are you doing here?!

Jennifer looks up at him, hopeful he won't notice the chaos behind her. Unfortunately, he does.

SANTA

(astonished)

Philpot?! Muffin!

Santa turns, eyeing Jennifer, who suddenly looks very guilty:

SANTA

You're at the bottom of this, I know you are.

PHILPOT

(dripping beet juice)

She made us do it.

More chaos through the glass window behind them.

JENNIFER

I just wanted to help the people who work for Mr. Woodford have a happy Christmas.

SANTA

By destroying their factory?

Tears well up in Jennifer's eyes.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry, Santa. But I was just trying not to be selfish. I meant good.

Santa is instantly contrite. Their confrontation is cut short by the screams of the Elves who are being battered by the machinery.

Continued..

190 CONTINUED:

190

SANTA
(rolling up his sleeves)
C'mon, what these Elves need is a
little organization!

CUT TO:

191 INT. THE FACTORY - NIGHT

191

is humming along at superspeed, watched over by a pleased as punch
Santa and a joyful Jennifer. Suddenly,

192 MR. WOODFORD

192

glowering at the scene before him.

WOODFORD
What is the meaning of this! What are
you doing in my factory?!

SANTA
We're helping your workers.

Santa steps briskly over to the packaging line and starts adjusting
one of the machines.

WOODFORD
My workers don't need your help. What
they need to be is less lazy.

SANTA
You expect people to work at peak
capacity all year long and not even
take time off to be with their families
during the holidays. What kind of
person are you?

WOODFORD
A hard worker.

SANTA
So are they. And you'd recognize that
fact if you weren't so blinded by the
"bottom line".
(taking charge)
Trouper, hand me that wrench... Stubby,
pull those controls over there... Philpot,
you and Muffin clean up this mess...

WOODFORD
(staring open-mouthed
at the Elves)
Who... who are these creatures?!

Continued..

192 CONTINUED:

191

SANTA

They're not creatures. They're my
Elves.

WOODFORD

Elves?! And I suppose you're Santa
Claus?

SANTA

If you say so.

A sense of awe comes over Woodford; he can't believe it, but the
proof is right in front of his eyes:

WOODFORD

My God -- you are Santa Claus...

JENNIFER

Isn't it wonderful?

Woodford sinks into a chair, his mouth open.

WOODFORD

I.. I thought you were just a fairy
tale.

JENNIFER

All you have to do is believe.

WOODFORD

But.. but how come you're doing this?
What's in it for you?

SANTA

(wiping his brow, leaving
a grease mark)

The joy of providing pleasure and good
will. Something you've forgotten along
the way.

Woodford looks at Santa and Jennifer and the Elves selflessly
helping others -- and is deeply moved. A spark that's been missing
from Woodford's eyes is re-ignited.

WOODFORD

I.. I guess I have. I've been so caught
up in making money, I forgot people can
help people too.

Woodford takes off his jacket and starts rolling up his sleeves:

Continued..

192 CONTINUED:

191

WOODFORD

Let me help.

(kneeling by machine)

These things weren't built to run at
Elf Speed.

Suddenly the rest of Woodford's family appear inside the factory:
his elegant wife CLARISSE and spoiled daughter BECKY, 14, and Andy:

CLARISSE WOODFORD

(irritated)

Darling, did you drag our guests back
to the factory again?

WOODFORD

(eyeing Santa)

The Spirit of Christmas showed up a
little early this year, dear. Looks
like our dinner guest was Santa Claus.

BECKY WOODFORD

I think Daddy's lost it, Adam.

But she notices that Andy is just staring open-mouthed at Santa.

CLARISSE WOODFORD

Santa Claus is a charming little tale
for little children, dear. Not for
grown-ups.

Trouper and Muffin dart past her carrying a ladder. She stares
at the two Elves -- and does a double-take.

WOODFORD

All you have to do..

(winking at Jennifer)

is believe.

Woodford starts making an adjustment to the assembly line, then
turns back to his kids:

WOODFORD

Well don't just stand there with your
mouth catching flies, Andy, pitch in.

ANDY WOODFORD

(getting excited)

Can I work the control board?

BECKY WOODFORD

(instantly competitive)

If he's going to, I am too!

Continued..

192 CONTINUED:

192

WOODFORD

(to his wife)

You too, Clarisse. Get your hands
dirty. There's more to life than
charity balls.

CLARISSE WOODFORD

(taking off her beaded jacket)

What an amusing concept -- manual labor.

SANTA

I don't believe my eyes.

JENNIFER

(her eyes sparkling)

I told you people can change. You've just
got to believe.

193 BECKY

193

taps Philpot on the shoulder:

BECKY WOODFORD

Aren't you a little tall for a Elf?

PHILPOT

(gritting his teeth)

I ate my Wheaties.

194 INT. WOODFORD FACTORY - MORNING

DISSOLVE TO:

194

The dispirited workers are drifting into the factory when they're
met by a beaming Woodford and his family, together with Santa,
Jennifer and the Elves.

WOODFORD

(pointing to Santa)

I'm here to tell you, there really is
a Santa Claus.

The workers look at Santa and the Elves with astonishment.

WOODFORD

Thanks to these wonderful people, we're
all going to have Christmas off.

In an instant, the downtrodden workers have a new lease on life.
They cheer.

Continued..

194 CONTINUED:

194

WOODFORD

(putting his arm around Jennifer)
We also owe a great debt of gratitude
to this clever young lady, who showed
me the meaning of Christmas.

JENNIFER

It's easy when you believe in Santa Claus.

The Workers cheer Jennifer.

WOODFORD

(putting his arm around Philpot)
You guys are sensational! I'd love
to offer you year 'round employment.

PHILPOT

Talk to me. How's your dental plan?

WOODFORD

Superb.

MUFFIN

(eyeing Santa)
Well much as we'd like to say yes, I'm
hoping we're gonna be needed up at the
North Pole.

PHILPOT

It's just good to know somebody else
would hire an Elf!

Jennifer tugs on Santa's arm:

JENNIFER

I guess we aren't going to find my
father, are we?

SANTA

Why would you say that?

JENNIFER

Well, tomorrow night's Christmas Eve.
You'll have to get back to the North
Pole, if there's gonna be a Christmas,
won't you?

SANTA

We've still got 24 hours.

JENNIFER

But Los Angeles is so far away.

Continued..

194 CONTINUED:

194

WOODFORD

Not by my plane.

SANTA

No thanks, we've already had that
thrill.

WOODFORD

Mine's a jet...

JENNIFER

Oh Santa, can we? It's our only chance.

SANTA

Well, a promise is a promise...

As Jennifer's eyes shine with hope, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT VI

ACT SEVEN

FADE IN:

195 EXT. WONDER RECORDS, LOS ANGELES - DAY

195

The distinctive-looking building gleams in the December sunshine. Santa, Philpot and a very excited Jennifer -- still wearing the backpack and clutching her Treasure Box -- stand outside Wonder Records. She hugs Santa:

JENNIFER

Oh, Santa, thank you lots and lots for bringing me to my Daddy.

SANTA

(uneasy)

Don't get so excited Jenny. He may not be here.

JENNIFER

(waving her postcard
of Wonder Records)

But he's got to be, this is where he works.

196 INT. LOBBY, WONDER RECORDS - DAY

196

Jennifer and Santa face the RECEPTIONIST -- a hip young dude -- who's on hold on the phone; he eyes Philpot standing with them:

RECEPTIONIST

Awesome threads, dude. You with that new Heavy Metal group -- "Fairy Dust"?

PHILPOT

(huffy)

I beg your pardon.

RECEPTIONIST

(listens on phone)

Looks like you're outta luck, guys. Personnel says Jeff Baxter doesn't work in the ole salt mine anymore.

JENNIFER

(choking up)

But he's got to. I know he does. He told me.

The Receptionist listens to the phone, then tells them:

RECEPTIONIST

Well, like he used to, but he was pink-slipped back in August.

(more)

Continued..

196 CONTINUED:

196

RECEPTIONIST (Cont'd)
(listens to phone)
There's no forwarding address.
(hanging up phone)
Sorry guys.

The Receptionist hangs up. Jennifer starts to cry:

JENNIFER
Daddy...

Santa watches Jennifer sobbing her heart out; he feels awful:

SANTA
I've let you down, Jenny. I'm sorry.

PHILPOT
I'm even more sorry.

Philpot looks about to burst into tears himself as they walk out on

197 EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE WONDER RECORDS - DAY

197

Passers-by don't even give Philpot a second glance; he's just part of the flotsam and jetsam that walk the streets of Hollywood.

JENNIFER
But what are we going to do? If we don't find Daddy and you go back to the North Pole -- you'll.. you'll have to leave me here all alone.

Santa glances worriedly at the weird denizens of Hollywood:

SANTA
I know...

Philpot whispers in Santa's ear; Santa smacks his forehead:

SANTA
How stupid of me.

Santa reaches inside his coat and pulls out a computer printout bound in leather embossed "SC". Philpot gets all excited as he explains it to Jennifer:

PHILPOT
If your father's listed in Santa's Naughty or Nice printout, we'll find him. Unless he's ceased to believe.
(more)

Continued..

197 CONTINUED:

197

PHILPOT (Cont'd)

Only Believers get into the files in
the first place.

JENNIFER

Oh, I'm sure my Daddy still believes.
He's the one who told me all about you,
Santa, when I was real little.

Santa looks unhappy as he closes the printout.

SANTA

I'm sorry, Jenny, but I'm afraid he
doesn't believe anymore.

Philpot is so upset, he starts boo-hooing loudly until Santa shoots
him a look; determination on his face, Santa strides back inside
Wonder Records, quickly followed by Jennifer and Philpot drying
his eyes.

198 INT. WONDER RECORDS - DAY

198

Santa heads back over to the Receptionist:

SANTA

Is there anybody here who might know
where Jeff Baxter is?

RECEPTIONIST

I dunno. I'm just a temp, y'know.
Lucy's the regular Receptionist. She's
blown this joint -- like on vacation --
and won't be back until the new year.

SANTA

Do you know where we can find her?
This is an emergency.
(pointing at Jennifer)
This young child is looking for her
father and this Lucy might know where
he is.
(leaning over the rolodex)
Do you have her phone number?

RECEPTIONIST

(covering the rolodex
with his hands)
Sorry, mister, I can't tell you stuff
like that. Company policy.

SANTA

Of course you can't.

Santa nods at Philpot, who starts to carry on loudly:

Continued..

198 CONTINUED:

198

PHILPOT
(waving his hand at
Receptionist)
Excuse me. Excu-u-u-se me! I'm here
for the Christmas party.

RECEPTIONIST
Party? What party?

PHILPOT
I'm the entertainment.

He starts singing -- badly:

PHILPOT
S-i-i-i-lent Ni-i-i-ght...

RECEPTIONIST
(getting upset)
I didn't get invited to any party.

PHILPOT
(throwing his hands up)
There's got to be a party. I need the
50 bucks!

Jennifer is staring wide-eyed at all this. While the Receptionist is distracted by Philpot's "singing", Santa looks at the rolodex and it starts to spin around by itself; suddenly a rolodex card detaches itself and flies into his hand.

SANTA
(smiling at Receptionist)
Well, thanks for your help.
(to Philpot)
The party must be at Columbia Records.

The Receptionist watches Santa usher Jennifer and Philpot out of the lobby. He shakes his head:

RECEPTIONIST
Awesome.

CUT TO:

199 EXT. A CHARMING CALIFORNIA BUNGALOW - DAY

199

Santa and Jennifer stand on the porch ringing the bell.

JENNIFER
What'll we do if the Receptionist
isn't home?

The front door is pulled open by a LUCY, a harried young woman; suitcases are piled in the hallway behind her:

Continued..

199 CONTINUED:

200

LUCY

Could you hold the cab a sec, I'm not ready yet.

SANTA

We're not your taxi. This is Jennifer Baxter. We're looking for her father and we're hoping you can help us.

LUCY

Baxter? Jeff Baxter?

JENNIFER

(excited)

You know my Daddy?

LUCY

Sure. He's a real nice guy. He always had the warmest smile whenever he'd pass my desk. Not like some of the jerks you meet in this business.

JENNIFER

(hopeful)

Do you know where he is?

LUCY

He called me last week. He's playing piano in some shopping mall.

(frowning her brow)

It's been so crazy, getting ready for vacation.

(shaking her head)

I can't remember which one. Sorry.

Jennifer looks bitterly disappointed. Lucy's taxi pulls up and BEEPS its horn.

SANTA

Don't worry, we know more than we did an hour ago. Thank you.

LUCY

I've got to run.

(warm smile)

I hope you have a nice holiday.

SANTA

With your help, we just might.

CUT TO:

200 INT. LOBBY, WONDER RECORDS - DAY

200

Jeff Baxter, harried and dressed in his tux, rushes into the Lobby and stops short as he asks the Receptionist:

JEFF BAXTER
Where's Lucy?

RECEPTIONIST
Probably in Acapulco by now.

JEFF BAXTER
(taking out a photo)
By any chance, has this little girl
been here asking for me?

RECEPTIONIST
Awesome! You just missed them.
(Jeff's face falls)
They bailed about half an hour ago.

JEFF BAXTER
They?

RECEPTIONIST
Yeah, she was with a fat old dude
and some goofy guy. He tried to pass
himself off as entertainment for a
Christmas party, but he couldn't
fool me.

JEFF BAXTER
(anxious)
Did they say were they were going?

RECEPTIONIST
Chasing after you, dude.

Jeff -- frazzled -- scribbles an address and phone number on a piece of paper and hands it to the Receptionist:

JEFF BAXTER
If they come back, this is where I am.
(glancing at watch)
Oh God, Craig hates it when I'm late
for work.

As Jeff rushes out of Wonder Records, CUT TO:

201 EXT. HIGHWAY OUTSIDE LOS ANGELES - LATE MORNING

201

The weather is warm and Laura is no longer shivering in the sidecar as Napoleon's motorcycle speeds past a sign promising: LOS ANGELES, 50 Miles.

Continued..

201 CONTINUED:

201

NAPOLEON

Now where's this place we're supposed
to find your husband?

LAURA BAXTER

Wonder Records. He's been struggling,
trying to write songs.

NAPOLEON

(his eyes shining)
It'll be so good to see Jennifer again.

202 SEARCH MONTAGE - MIDDAY

CUT TO:

202

Santa and Jennifer trudge in and out of shopping malls while Philpot
and the other Elves rushes in and out of other malls, showing people
Jennifer's treasured picture of Jeff Baxter.

CUT TO:

203 INT. WONDER RECORDS - AFTERNOON

203

Laura and Napoleon wait anxiously as the Receptionist searches his
desk drawer:

RECEPTIONIST

(shaking his head)
Hey, I wish I had as many people
looking for me.
(he hands Laura a piece of paper)
You'll find your other half here.

LAURA BAXTER

(confused)
Isn't that a shopping mall? What's
a musician doing working in a mall?

RECEPTIONIST

Earning a living.

CUT TO:

204 INT. HUGE SHOPPING MALL - LATE AFTERNOON

204

Santa and a dejected Jennifer -- trays of food in hand -- find a
table by the railing of the central atrium, looking down at all three
levels of the mall. The sound of a CHOIR singing Christmas carols
drifts up through the noise of throngs of SHOPPERS.

JENNIFER

I.. I'm really not hungry, Santa.

SANTA

Eat. You need your strength.

Continued..

204 CONTINUED:

204

JENNIFER
(discouraged)
Maybe this was a big mistake.

SANTA
Hang tough, Jenny. We'll find him.

JENNIFER
We don't have much time.

SANTA
Miracles can happen.

The Choir stops singing and PIANO MUSIC starts drifting up through the mall, music we've heard before. It's the same song Jennifer sang to Santa in Act I. Jennifer's ears perk up.

JENNIFER
(excited)
That's my song!

SANTA
What?

Jennifer peers over the railing, trying to find the source of the music.

JENNIFER
That's the song I sang to you on the bus. The song my father was writing for me before he left for California! Nobody else knows it.
(leaning way over railing)
He's got to be here!

Jennifer starts running toward the down escalators. Santa takes off after her.

205 JEFF BAXTER

205

is sitting at the piano on the Main Floor when Jennifer comes running through the crowds. She stops and stares at him, not quite believing she's actually found him.

Jeff realizes he's being stared at, looks over at Jennifer and stops playing. For a moment, he's embarrassed at being seen like this, and then they rush into each other's arms:

JENNIFER
Daddy!

Continued..

205 CONTINUED:

205

JEFF BAXTER

Jenny! My Jenny!
(tears in my eyes)
How did you find me?

JENNIFER

Santa Claus brought me to you.
(looking around at the crowds)
Oh Daddy, how exciting, all these people
are listening to you play your music!

JEFF BAXTER

Not exactly, honey..

But before Jeff can explain, Santa rushes up to join them.

JENNIFER

Oh Daddy, I want you meet --

JEFF BAXTER

(eyeing Santa, disbelieving)
-- Santa Claus, right? How could you
delude a child like that?

SANTA

I guess that makes two of us.

JEFF BAXTER

Come again?

SANTA

Wonder Records...

The Elves come running up to them:

TROUPER

Santa, we couldn't find Jennifer's
father anywhere!

ROLY POLY

No stone unturned did we..
(searching for a rhyme)
Did we...

PHILPOT

Leave it alone, Roly.

Jeff looks from the Elves to Santa; his jaw drops.

JEFF BAXTER

You mean you really are Santa Claus!

Continued..

205 CONTINUED:

205

JENNIFER

See, Daddy, if you'd have believed,
we could have found you faster 'cause
you would've been in the Naughty or
Nice printout...

(hugging him)

But we found you anyway and that's
important.

STUBBY

So this is Jennifer's father?

MUFFIN

(miffed)

We've been in every mall in town looking
for you and you were here all the time!

PHILPOT

(shaking his head)

Sometimes I wonder about you, Muffin.

JEFF BAXTER

(beaming)

Well, you must be Santa Claus because
you brought my daughter back to me.

(turning fatherly)

Honey, both your mother and I've been
worried sick about you. You were very
wrong to run away.

SANTA

Well I left word on her answering machine
to call Mrs. Claus if she wanted to talk
to Jenny.

JEFF BAXTER

Would you believe it if Santa Claus left
a message on your answering machine?

SANTA

If I believed in Santa Claus, I would.

They look at each other a long moment. Suddenly Jeff's Boss
descends on them:

JEFF'S BOSS

Baxter, I pay you to play music. Not
stand around chatting with your..

(eyeing Santa and company
disdainfully)

friends.

Continued..

205 CONTINUED:

205

JEFF BAXTER
(fingering a few notes of
"Santa Claus Is Coming to
Town"; to his boss)
You better watch out,
You better not cry,
You better not pout,
I'm telling you why..
Santa Claus is coming to town..

JEFF'S BOSS
(harrumphing)
That's better!
(eyeing Elves)
Whoever rented those costumes oughtta
be fired.

And he bustles off. Everybody laughs as Jeff stops playing and
stares at the piano:

JEFF BAXTER
Oh, Jenny, I've made such a mess of
things. I'm nothing but a failure.

JENNIFER
Not to me, Daddy. You're the most
important man in the whole wide world.

JEFF BAXTER
I broke up my family by going after
my dream..
(bitterly)
..and what did I get for it? I'm
miserable, lonely and fed up..
(starting to finger his song)
I can't even finish one song!

SANTA
You know, I've been depressed and
downright miserable too.

Jeff continues to play his song.

JEFF BAXTER
Did you lose a dream?

SANTA
I lost my faith in people. I started
feeling they didn't care about each other
any more. So I stopped feeling needed.
That's when I decided to retire.

JEFF BAXTER
Oh no.

Continued..

205 CONTINUED:

205

SANTA

But your daughter showed me there is
good in people.

Jeff's face lights up as he looks at his daughter:

JEFF BAXTER

Jennifer always looks for the best in
everyone. Even me.

SANTA

Well, she showed me that if you give
people a chance, they'll come through for
you. So I'm not going to quit Christmas.
I'm going to celebrate it!

The Elves cheer as Jennifer hugs Santa. Philpot links hands with
the other Elves and they dance around Santa and Jennifer.

SANTA

People all over the world owe you a
big debt of thanks, Jenny. You're one
special child.

JENNIFER

Thank you, Santa. Thank you, thank
you.

Jeff, who's been toying with his song, suddenly gets inspired and
starts putting words to his music. He begins to sing "IT ALMOST
WASN'T CHRISTMAS", which tells the story of how Santa lost faith
and Christmas almost didn't happen until a little girl showed Santa
that people really could care for one another.

Shoppers stop shopping and gather around the piano, listening to
this beautiful song. When he finishes, they applaud wildly. Jeff
beams. And then

206 THE CHOIR MASTER

206

emerges from the crowd around the piano.

CHOIR MASTER

That song is wonderful. I love it!
Could my choir record that song. Would
that be alright with you?

JEFF BAXTER

Alright?! Are you crazy! I mean, of
course, of course!

(getting up off his bench)

Please, sit down, sit down.

The Choir Master laughs:

Continued..

206 CONTINUED:

206

CHOIR MASTER

No. You sit and you play that beautiful song.

JEFF BAXTER

(eyeing Santa)

Did you have anything to do with this?

SANTA

(his eyes twinkling)

If you believe hard enough, you can make anything happen.

At which point, who should come running through the mall but Laura, who throws her arms around Jennifer:

LAURA BAXTER

Oh, Jenny, my baby, my baby...

JENNIFER

(hugging Laura)

Mommy!

JEFF BAXTER

(choking up)

Laura...

LAURA BAXTER

(her eyes welling up)

Oh Jeff, I've been so stupid, we should have been here with you...

JEFF BAXTER

No, sweetheart, I shouldn't have been afraid to tell you the truth and come home to you.

And with a smile, they start to move toward each other... when Napoleon runs up to a surprised Jennifer:

JENNIFER

Napoleon! You're not in jail!

VELMA

Where's the money? Where's the money?

Napoleon grabs at Jennifer's backpack.

JENNIFER

What are you doing?

NAPOLEON

I want the money!

Continued..

206 CONTINUED: 206

Napoleon rips open the backpack and takes out thousands of dollars.

JENNIFER
(stunned)
Where'd that come from?

SANTA
(shocked)
That's the raffle money!

Santa goes to stop Napoleon. Jennifer screams, Jeff rushes over to help as Santa struggles with Napoleon, who knocks him off balance. Santa stumbles back, falls and

207 SANTA'S HEAD 207
cracks against the floor HARD!

208 THE CROWD 208
gasps. The Elves are stunned.

209 SANTA 209
lays on the floor, unconscious.

210 AN ANGRY JEFF 210
wrestles Napoleon to the ground:

JEFF BAXTER
Now look what you've done -- to Santa Claus!

NAPOLEON
You don't understand, you don't understand!

211 JENNIFER 211
bends over Santa:

JENNIFER
(listening to Santa's chest)
I can't tell if he's breathing.

Adlib expressions of horror from the crowd. SECURITY GUARDS run up and grab Napoleon and the money as Jeff yells:

JEFF BAXTER
Somebody get a doctor!

The Elves rush off in all directions.

212 NAPOLEON 212
looks terribly bereft:

NAPOLEON
I wanted to give it back. I wanted
to give it back to Father John.

213 JENNIFER 213
kneels over Santa, her eyes filling with tears as she takes his hand:

JENNIFER
Santa, come back! Don't die! We need
you. Without you, the hopes and joys of
all the world's children will disappear.
It'll be such a sad world.

214 ALL THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 214
decorating the mall start losing their brightness.

215 LAURA AND JEFF 215
hold onto each other as they kneel by Jennifer; Laura tries to calm
Jennifer:

LAURA BAXTER
Sweetheart, don't.

JEFF BAXTER
(gently)
Honey, there are some things people
can't do anything about...

JENNIFER
No! I don't believe that!

216 NAPOLEON 216
is horrified:

NAPOLEON
I just wanted to give the money back.

217 JENNIFER 217
bends over Santa's inert form:

JENNIFER
Santa, see, even Napoleon changed
because of you. People believe in you.
I believe in you. Everybody believes in
you. People still care. Didn't Mr. Woodford
see the light and do the right thing?
(more)

Continued..

217 CONTINUED:

217

JENNIFER (Cont'd)

And Father John, he cared so much about his people. Because of you, all these people discovered the goodness inside themselves.

JEFF BAXTER

(feeling Santa's wrist)

His pulse is very faint.

All the Christmas lights are growing dimmer...

JENNIFER

(to the crowd, desperate)

He's dying! Please, please, if you believe in Santa Claus, let him know, let him know you believe in him.

(right to camera)

Please, if he knows you need him, if he knows you believe, he'll get strong and come back.

We MOVE ACROSS the faces of people in the crowd; some are stricken, some are crying, some bravely trying to hold back their tears. One GRAVE-EYED LITTLE BOY says:

LITTLE BOY

I.. I believe in Santa Claus.

Other people join in, reaffirming their faith:

THE CROWD

I believe. I believe in Santa. I believe in Santa Claus.

As people express their faith, the Christmas lights in the mall start growing brighter.

JENNIFER

(right at camera)

Do you believe in Santa Claus? Then tell him, tell him right now.

Laura and Jeff try to get Jennifer to leave Santa's side but she won't budge, she won't let go of his hand.

THE CROWD

I believe. I believe. We need you Santa.

NAPOLEON

I believe in Santa Claus.

Continued..

217 CONTINUED: 217

VELMA
It's about time.

218 SANTA 218

MOANS. The Crowd stare at him, stunned, as his eyes flicker open.

THE CROWD
He's okay. It's a miracle!

The Christmas lights are once more shining bright as Santa winces and feels the back of his head. Jeff and Laura help him sit up.

SANTA
(squeezing Jennifer's hand)
Am I glad you never stopped believing
in me.

She hugs Santa gratefully as the Choir quietly starts singing the refrain from "IT ALMOST WASN'T CHRISTMAS". Gradually, the rest of the crowd joins in, and their voices rise in a joyous chorus of good feeling and good will.

219 THE ELVES 219

are looking at their watches:

PHILPOT
Santa, we've got to get moving.

220 INT. MALL - LATE AFTERNOON - SANTA'S MAGIC SLEIGH 220

-- surrounded by an awed Crowd -- waits in the center of the shopping mall. The Elves clamber aboard as

221 NAPOLEON 221

hands the money to Santa:

NAPOLEON
Please, give it all back to Father John.

SANTA
I always knew you were really a good
man at heart.

VELMA
Don't get carried away.

Napoleon and Santa chuckle.

222 SANTA AND JENNIFER

222

hug each other tightly.

JENNIFER

Thank you, Santa, for making my
Christmas Wish come true!

SANTA

(eyeing Laura and Jeff who
are standing close together)
I think it's going to last the whole
year around.

JENNIFER

This'll be the most perfect Christmas
ever.

Santa climbs aboard his sleigh.

SANTA

(eyeing the blue sky above)
Almost perfect. But we're going to
do something about that.

He takes the Magic Snowflake out of his pocket and hands it to
Jennifer:

SANTA

Here. Spin the Magic Snowflake.

Jennifer looks at Santa tentatively; he nods and she spins the Magic
Snowflake. It levitates above her hand and suddenly a shower of
golden sparkles fly out of the Magic Snowflake. And then
magically, wondrously

223 SNOW

223

begins to fall inside the Mall.

224 JENNIFER

224

squeals with delight:

JENNIFER

Oh, Santa, it is perfect!

SANTA

(waving at the Crowd)
Merry Christmas, everyone!

The crowd romp in the snow, wave at Santa, wishing him a "Merry
Christmas" as he puts his finger to his nose.. More Magic Sparkles
envelope the sleigh and it starts to move.

225 LAURA AND JEFF 225
 embrace Jennifer as they wave at

226 SANTA'S SLEIGH 226
 whooshing through the mall under the falling snow. The doors
 magically open and as the sleigh disappears outside, we can hear
 Santa's laughter echoing back:

SANTA
 Ho, Ho, Ho! Merry Christmas, one and
 all!

227 END TITLE SEQUENCE 227
 We HEAR the CHOIR singing the fully-orchestrated version of "IT
 ALMOST WASN'T CHRISTMAS" as we watch each of the people Santa and
 Jennifer met open their presents Christmas morning:

228 INT. SOCIAL HALL, ST JOHN'S PARISH - CHRISTMAS MORNING 228
 Father John and the people of the parish open their presents
 gratefully.

229 INT. JESSUP FARMHOUSE - CHRISTMAS MORNING 229
 Clyde and his family, happy in their home.

230 EXT. WOODFORD INDUSTRIES - CHRISTMAS MORNING 230
 The Woodfords and the Workers are joyously singing Carols together.

231 INT. JAIL CELL, CLEVELAND - CHRISTMAS MORNING 231
 Napoleon is opening his present when he hears a SQUAWK from his
 shoulder. He looks over, and his stuffed parrot has been replaced
 by a live one. He grins.

232 INT. JEFF BAXTER'S LIVINGROOM, LOS ANGELES - CHRISTMAS MORNING 232
 Jennifer runs into the room to find lots and lots of presents under
 a tree. A sleepy Jeff and Laura come out of the bedroom and are
 surprised to see all the presents; they look at each other and
 understand: Santa.

233 ONE BEAUTIFULLY-WRAPPED PRESENT 233
 suddenly glows with a golden light. Its card reads: "For Jenny".

234 JENNIFER 234
 opens the glowing present and finds

MAGIC CRYSTAL SNOWFLAKE 235

engraved:

FOR JENNIFER
Who brought Christmas back to everyone.

On the back, it reads:

GOOD FOR MANY WISHES

JENNIFER 236

smiles, hugs the Magic Snowflake and looks at the fireplace. As the song reaches its climax, we can HEAR Santa's laughter echoing down the chimney...

FADE OUT

THE END