

S C R O O G E

A Christmas Carol

by

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7TH DRAFT

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FADE UP ON:

1 EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT 1

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Santa's Workshop -- a quaint "gingerbread" cottage nestled in a serene, snow-covered valley. Smoke curls from the chimney. MUSIC: Silent Night played on a celeste enhances the Christmas card peace and beauty.

WE MOVE CLOSER and isolate details:

A candy-striped column marked "NORTH POLE."

Below the glistening, icicle-trimmed eave, silhouetted on the shade of a frost-veiled window, ELVES put the final touches on some toys -- tapping an extra nail, adding that last dab of paint.

REINDEER nervously paw the ground, gently jangling their sleighbells as they shake the snow from their antlers.

Cheeks fat with acorns, a CHIPMUNK scampers across the yard to his home behind the woodpile.

A rusty, old weathervane CREAKS in the breeze. All the arrows are stamped "S."

In the sleigh sits a huge sack overflowing with gifts which include toy drums, bisque dolls, teddybears.

Backlit by the full moon, a SNOWY OWL hoots softly and shuts his eyes.

The sky sparkles with stars but one shines brighter than the rest. Is it a falling star? No, it's a flaming mortar shell that screams into the cottage and explodes in a teeth-jarring fireball of MULTIPLE BLASTS.

MUSIC changes to standard TV action fare as a gritty-voiced ANNOUNCER cuts in.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Seven o'clock. Psychos seize
Santa's Workshop and only Chuck
Norris can stop them in --

CUT TO:

2 VIOLENT MONTAGE

2

which includes an ELF knocking out a window with a gun butt, SANTA slamming a clip in an assault rifle, CLOSE UPS of AK-47s and M-60s FIRING, bullets shredding a Christmas tree, bullets splintering a coo-coo clock, bullets chewing up a row of candy canes.

MONTAGE ENDS on CHUCK NORRIS poised in "Road Warrior" arctic battle gear -- sleeves ripped off, white bandana around head -- brandishing a flame-thrower. *

SUPER TITLE.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
-- "The Night the Reindeer Died."

CHUCK
Eat this!

Chuck pulls the trigger, unloading a fountain of fire.

CUT TO:

3 OMITTED

3 *

4 EXT. BAYOU - DAY

4

A tuxedoed BOB GOULET stands in a dugout deep in the bayou. He poles the boat while singing The Little Drummer Boy. Announcer turns syrupy.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Eight-thirty. And America's
best-loved singer invites you to
share a home-style holiday when
it's --

SUPER TITLE.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
-- "Bob Goulet's Old Fashioned
Cajun Christmas."

BOB
"Pa-rum pum pum pum,
Just me and my drum."

CUT TO:

5 GATOR 5

A hungry GATOR slides off the bank and heads for Bob.

6 BACK TO SCENE 6

BOB (O.S.)
"Me and my drum."

CUT TO:

7 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 7 *

Waist-high SHOT of SIDEWALK SANTA ringing bell on snowy street. MUSIC: Silver Bells. Announcer tough.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Nine o'clock. Someone is killing
sidewalk Santas and only Loni
Anderson can stop him in --

SUPER: "FAT, JOLLY AND"...

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
-- "Fat, Jolly and" ...

MUSIC ENDS as we HEAR the SOUND of a lead pipe CRUSHING a skull o.s. Bell slips from Santa's hand and clatters to the gutter.

FINISHING SUPERING TITLE with word "DEAD" in dripping, red letters.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
... "Dead."

CUT TO:

8 INT. VICTORIAN PARLOR - NIGHT 8

JOHN HOUSEMAN sits in a wing chair in front of a crackling fire reading from a red leather-bound copy of Scrooge.

JOHN HOUSEMAN
"It was a cold, bleak Christmas
Eve. The fog-draped streets of
London were..."

FADE HIS AUDIO.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
 Ten o'clock. IBC presents --
live -- via satellite from New
 York, Bethlehem, Helsinki, West
 Berlin and the Great Barrier Reef
 -- Charles Dickens' immortal
 Christmas classic Scrooge.

SUPER TITLE.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
 Starring Marlon Brando, Barbra
 Streisand, former Speaker of the
 House Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill,
 the Solid Gold Dancers, and Mary
 Lou Retton as Tiny Tim. Scrooge.
 It'll touch your every
 heartstring.

CUT TO:

9 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

9

TV set with "SCROOGE" TITLE on screen. A Rockwellesque
 family is gathered around watching TV -- MOM and POP on
 couch, JUNIOR on the floor with his PUPPY and a bowl of
 popcorn. Their happy faces glow in the warm TV light.

JUNIOR
 Hurry up, Gramps! It's starting!

GRAMPS hurries in to join family.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
 That's right! It all starts on
 Christmas Eve.

SUPER gleaming silver IBC Network logo FULL-FRAME.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
 Christmas Eve on IBC --

Under logo, SUPER "Yule love it."

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
 You'll love it.

10

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

10

REVEAL that we have been watching a TV screen in an office at IBC -- the International Broadcasting Company.

The lights come up. The same silver IBC logo is mounted on the wall. A table is ringed with network EXECUTIVES. At one end of the table is the big TV monitor. At the other end sits FRANK CROSS, president of IBC, who presides over the meeting.

Frank is trim, polished and good-looking. At thirty-eight, he is young for the powerful position he holds. The press still calls him a "TV wonderkind." Co-workers call him the "Smiling Viper."

MRS. GRACE COOLEY, his attractive black secretary, sits near him taking notes.

This is a power office -- bleak, modern and immense. It is on the 22nd floor with huge grid windows that look down on New York City. It's designed to impress and intimidate. There is futuristic design furniture, a wall of TV monitors, a private bathroom, a small kitchen, a bar. Above the ultra-modern desk hangs a Picasso from his 1907-8 "African-Negro" period. The walls are decorated with primitive masks, the closest thing Frank has to a hobby. The massive desk is littered with Scrooge miscellany -- drawings, models, posters, swatches, etc.

No one speaks, waiting for Frank's reaction. There are a few nervous coughs.

Finally Frank leans forward in the chair.

FRANK

It sucks.

EXECUTIVE 1

Yeah, something's missing...I don't know.

WAYNE, a smarmy sycophant, leaps on the bandwagon.

WAYNE

The Chuck Norris thing was way over the top.

FRANK

Chuck Norris was fine.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

WAYNE

But somehow it worked, I don't know why.

EXECUTIVE 2

Nah, it's something else. It's not uh...

WAYNE

Bob Goulet looked wrong. We should've lost the gator.

FRANK

The gator's great. Grace, refill.

Grace leaps for the coffee urn.

WAYNE

Of course my kids love the gator.

TED, aggressive young head of publicity, shakes his head.

TED

It's not the gator, it's not Chuck Norris,...

WAYNE

Thank god Scrooge works.

FRANK

Scrooge stinks.

TED

(snapping his fingers)
There's your problem -- Scrooge.

FRANK

We spend forty million dollars on a live TV show and we've got an ad with some old fart reading a book by a fire.

ELIOT LOUDERMILK, a slightly nerdy junior executive, raises his hand.

ELIOT

Sir, we've been running that spot for a month and we're getting a terrific response.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

FRANK

I'm the youngest president in the history of television for only one reason -- I know people.

ELIOT

But the people already want to watch the show.

FRANK

(giving Eliot a dead stare)
That's not enough. They've got to be afraid to miss it. Grace, kill the lights.

The room goes black.

A new TV promo begins. It is shot in high-contrast black and white, SCORED with heavy metal, and features grit-voiced ANNOUNCER #2. SFX: AMPLIFIED HEARTBEAT. *

BLACK SCREEN.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)

Freeway killers.

11 EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

11

ALL FIVE PASSENGERS of a speeding car open up on the moving CAMERA in a blaze of gunfire.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)

Arab terrorists.

12 EXT. SKY - DAY

12

A 747 EXPLODES in mid-air fireball.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)

Aids.

13 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

13

Ignoring o.s. screams, a grim sun-gun lit NURSE in starched white uniform stalks the CAMERA, brandishing a hypodermic needle like an icepick.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)

Teenage suicide.

14 INT. SCHOOL - DAY 14

An o.s. GUNSHOT splatters blood on a blackboard on which there is a childish drawing of a cat with "CAT" scrawled underneath.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Drug-crazed maniacs.

15 INT. APARTMENT - DAY 15

A knife-wielding INTRUDER with a stocking pulled over his face and a Nazi armband kicks in the door and lunges for the CAMERA.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Acid rain.

16 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 16 *

HIGH-ANGLES ON shrieking MOB of people trying desperately to fend off the rain that burns smouldering in their umbrellas.

17 EXT. DESERT - PRE-DAWN 17

L.S. of an ominous black shape which stands in the sand like a towering mountain. MUSIC builds.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Now, more than ever, it is
important to remember the true
meaning of Christmas.

The o.s. rising sun illuminates the dark shape as the MUSIC builds.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Don't miss Charles Dickens'
immortal classic -- Scrooge.

It's evident that the shape is giant stark letters that form the title -- "SCROOGE". MUSIC peaks.

But suddenly a blinding atomic BLAST shatters the letters. A mushroom cloud rises high in the sky.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Your life might just depend on it.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

CAMERA PANS DOWN. Atomic dust clears to REVEAL candy cane lying in the dirt.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

*

18 INT. AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

18

Shell-shocked execs spill out of Frank's office. Ashen, open-mouthed, they drift away from the meeting.

Frank briskly moves through them, spitting out instructions to Ted. Grace is close on their heels.

TRACK them as they walk down office corridor. Illuminated posters of other IBC shows line the hallway.

FRANK

(to Ted)

I want that run every hour on the hour.

TED

Got it.

He peels off. Grace assumes Ted's position by Frank's side.

FRANK

Get Standards and Practices up here. And I'm gonna need to see Reese.

GRACE

Your attorney?

FRANK

No, the screamer in wardrobe. Which reminds me -

*

*

ELIOT (O.S.)

Excuse me, Mr. Cross?

*

*

Eliot rushes up to them.

ELIOT

Sir? What...uh...what exactly does that ad have to do with Scrooge?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

FRANK
Nothing. Why?

ELIOT
Well...it, uh, seems to pervert
the whole..."spirit" of
Christmas. It won't make people
feel good and joyous. This ad
will frighten them.

FRANK
(smiling coldly)
It'll scare the Dickens out of
them!

Frank turns on his heels and heads back to his office.
Grace gives Eliot a sympathetic smile and follows.

19 INT. AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

19

They reach Grace's desk, neat and impersonal save for a
child's fingerpainting taped to her cubicle wall.

FRANK
And, Grace, would you ah...oh,
what's the name of the kid I was
just talking to? With glasses,
bright kid, lot of guts?

GRACE
Eliot Loudermilk.

FRANK
Yeah, Loudermilk. Would you call
security, have them clean out his
desk, change his locks and toss
him out of the building.

GRACE
He's fired? But it's Christmas.

FRANK
Thank you. Call accounting and
have his bonus stopped.

GRACE
(on phone)
Loudermilk? Code Nine.

He points at the fingerpainting.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

FRANK
What's this?

GRACE
It's a painting one of my kids
did. See, there's Santa and -

FRANK
How many fingers does Mrs. Claus
have on her left hand?

GRACE
(studying it)
Four.

FRANK
On her right?

GRACE
Seven.

He yanks it off the wall and tosses it to her.

FRANK
Grace, it's crap. Lose it.

He heads for his office.

FRANK
Come in and bring your pad.

20 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

20

Frank is making himself a "Stab" -- Stolichnaya and Tab
-- when Grace enters.

FRANK
Okay, let's get this over with.
Read me the list.

Grace takes out the Christmas list.

GRACE
Goldberg.

FRANK
Send him a VHS home video recorder.

GRACE
Parker.

CONTINUED

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

VHS. FRANK

Kaluta. GRACE

The bath towel. FRANK

Brock. GRACE

VHS. FRANK

Forristal. GRACE

Towel. FRANK

Whitacre. GRACE

Frank stands at the window, sipping his drink, staring moodily down at the street. It's snowing heavily.

FRANK
What was the last rating on
Police Zoo?

21 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE IBC BUILDING - DAY

21

Eliot Loudermilk stands in the snow outside the IBC entrance, holding a tennis racket. Cardboard boxes filled with his stuff sit piled on the curb. A briefcase sails out and lands at his feet. WE HEAR sad violin MUSIC -- "Eliot's Theme." Eliot looks up at the towering skyscraper and raises his fist.

ELIOT
(screaming)
I'll get you Frank Cross you son
of a bitch!

22 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

22 *

Grace reads the ratings for Police Zoo.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22 *

GRACE

Five point two Neilson, seven
share and a TVQ of three.

FRANK/GRACE

(together)

Towel.

GRACE

Your brother.

FRANK

Towel.

Frank's getting impatient. He grabs the list.

FRANK

Just gimme that. Towel, towel,
VHS, towel ... And Grace...put
yourself down for a towel.

GRACE

What about my bonus?

FRANK

And a face cloth.

Grace answers the phone. He throws back the drink.

GRACE

Mr. Cross' office. Yes, I'll
tell him.

She hangs up.

GRACE

Mr. Rhineland's on his way down.

FRANK

What? He's coming here? Jesus
Christ, how do I look?

She straightens his tie and fixes his hair as he shoves the vodka bottle in the desk drawer. He then assumes an "executive working pose" behind his desk, jotting down notes from a copy of Sport's Illustrated. Grace is about to leave when she notices the magazine is upside-down. She turns it right-side-up and exits as PRESTON RHINELANDER enters. Rhineland, IBC chairman, is in his sixties with white hair and pale blue eyes. His manner is more than reserved. It's cold.

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

22 *

FRANK

Preston! What a surprise.

He holds up the Sports Illustrated cover with Mary Lou Retton in rags with crutches on the cover.

FRANK

I was just going over some of the great press we're getting on this Scrooge show. Mary Lou Retton as Tiny Tim.

Frank babbles nervously in the face of Rhinelander's stony silence.

FRANK

And here's the buy -- she doesn't just throw away her crutches and walk. She throws away her crutches, somersaults across the floor, vaults over a lamppost and lands in a full twisting -

Rhinelander leans across the desk.

RHINELANDER

Frank?

FRANK

Yes?

RHINELANDER

Do you know how many cats there are in this country?

FRANK

No, not ah --

RHINELANDER

Twenty-seven million. Do you know how many dogs?

FRANK

In America?

RHINELANDER

Forty-eight million. We spend four billion dollars on pet food alone.

Frank stalls for time, unable to grasp what his boss is driving at.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (3)

22 *

FRANK
Four billion?

RHINELANDER
I know this must sound crazy,
Frank, but I have here a study
from Hempstead University showing
that cats and dogs are starting
to watch television.

He holds up the report.

RHINELANDER
If these scientists are right,
we have got to begin programming
for them now. In twenty years,
they could be steady viewers.

FRANK
Programming ... for cats?

RHINELANDER
Listen, I'm not saying build an
entire show around animals. All
I'm suggesting is that we
occasionally throw in a little
"pet appeal" -- some birds, a
squirrel ...

FRANK
Mice?

RHINELANDER
Exactly. Mice. Remember Kojak
and his lollypops? How about a
cop who dangles string? That's
his gimmick. Lots of quick,
random movement. Frank, wasn't
there a doormouse in Scrooge?

FRANK
No, but now that you mention it,
I always felt it needed a
doormouse.

RHINELANDER
Better yet -- doormice. Walk
with me.

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UNCLASSIFIED

23 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - DAY

23 *

Frank and Rhinelander enter.

RHINELANDER

Frank, this show is the jewel in the IBC crown.

(pinning Frank with an icy stare)

Everything is riding on it.

FRANK

Preston, I'm personally overseeing every stage of this project. We'll own Christmas.

Rhinelander steps into an UP elevator.

RHINELANDER

That's all I wanted to hear. Lunch tomorrow -- 21?

FRANK

Sounds great.

As the doors close on Rhinelander, the doors of another elevator open and BRICE CUMMINGS steps out. Tan, sharp and yuppie-handsome, he sees Frank and smiles winningly.

BRICE

Hi Frank. Brice Cummings. We met at Spago.

FRANK

Yeah, right.

He turns to go.

BRICE

Have you seen Preston?

Frank turns back.

FRANK

He just went back upstairs.

BRICE

I just dropped by to say hello. I went to school with the big guy's son.

FRANK

Great.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23 *

Brice steps back inside the elevator.

BRICE

Gimme a call when you hit the coast.

The doors close on him.

24 OMITTED

24 *

25 INT. GRACE'S AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - DUSK

25 *

Frank blows past Grace.

FRANK

(over his shoulder)

Get me a full report on Brice Cummings..

GRACE

You're due at the Helmsley Palace
in five minutes. Can I ask you -

FRANK

Not now.

GRACE

I can't stay late tonight. I
have to take my little boy to the
doctor's.

FRANK

Then I suggest you get to work
on that report.

GRACE

But I made this appoint-

FRANK

Because the sooner you're done,
the sooner you can leave.

GRACE

Couldn't I -

FRANK

If it's a problem, I'm sure there
are lots of younger, whiter
secretaries who would just love
your job.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25 *

FRANK (Cont'd)
 (softly)
 Loud and clear.

GRACE
 Yes sir. Your brother's waiting
 for you inside.

26 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DUSK

26

His younger brother, JAMES CROSS, has been sitting in the office watching it all. James is a lanky, decent-looking fellow. He renovates brownstones which explains why he's wearing paint-flecked jeans and a beatup Shaggy Dog sweater.

JAMES
 Hey, Francis. You were a little tough on her. You know what they say "If you treat people badly on the way up - "

FRANK
 (impatiently cutting in)
 You can also treat them badly on the way down. It's great. You get two chances to treat them badly. Listen, I'm out of here.

27 EXT. IBC BUILDING/PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

27 *

James and Frank make their way through heavy holiday CROWD. James rubbernecks, "ooing" at the sights. Frank just plows through.

JAMES
 I really like this time of year. Even in New York people are nicer to each other. I saw a cab driver help an old lady with her packages. Well actually it wasn't an old lady, it was more like a young, teenage... hooker, but he did get out and help her with her packages.

(CONTINUED)

28 EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER/FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

28 *

JAMES

Wow! Look at that tree.

Frank walks on, oblivious.

JAMES

You don't like Christmas, do you?

A CROWD has gathered around singing CAROLERS/SALVATION ARMY BAND blocking the sidewalk.

FRANK

Like it? I love it. It's cold.
 People are home watching TV. Ad
 revenues jump thirty percent.
 I'm the biggest fan Christmas
 ever had.

(elbows through crowd)

Jesus, think these idiots could
 take up more room!?

JAMES

Any chance you can make it for
 Christmas dinner? You can
 finally see my -

FRANK

Pointless life?

JAMES

Hey, back off. What's the
 problem -- I have friends? And
 a wife I'm crazy about?

FRANK

Fine, you have your dinner with
 your "concerned and involved"
 friends, okay? Send each other
 Christmas cards on recycled paper
 and string "real" popcorn and
 "real" cranberries for the "real"
 tree and babble about the
 "priceless gift of sharing" and
 kids with their eyes big as
 teacups and squeeze-toys for the
 dog and

(in falsetto)

"Oh, honey, it's just what I
 always wanted! This is the most
 wonderful Christmas ever!" But,
 James, count me out!

(CONTINUED)

35 INT. HELMSLEY PALACE DINING ROOM - NIGHT 35

PAN DOWN dais PAST ARCHBISHOP and MAYOR KOCH HOLDING on Frank who speaks at a podium.

FRANK

...And he asked -- "What's old, wrinkled, and hangs out your shorts?"

36 ANGLE ON THE ARCHBISHOP 36

glancing at Frank apprehensively.

37 ANGLE ON FRANK 37

FRANK

The answer, of course, "your mother."

38 ANGLE ON ARCHBISHOP 38

bursting into laughter.

39 ANGLE ON AUDIENCE 39

New York's power elite laughing from their tables.

40 ANGLE ON FRANK 40

FRANK

But seriously, we are, when it comes right down to it, one big family. I got into broadcasting because I care about people. Sometimes I care a little too much -- and that hurts -- but I never forget something the Beatles once said -- "The love you take is equal to the love you make."

He holds up a trophy of a man leading a small boy by the hand.

FRANK

Thank you.

41 WIDE ANGLE 41

REVEALING a big banner behind him which reads:
"HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR".

FRANK

I will always cherish this award.

42 thru 44 OMITTED 42 thru 44 *

45 EXT. EL SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT 45 *

Grace and CALVIN, Grace's five-year old son, descend the stairs from the elevated and head towards their street.

46 EXT. GRACE'S PROJECT BUILDING - NIGHT 46 *

Grace and Calvin walk hand-in-hand towards their graffiti-scarred project. They go inside and head up the stairs.

Feliz Navidad drifts out of a ground floor apartment.

47 EXT./INT. IBC BUILDING - NIGHT 47

A cab pulls up to the IBC entrance. Frank wordlessly gets out and walks into the building, leaving the Humanitarian Award on the seat. WE FOLLOW him past the TWO IBC SECURITY GUARDS manning the security systems console, past a display for Scrooge, across the vast marble lobby to the elevator bank. *

Frank pushes the elevator button, the doors silently open, he enters and they close behind him.

48 EXT./INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 48 *

Grace stands in her shabby hallway fumbling with her front door keys. Before she can unlock it, the door flies open. SHASTA and RANDEE, seven-year-old twins, wrap themselves around her legs, squealing with joy.

TWINS

Momma's home! Momma's home!

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

48 *

A velvet painting of Martin Luther King hangs over a cardboard fireplace. Age-worn Christmas decorations and a peculiar Nativity scene which includes He-Man, Starlite and a Care Bear, bring some cheer to the dreary living room. The apartment is a little cramped for a family of four. Unfortunately, there are nine living there.

Randee runs over to Calvin, pulling him inside. As Grace enters, STEVEN, her fifteen-year-old, dread-locked son, bounds in from the kitchen, his younger sister, LANELL, on his heels.

STEVEN

Hi Mom!

Steven takes Calvin's coat and leads him over to the couch.

STEVEN

Calvin. Come here, man. Sit down.

Calvin stares blankly.

STEVEN

So what's happening? Everything okay? You wanna play catch. *

He tosses a sponge ball to Calvin who fails to react. It bounces off his chest.

RANDEE

Stupid, he doesn't wanna play catch. He wants to play She-Ra -- Princess of Power!

She dances the She-Ra doll up Calvin's leg. He doesn't respond.

49 EXT./INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

49

Frank exits the elevator. He unlocks the door to his office, walks in, switches on the lights, and locks the door behind him.

Frank takes off his coat, triggers a wall of TVs, and heads for the bar. WE CATCH the tail end of an ad and start into another IBC Christmas show.

WE SEE ON TV:

50 EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - DAY

50

A Nativity scene at the bottom of the ocean with FISH swimming through creche. John Denver's Calypso PLAYS.

SUPER TITLE "JACQUES COUSTEAU'S CHRISTMAS BENEATH THE SEA".

The TV continues o.s. while WE WATCH Frank settle in. He loosens his tie. He stirs his drink.

The flickering light from the TV screens makes the masks seem to come alive.

51 INT. GRACE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

51

GRAMMA, a loony "Koko Taylor" type blues mama, sets bowls of food down on the kitchen table. Grace comes out of her bedroom, drying her hair with an IBC towel. Shasta holds on to Grace's robe.

GRACE

What's for dinner, Gramma?

GRAMMA

Wheaties and olives.

GRACE

Again?

GRAMMA

Honey, after Calvin's doctor bills are paid, we're lucky to afford that.

GRACE

I know Mom but -- look, how about just the Wheaties?

SHASTA

Or olives!

Lanell enters the kitchen.

LANELL

Shasta, Steven needs you. Right now.

Shasta skips out the door.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

LANELL

So what did the doctor say?

GRACE

Same as all the others. He needs special treatment. It's gonna take a lot of money.

Gramma pours milk over the cereal and olives.

GRAMMA

I don't see what all the fuss is about. Calvin's a sweet child. He's just a little shy.

GRACE

Mom, he hasn't spoken a word in four years.

GRAMMA

Well, he's got a lot on his mind. He's a thoughtful little boy.

LANELL

Gramma, face it -- he's cat atomic.

GRACE

Catatonic, honey.

LANELL

Did you... did he give you the bonus?

GRACE

Yeah, I'm drying my hair with it.

Peals of high-pitched laughter erupt from the living room.

GRACE

What're they up to?

GRAMMA

They're just trimmin' the tree.

GRACE

We don't have a tree.

52 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

52

Grace races in to find Calvin, wearing red and green pj's, standing on the coffee table. He is covered with tinsel, strings of blinking lights, dangling ornaments and a shiny silver star is stuck on his forehead.

GRACE

Oh no. Kids, get that stuff off him.

STEVEN

But Mom he looks so pretty.

GRAMMA

Even better than last year.

GRACE

Yeah, but still...

LANELL

Some day we got to get a real tree.

53 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

53

On TV, Denver continues to sing Calypso over SHOT of underwater manger with fish. *

Drink in one hand, cigarette in the other, Frank shouts into the phone cradled on his shoulder. *

FRANK

No, that won't do. Heat wave or no heat wave, you guys promised me the world's biggest snowman. No, I'm not cutting to Helsinki to see Hedwig, the ice skating goose... I don't give a fuck how fast she skates! *

Intercom BUZZES.

FRANK

Get back to me. *

(punches button)

What?!

MAN (O.S.)

(on intercom)

Mr. Cross. Visitor on the way up.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

FRANK
 (into intercom)
 Hold it. I didn't authorize any
 visitor.

54 INT. IBC LOBBY - SAME TIME

54

IBC GUARD 1 talks to Frank on the phone.

IBC GUARD 1
 Excuse me, sir?

FRANK (O.S.)
 (on phone)
 You told me you sent somebody up.

IBC GUARD 1
 No sir. No one's gone up. Must
 be a crossed wire.

FRANK (O.S.)
 Well fix it!

IBC GUARD 1
 Yes sir. Right away.

He hangs up.

IBC GUARD 2
 Who's that?

IBC GUARD 1
 Der Fuhrer. Sounds like he's
 hitting the bottle pretty hard
 tonight.

They don't see the floor indicator lights change as the
 elevator rises and stops on the 22nd floor.

55 INT. AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

55

WE SEE the door to Frank's office. O.S. elevator doors
 open and WE HEAR ominous dragging FOOTSTEPS.

56 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

56

There is a KNOCK on the door.

(CONTINUED)

56

CONTINUED:

56

Frank presses the intercom.

FRANK

Who's there?

He gets no answer.

Puzzled, he unlocks the door and steps out into the hall. The hall is empty.

He comes back inside and bolts the door. Immediately, KNOCKING STARTS, loud and getting louder, cracking the plaster, rocking the frame, denting the door itself.

The POUNDING STOPS.

FRANK

Who's there?!?

The door explodes off its hinges, sailing across the room. The force of the blast knocks Frank to the floor.

Frank stumbles to his feet, bleeding from a cut on the cheek.

The room is a shambles. As the dust settles, WE SEE a man standing in the smouldering doorway. Or what's left of a man.

It's LEW WEXLER, Frank's ex-boss and mentor at IBC. He wears rotting golf togs complete with checkered pants, tasseled shoes and a robin's egg blue alpaca sweater, and he drags a big, bulky golf bag crammed with clubs. Lew is a decayed corpse, a Rick Baker nightmare with moss growing on him and a mouse-hole in his forehead. *

LEW

Hi, Frank. Do you mind if I help myself to a drink?

Swinging a rusted putter, Lew ambles across the room to the bar and pours himself a Scotch. His golf shoes click on the parquet.

Frank is not easily rattled. He opens a drawer and pulls out a revolver. Holding the gun police-style with both hands, he empties it into Lew's back. Five shots hit him with a dull "thek!" kicking up a little dust. It's like shooting an old pillow. The other shot shatters the glass of Scotch.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: (2)

56

Lew turns around holding the broken glass.

LEW
I don't mind if you hit me,
Frank, but take it easy on the
Dewar's.

He turns back to make himself a new drink.

Frank drops the gun. Now he's rattled.

Lew raises his glass in a toast ...

LEW
To old times.

... And downs it. The Scotch cascades out the holes in his throat and forms a puddle at his feet.

Frank steps forward, recognizing him.

FRANK
Oh my God! It's...

LEW
Lew Wexler. Your old boss. And
your best friend. *

FRANK
But you're dead!

LEW
For seven years.

Frank stalls as he moves across the room toward a red "panic button" security alarm near the door.

FRANK
Has it been seven years? Gosh,
looking at you, I wouldn't say
more than three, tops.

LEW
You're in big trouble, Frank.

Frank edges closer to the button. A WHITE MOUSE peeks out of the hole on Lew's skull.

FRANK
Let's say, for argument's sake,
that you're right, that I am in
big trouble.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: (3)

56

FRANK (Cont'd)
What exactly would that mean,
Lew?

LEW
Unless you change your ways, you
will be doomed as I am to wander
the earth forever.

FRANK
"Doomed to wander the earth?"
What do you do there in Hell, Lew
-- watch Masterpiece Theater?

Lew moans menacingly. Frank lunges for the button and
slams it. *

57 INT. IBC LOBBY - NIGHT

57

At the console, a shrill ALARM and flashing red light go
off. IBC GUARD 1 switches off the alarm and answers the
phone.

IBC GUARD 1
Yes sir.

FRANK (O.S.)
(on phone)
Help! Help!

58 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

58

Frank babbling into intercom.

FRANK
There's something up here! He,
he broke down my door! He's a
corpse with a mouse!

59 INT. IBC LOBBY - NIGHT

59

IBC GUARD rolls his eyes.

FRANK (O.S.)
(into phone)
He's threatening me! He's
scaring me! He's ...

60 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

60

FRANK
 (groping for words)
 He's ...

LEW (O.S.)
 Setting fire to my Picasso.

FRANK
 (repeating)
 He's setting fire to --

Frank jerks a look at Lew who's holding his Picasso.

FRANK
 MY PICASSO!!!

The Picasso spontaneously bursts into flames.

61 INT. IBC LOBBY - NIGHT

61

IBC GUARD 1
 We're on our way.

He hangs up.

IBC GUARD 1
 Whatta you think?

IBC GUARD 2
 Let him sleep it off.

62 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

62

Lew rubs his forehead.

LEW
 I have such a headache. Got any
 Tylenol?

Frank is beating at the smouldering painting with his hands.

FRANK
 Do you know what this is worth?!

The mouse jumps out of the hole and perches on Lew's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

LEW

Your life? You forgot just what a precious thing life is. Worth more than even a Picasso.

Lew addresses a golf ball with his putter.

LEW

One minute I'm standing on the fourteenth hole at Wingfoot. Lining up a putt. A heart attack later, I'm a worm feast.

FRANK

Come on, Lew, you're not a worm feast. You're...an hallucination. I know, I've been drinking too much.

WE SEE a CLOSE UP of the white mouse.

FRANK

I'm under a lot of pressure with this whole -

LEW

Silence! I had it all. I was a captain of industry. Feared by men. Adored by women.

FRANK

Adored? Lew, let's be honest, you paid for the women.

Frank dabs the cut on his cheek with a handkerchief.

LEW

I've come to warn you -- don't waste your life as I did mine.

FRANK

"Waste?!" How can you say that -- the man who invented the mini-series? You're a legend in this business.

LEW

Mankind should've been my business! Charity, mercy, kindness, love -- that should've been my business! Frank, for your own sake, wake up! Get involved!

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (2)

62

The mouse scampers back to his hole.

LEW

(sighs)

It's too late for me but you can still save yourself. You'll be visited by three ghosts. Expect the first tomorrow afternoon at one o'clock.

FRANK

Tomorrow's bad for me, Lew. In fact, this whole week's no good. Why don't we take a lunch on ...

Lew lurches forward, backing Frank up against a wall.

FRANK

... Not Monday, Tuesday's out. How about drinks, Wednesday? You, me, the ghosts, say Trader Vic's around fou --

Lew suddenly grabs him by the throat. With frightening strength, he lifts him off his feet and carries him effortlessly across the floor toward the windows.

FRANK

Or tomorrow's fine! I could squeeze you in anytime, say break --

Lew thrusts him through a window, without breaking the glass, and holds him kicking the air twenty-two stories above the street.

FRANK

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!

In a LOW ANGLE, WE SEE one of Frank's shoes come off and plummet toward the pavement.

LEW

This isn't a joke, Frank! This is your last chance!

63 EXT. WINDOW - NIGHT

63

Frank is crazy with fear, clutching Lew's arm for all he's worth.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

FRANK

I believe you! I believe -

But the arm...begins to...give way. The sleeve rips.
The bone splinters. The flesh pulls apart.

FRANK

Oh God please don't! No!

The arm comes off in his hand. He's falling, hurtling
toward the street.

MATCH CUT TO:

64 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

64

Frank sails through the air, slamming into his leather
lounge chair. He jolts awake. Panicked, gasping with
terror and confusion, he takes in the office. It is
completely intact. No trace of the nightmarish Lew
Wexler at all -- the Picasso hangs unharmed, the door is
undamaged. Even the cut on his cheek is gone.

Frank runs to the phone, frantically dialing.

FRANK

(into phone)

Doctor Rosenblum!?

DR. ROSENBLUM (V.O.)

(recording on answering
machine)

Hello. This is Dr. Rosenblum.
I'm unavailable right now but if
you leave your name and number,
I'll return your call at my
earliest possible convenience.
Until then, remember that life
is like an elevator -- with an
up button and a down button.
It's up to you which one you push.

FRANK

This is Frank Cross goddammit and
I need to talk to you right now!
I need to talk to somebody! I
think I'm having a nervous -

The "BEEP" cuts him off. He slams the phone down and
scrambles across the room to his desk.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

Yanking the drawer out completely, he dumps its contents on the floor. Frank grabs a leather address book stamped "BUSINESS" and wildly tears through its densely filled pages including countless business cards paper-clipped to edges.

He tosses it aside and snatches a matching address book stamped "PERSONAL". As he flips through it WE SEE its pages are blank.

He throws it aside and digs into the pile of papers, letters, finally pulling out a ragged scrap of paper.

65 CLOSE ON THE PAPER

65

A ripped paperback cover of The Hobbit. He turns it over. WE SEE written on the other side -- "For my preciousssss - love, Claire CH 3-3092".

66 ANGLE ON FRANK

66

dialing the phone number. WE HEAR the phone RING several times and finally be picked up. ELECTRONIC TONES.

RECORDED OPERATOR (V.O.)
243-3092 has been disconnected.
243-3092 has been disconnected.
If you require further -

Frank hangs up and quickly dials information.

FRANK
(into phone)
Yes. For a Claire Phillips.
P-H-I-In Manhattan. Uhm. Try
downtown. Oh great, that's it!

He hangs up and immediately dials the number.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
(on phone)
Hi...

FRANK
Claire! It's me -

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

CLAIRE (V.O.)
 (on phone -- a Christmas
 song plays behind her
 answering machine
 message)

...This is Claire. I've gone
 a wassailing. Leave a message
 and I'll call you right back.
 Merry Christmas.

FRANK
 (on phone)
 It's Frank. Cross. I uhm I know
 it's been...
 (checks his watch)
 ...fifteen years since we spoke
 but I didn't know who else to...
 I... Something just happened.
 Or maybe...I don't know. I
 really need to talk to you! It's
 urgent! Please, please call me
 as soon as you get this. My
 number is uhm area code
 212-877-4191. That's 877-41-

The phone machine "BEEP" cuts him off. He slowly hangs
 up.

His gaze sweeps the quiet office. He walks to the door,
 and runs his hand along the door frame, trying to
 convince himself that it was only an hallucination.
 After a moment, he shrugs and turns for the bar.

His legs suddenly shoot out from under him and he crashes
 hard to the floor. The object he slipped on bounces off
 the wall and rolls back to him. Frank picks it up.

67 CLOSE ON

67

what he holds in his trembling hand -- a golf ball!

With ADVANCED TRACK, WE HEAR the VOICE of Jacob Marley.

MARLEY (V.O.)
 Mark well this warning -- you may
 yet have a chance and hope of
 escaping my fate.

DISSOLVE TO:

68 INT. SCROOGE'S BEDROOM IN STUDIO 8H - DAY

68

"TIP" O'NEILL as Jacob Marley and MARLON BRANDO as Scrooge rehearse their scene for that night's performance.

SCROOGE

Leave me, spirit. Haunt me no more.

WE HEAR SAWING o.s.

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)

Rehearsal in progress! Keep it down!

The SAWING STOPS.

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)

Go ahead, Marley.

MARLEY

For your own sake, Ebenezer, remember what has passed between us and shun the path I've tread.

69
thru
74

OMITTED

69
thru *
74

75 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - MORNING

75 *

REVEAL that WE ARE WATCHING this on a monitor in Frank's office.

TV continues in b.g.

Frank is sitting at his desk staring at a front page. Ted stands behind him.

ANGLE ON New York Post front page. The headline reads -- "IBC KILLS OLD WOMAN!" Beneath it is a B&W photo of a sweet-faced granny.

TED

Apparently this eighty-year-old grandmother was watching your Scrooge promo and, uh, just keeled over. It scared her to death.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75 *

On TV, Marley rattles his chains and moans.

FRANK

Boy I knew that ad worked! You can't buy publicity like this!

He spins his chair, facing Ted.

FRANK

Okay, here's what you do. You run the same ad every half hour and you stick a warning at the top telling anyone with a heart condition to leave the room. This is terrific!

Grace rushes over.

GRACE

I have that report you wanted on -

FRANK

Read it.

GRACE

"Brice Cummings, 27, graduated top of class at UCLA. Made a name in live TV, sports. Won three Emmys for Olympics. One Emmy for Super Bowl. Made vice-president -"

FRANK

I know all that.

He snatches the report from her, scanning it.

FRANK

Gimme some dirt. Drugs, booze, guys -- what's his problem?

TED

What do you want me to tell the reporters downstairs?

Frank balls up the Brice resume and flings it into the trash.

FRANK

Let me think...

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (2)

75 *

He gets up, walking to the window.

FRANK

Okay, Grace, take this down: "We at IBC are shocked...and appalled by this...tragedy."

He puts his hand on his hips, deep in thought.

FRANK

"A network is made up of people -- ordinary Americans like you or me. It is only through caring for each other - "

TED

In other words the standard statement.

FRANK

Yeah. But make it Christmasy.

76 INT. IBC TV STUDIO 8H - DAY

76 *

TIGHT SHOT of an aged, carved sign that reads -- SCROOGE & MARLEY. A hand comes into the SHOT holding an aerosol spray can. A blast of brown paint hits the sign's border.

CAMERA CRANES UP to REVEAL the 19th century London street being created. CARPENTERS hammer frantically building the "Scrooge" set, a poulterer's storefront is hoisted into place; the grocer's stall stocked with fake produce, the windows of the toy store sprayed with frost. TECHNICIANS snake cables through the set dodging the PAINTERS and carpenters.

Ted runs over to Frank who's reeling off orders to Grace.

TED

We've got a real situation downstairs. There must be three, four hundred protestors.

FRANK

What's their problem?

TED

They blame us for killing that old lady.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76 *

FRANK

Well get the cops and clear 'em out.

TED

That's really not the best PR, sir.

FRANK

Okay, tell 'em we share their concern and that the executive responsible has been fired.

TED

What executive?

FRANK

Eliot Loudermilk of course. And tell them -- even better -- find a spokesman and I'll meet with him personally.

Ted turns to go. Frank grabs his arm.

FRANK

Pick somebody small and old.

A dour LADY CENSOR comes over with a sexy SOLID GOLD DANCER in tow. The Dancer wears a terry robe over her shoulders.

LADY CENSOR

She's not going on the air.

FRANK

Why not?

(to Grace)

Did you set up my shrink appointment for one o'clock?

GRACE

You've got that lunch with Mr. Rhineland.

FRANK

Then make it for after lunch. In my office.

Frank turns back to the Lady Censor.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED: (2)

76 *

LADY CENSOR
I'm sorry but Standards and Practices
can't allow this costume on the air.

FRANK
What's wrong?

A PROP MAN, balancing a fake Victorian street lamp on his
shoulder, totters through.

PROP MAN 1
Watch your backs!

LADY CENSOR
(to Frank)
Well ... specifically, you can
see her nipples.

FRANK
I want to see her nipples.
America wants to see her nipples.

LADY CENSOR
But it's a Christmas show.

Frank rips the robe from the Dancer's shoulders revealing
a sheer, sequined, "chimney sweep" outfit.

The Prop Man stops dead in his tracks, swinging around
for an eyeful.

FRANK
Charles Dickens would've wanted
to see her nipples!

Frank notices the panting Prop Man.

FRANK
Hey! What're you lookin' at?

PROP MAN 1
Sorry.

He whips around, slamming the Censor in the back of the
head with the lamppost.

She drops OUT OF FRAME.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
(from behind Frank)
Lumpy?

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED: (3)

76 *

Big romantic MUSIC STING.

Frank turns to see CLAIRE PHILLIPS -- a striking woman in her early thirties. She is out-of-breath, her face flushed, second-hand coat buttoned wrong, her hat askew.

CLAIRE

(panting)

I'm sorry. I didn't get your message until this morning. I called your office but they said you weren't in yet so then I called later and they said you were busy so I just decided to-

She stops, really seeing him for the first time.

CLAIRE

Boy, you look different.

FRANK

Yeah, well, it's been a while.

CLAIRE

It's your hair! I've never seen you with short hair before. It makes you look so... "grown up."

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

(over P.A.)

Frank, check this out.

Raucous rock TRACK fills the studio.

77 ANGLE ON SOLID GOLD DANCER

77

wearing spiked heels and the sheer costume, gyrating to the MUSIC. Fake snow falls.

78 BACK TO SCENE

78

Frank kneels by the fallen Lady Censor. She lies on the floor, dazed and groggy, as the IBC NURSE bandages her head.

FRANK

That works. You just had to see it in context.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

CLAIRE

Is she gonna be alright?

FRANK

Oh yeah. She's a pro.

CLAIRE

What about you? You sounded like
you'd seen a ghost.

FRANK

Ghost? Ha, ha! Oh, you mean
that phone call last night? I,
ya know, ran across your number
so I just thought I'd check in
and see how you were doing.

A burly PROP MAN walks over, waiting a few feet away.

CLAIRE

I know you. I know that voice.
That was the frightened Lumpy I
heard.The Prop Man steps up to Frank holding a wriggling live
MOUSE in one hand and a pair of tiny antlers in the
other.

PROP MAN 2

Excuse me, Lumpy?

FRANK

(snapping)
Mr. Cross!

PROP MAN 2

Sorry. I just started here. I
didn't -

FRANK

What?!

PROP MAN 2

Sir, we're havin' a helluva time
gluing antlers on these mice.
We tried Crazy Glue. We tried -

FRANK

Try staples.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (2)

78

The Prop Man looks at the mouse, shrugs and exits.

FRANK
(to Claire)
Anyhow, I'm...listen I apologize
for calling so late. I hope I
didn't wake your husband or -

CLAIRE
No problem. I'm still single.

They look at each other for a moment. "Tip" O'Neill
rushes past still in his Marley makeup.

CLAIRE
Was that "Tip" O'Neill who just
walked by?

FRANK
Yeah.

CLAIRE
I wonder if he'd remember me?

FRANK
You've met him?

CLAIRE
I chained myself to his bumper.

FRANK
Still trying to save the world?

CLAIRE
(gently)
Still trying to run it?

FRANK
(suddenly angry)
Get the hell outta here!

CLAIRE
But, but you called me.

FRANK
(pointing over her
shoulder)
Who're you?!

Claire turns to see -- Calvin, Grace's little boy,
peering from behind the poulterer's display window.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

How'd you get in here?

Frank grabs Calvin by the collar. The little boy stares mutely up at him.

FRANK

Fine, don't talk to me! Talk to the police!

He hauls Calvin out of the store.

FRANK

Security!

Grace dashes into the room.

GRACE

Wait! Wait! That's my little boy!

FRANK

Well...what's he doing here?

GRACE

I thought it'd be fun for him to see a real, live -

FRANK

This is a network not a daycare center! Keep him out of the way!

Grace leaves with Calvin.

CLAIRE

Why are you so angry?

FRANK

Why can't you button your coat?

Embarrassed, Claire fumbles with the coat, rebuttoning it.

CLAIRE

Sorry, I was in such a hurry this -

It's still buttoned wrong.

FRANK

No. Just, come here.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (4)

78

Frank starts buttoning her coat. It's the first time he's touched Claire in fifteen years. He realizes it.

FRANK

Your eyes are so...green.

CLAIRE

(blushing)

I, uh, got those new tinted contacts. They look stupid, right? You can see the brown in the -

FRANK

No. They look -

Loud HAMMERING begins o.s.

FRANK

(to Carpenter)

Think you could do that later?

Ted hustles over.

TED

Frank, I found your spokesman.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

(over P.A.)

Frank, Zulu Nation on line one.

CLAIRE

Listen, I'd better go.

FRANK

Tell them to hold. *

Frank and Claire look at each other. *

CLAIRE

Frank, what did happen last night?

FRANK

Oh, something I ate. A bad clam. I don't know.

CLAIRE

Well if it ever happens again,...
(handing Frank her card)
...Give me a call.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (5)

78

She looks at him for a moment and leaves. He watches her walk away. The hammering resumes. *

Frank glances at the card.

It reads -- "OPERATION REACH OUT - CLAIRE PHILLIPS, DIRECTOR -514 W. 43rd St. - 975-1440."

MAN (O.S.)

Excuse me, Mr. Cross?

Frank pockets the card as he wheels on the small, ELDERLY MAN standing beside him.

FRANK

Oh you! I know what you're gonna say. It's my fault. Well let me ask you something. What about the hundred million people who watched that ad and didn't die?! What about them?

MAN

I don't think -

FRANK

That's right, you don't think!

TED (O.S.)

Frank.

FRANK

Not now. I'm running a business here! I'm just trying to get people to watch my show! Sometimes I gotta slap 'em in the face just to get their attention!

TED (O.S.)

Frank.

FRANK

Get away. People want to see car bombs! People want to see death squads and drug wars! They want to see 747s slam into a mountain and mud slides and heads on poles! Am I right?! Or am I crazy?!

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (6)

78

MAN
 Jeez, I don't know, mister. I'm
 just from the cab company. One
 of our drivers found this in the
 back seat.

He hands Frank the "HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR" trophy.

FRANK
 (to Carpenter)
Stop that goddamn hammering!

TED (O.S.)
 Frank!

Frank turns to see Ted standing with a sweet,
 white-haired NUN holding a picket sign that reads:
 "MERRY CHRISTMAS NOT SCARY CHRISTMAS!" She stares at
 Frank in horror.

TED
 Uhm, I'd like you to meet Sister
 Mary Margaret from the Concerned
 Viewers of America.

FRANK
 I said, KNOCK IT OFF!!!

The Carpenter looks up from his work and shrugs.

CARPENTER
 Okey doke.

The support he had been bracing snaps, setting a chain
 reaction which causes the entire set to CRASH to the
 floor in a cloud of dust.

79 ANGLE ON LADY CENSOR

79

her head wrapped in gauze, looking up helplessly as the
 last flat inevitably topples toward her.

DISSOLVE TO:

80 OMITTED

80 *

81 INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

81 *

The wood-paneled, conservative restaurant is crowded with New York's BUSINESS ELITE. Frank and Preston Rhinelanders sit at a power table set for three.

RHINELANDER

So how's everything going?

FRANK

(brushing dust off his
shoulder)

Couldn't be better.

HEADWAITER

Can I get you gentlemen something
from the bar?

RHINELANDER

Yes, I'll have a highball.

FRANK

Make that two.

The HEADWAITER exits.

RHINELANDER

Did you hear from the Embassy? *

FRANK *

Everything's fine. We'll be
cutting back and forth between
Scrooge in our studio, Leroy
Neiman painting the Berlin Wall,
and the Holy Father blessing the
Zulu Nation.

RHINELANDER *

That's just the point, Frank.
I'm worried you're spreading
yourself a little thin. So I've
taken the liberty of hiring
somebody to work with you.

FRANK

Uh...great.

RHINELANDER

I knew you'd be pleased.

FRANK

Couldn't be more pleased. Who
is it?

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

Rhinelanders calls out to someone across the room.

RHINELANDER

Brice!

Standing in the doorway, Brice Cummings waves acknowledgingly and strides to the table.

BRICE

(to Frank)

Well, we meet again.

He shakes Frank's hand and sits.

BRICE

Frank, I know this is coming at you pretty damn fast. But I want you to understand my only function here is to take some of the burden off your shoulders.

Frank looks from Brice to Rhinelanders, totally confused.

BRICE

A lot of men in your position would see me a threat. It's only natural ...

Stunned and speechless, Frank can only watch Brice babble on. The CLOCK STRIKES one. Frank stiffens, remembering Lew Wexler's warning.

LEW (V.O. WITH ECHO)

You'll be visited by three ghosts. Expect the first at one o'clock.

Frank jerks a look at the grandfather's clock in the corner. It reads one.

BRICE (O.S.)

... But when Preston hired me this morning as sort of, a, oh, "consultant" I suppose you'd call it, I said to him, "Consider me just one of the team."

Frank looks down at his digital watch. It reads -- 1:00.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: (2)

81

BRICE (O.S.)
 My lacrosse coach had a saying
 that I thought was really stupid
 at the time ...

Frank nervously scans the restaurant, searching for Lew's
 promised apparition.

BRICE (O.S.)
 ... He used to say, "There is no
 'I' in T-E-A-M."

The Headwaiter arrives, serving them their drinks. Frank
 reaches for his.

82 CLOSE UP - FRANK'S GLASS

82

A human eyeball, bloody veins trailing behind it, floats
 in the glass.

83 BACK TO SCENE

83

He screams.

HEADWAITER
 I'm sorry, I thought you ordered
 an eyeball. I'll take it away.

The Waiter immediately snatches the glass and walks to
 the kitchen.

The other BUSINESSMEN in the restaurant stare at Frank,
 muttering, shaking their heads.

Rhinelanders reaches across the table grabbing Frank's
 wrist.

RHINELANDER
 (softly)
 Don't fall apart on me now,
 Frank.

Beads of sweat form on Frank's brow.

FRANK
 No, no, I'm ... I'm just a little ...
 (to Brice)
 Your lacrosse coach said ... what?!

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

BRICE
The point is, Frank-

The Headwaiter returns to Frank's table.

HEADWAITER
Excuse me, are you gentlemen
ready to order?

In the b.g., over Rhinelander's shoulder, WE SEE a WAITER
bring a baked Alaska to another table.

BRICE
Great. Yes, I'll have the mixed
grill.

RHINELANDER
Bobby, how's the rack of lamb
today?

HEADWAITER
Excellent choice.
(to Frank)
Sir?

At the other table, the Waiter sets the match to the
baked Alaska and explodes into flames.

Only Frank sees this.

FRANK
Uh ... uh ... I ... uhh ...

HEADWAITER
May I suggest a veal chop?

FRANK
No! No veal!

No one else in the restaurant takes the slightest notice
of the human torch Waiter as he reels shrieking through
the room.

Frank forces his attention back to his table trying to
ignore this newest nightmare.

FRANK
I'll have the uh ... The uhm ...
the ...

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED: (2)

83

The Headwaiter, Brice and Rhinelander exchange curious/worried looks.

The fireball Waiter runs into the kitchen screaming.

*

FRANK

I've ... I'm gonna step outside.
I could use some air.

Frank knocks over his chair as he stumbles from the room.

BRICE

He's under a lot of pressure.
I'm sure he'll do just fine.

*

84 EXT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

84 *

Frank reels out the door. He spots a battered Checker cab and hails it. The taxi pulls over.

FRANK

(as he gets in)
Take me to -

85 INT. TAXI - DAY

85

The door locks slam shut. Window bars fly into place. WE HEAR the SOUND of HEAVY BOLTS BEING THROWN. Frank is trapped.

FRANK

What the hell is -

The cab rockets from the curb, knocking Frank to the floor. The CABBIE laughs wildly as he swings a U-turn into opposing traffic.

*

86 EXT. STREET - DAY

86 *

The cab narrowly avoids a head-on collision.

87 INT. TAXI - DAY

87 *

Fighting the G forces, Frank leans forward.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87 *

FRANK

Look out!

CABBIE

Relax Frank, enjoy the ride.

FRANK

How'd you know my name?

CABBIE

I know everything, Frank. I'm
the ghost.

The Cabbie's head turns, Exorcist-like, to stare at Frank. He's an albino imp -- snow-white shoulder-length hair, ghost-white skin, point ears and red-tinged eyes. He grins demonically, flashing sharp little teeth.

Frank looks at the hack license on the dashboard. Beneath the Cabbie's grinning picture it reads: "GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST".

With the Cabbie still staring at Frank, the cab runs a red light. Two cars skid to miss a pileup.

FRANK

(forced casual)

Listen, this is great. It's such a nice day, I can get out here and walk.

The Cabbie floors it.

88 EXT. STREET - DAY

88 *

Eliot has just exited a liquor store with a new bottle of Rebel Yell. He cracks the top, licks his lips and is just about to try to sip when the taxi jumps the curb, screams down the sidewalk and the Cabbie snags the bottle from his hand. As it roars off into the distance, Eliot is left spinning.

89 INT. TAXI - DAY

89 *

Frank pounds frantically on the windows, yanking on the doors to no avail.

FRANK

Are you crazy?!

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89 *

The Cabbie takes a big swig from the bourbon.

CABBIE

Here's the thing Frank -- I'm a ghost; I'm dead; I just don't care.

He tosses the bottle out the window where it smashes on the pavement.

CABBIE

Mind if I smoke?

Black smoke churns out his mouth, nose and ears, filling the cab.

Frank doubles over, choking in the back seat.

The taxi shoots through a cloud of steam, suddenly appearing right in the path of a Saturday Evening Post truck.

90 OMITTED

90 *

91 EXT. SUBURBAN SUB-DIVISION - NIGHT (DATE 1957)

91 *

The truck swerves, just in time.

CABBIE

Go back to Jersey, ya moron!

92 INT. TAXI - NIGHT

92 *

Frank picks himself up off the backseat floor.

FRANK

(still coughing)
Where are we?

CABBIE

When are we is the question.

CLOSE ON meter as it clicks from "1957" to "1956".

FRANK

Please, take me home.

CABBIE

You got it.

With a nasty chuckle, he hits the gas.

93 EXT. ANOTHER SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT 93

The Checker tears down the quiet track-house-lined street and skids into the back of a delivery truck parked in front of the only house on the block without Christmas lights. Meter registers "1955". *

Painted on the back of the truck -- "CROSS BUTCHER SHOP".

94 EXT. TAXI - NIGHT 94

The Cabbie jumps out and opens Frank's door.

Frank falls out, crawling from the cab.

CABBIE

Welcome home.

FRANK

(looking around)

Oh my god. This is where I grew up. I thought they tore this place down. *

CABBIE

They did.

Frank slowly gets to his feet.

FRANK

Right. Okay, I know the deal. I'm gonna go back in time, see Mom and Dad, get all goosy and start blubbering. Well you got the wrong guy.

The Cabbie and Frank start walking through the snow to the house.

CABBIE

That's exactly what Attila the Hun said, but when he saw his mom - *

FRANK

Yeah, save it for the Donahue Show. Can we get this over with?

They reach the front door.

CABBIE

Follow me.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

He takes Frank's hand and, as he steps right through the solid wooden door, Frank smacks hard into it, bouncing back onto the stoop.

The Cabbie giggles hysterically from inside as Frank stumbles to his feet.

FRANK
(whispering)
That was a dumb joke.

The Cabbie pokes his head through the closed door.

CABBIE
(bellowing)
Made me laugh!

FRANK
Ssshhh! They'll call the cops
on us.

The Cabbie opens the door letting Frank into the bare foyer.

CABBIE
Calm down. They can't see us and
they can't hear us. They're not
real. They're sort of like... reruns.

95 INT. FRANK'S PARENTS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

95

This is a bleak, no-frills, working-class Fifties tract-house. LITTLE FRANK sits inches from a B&W Magnavox TV set watching the end of the Howdy Doody Show. The show's theme and end credits roll.

DORIS, Frank's mother, is pregnant with James. She lies on the couch, chain-smoking Chesterfield's and frowning over her cross-word puzzle magazine. EARL, Frank's big, barrel-chested father, still wearing his blood-stained butcher apron, comes over and turns down the TV volume. He towers over little Frank.

EARL
Here Francis, I've got something
for you.

LITTLE FRANK
(looking up hopefully)
A choo-choo train?

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

95

EARL

Nah, it's ten pounds of veal.
Merry Christmas.

He drops a butcher-wrapped lump onto the floor beside his son.

Little Frank looks at it sadly.

LITTLE FRANK

(quietly)

But I asked Santa for a choo-choo.

EARL

Then go out and get a job and buy
a choo-choo.

Doris glances up from her puzzle.

DORIS

Earl, he's only four.

EARL

All day I hear excuses why people
don't wanna work -- "My back
aches," "My legs hurt," "I'm only
four." The sooner he learns they
don't hand you life on a silver
platter, the better.

Little Frank silently returns to the TV set, turning up
the volume. Sergeant Bilko begins. Little Frank
watches; mouth opened, totally zoned. *

DORIS

What's a four letter word for
affection, begins with "L"?

EARL

Who cares?

96 EXT. FRANK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

96 *

Frank and Cabbie exit house.

CABBIE

So you spent the next fifteen
years sitting on your ass, alone,
watching TV.

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

FRANK

That's not true. I did things.
I played baseball. I remember
back in seventh grade I hit a
home-run and won the big game.

CABBIE

No you didn't.

FRANK

Oh right, I'm sorry, that was a
TV show I saw -- The Courtship
of Eddie's Father.

CABBIE

We're outta here.

FRANK

But there was this time I ran
through all these wildflowers and
the sky was blue, the sun was
streaming down...

CABBIE

Frank?

FRANK

No, wrong again, that was Little
House on the Prairie.

CABBIE

Face it -- garden slugs got more
out of life than you did.

FRANK

Can I go back to the office now?

CABBIE

Hop in.

They get in and the taxi peels off into the night.

97 CLOSE ON TAXI METER

97

ticking away years from 1955 to 1967. WE HEAR o.s. SFX
of taxi skidding through corners, bashing fenders, then
horn honking, the Cabbie cursing, etc.

98 EXT. IBC BUILDING - DAY (DATE - 1968) 98 *

The Checker swerves up to the curb, slamming into a '68 Cadillac limo.

99 INT. IBC MAIN OFFICE - DAY 99 *

CLOSE ON sheets of paper sliding from a Xerox machine. Copied on each sheet is a B&W image of a woman's behind.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL TINA, a cute young secretary perched on the Xerox glass, panties around her ankles and a bottle of champagne in her hand. She giggles with an IBC PAGE as the copier's light passes beneath her.

WIDEN TO SEE wild IBC office party in full swing. A banner hung across the room reads "COOL YULE '68". Lew Wexler, in his prime and wearing a red alpaca sweater, kisses a SEXY GIRL dressed as a mini-skirted Mrs. Claus. Rowdy IBC STAFF sing, dance, drink and cut loose as Phil Spector's Christmas Album BLARES from a stereo. *

The far door opens and Young Frank, now about twenty with long hippie hair, wheels his IBC mail cart into the room, oblivious to the party. He takes handfuls of mail and carefully but efficiently tosses it into the appropriate slot. Present-Day Frank and Cabbie watch from doorway. *

Lew breaks free of Mrs. Claus and saunters over to Young Frank. He takes a sip from his scotch, watching Young Frank diligently at work.

LEW
Excuse me, Fred?

FRANK
Frank, sir.

LEW
Frank. You didn't happen to notice a big Christmas party around here did you?

YOUNG FRANK
(laughing nervously)
Yes sir. I'm almost done.

Tina skips over and hands Lew her Xerox copy.

LEW
(taking it)
Thanks, Tina. I think we've all seen your Christmas card.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

MAN (O.S.)

Lew, the beer's getting warm.
Where's the ice?

TINA

(to Young Frank)

Wanna dance?

YOUNG FRANK

No. Thanks. I think I'll just
finish up and head home.

Tina shrugs, grabs a nearby IBC EXEC and dances with him.
Lew watches workaholic Frank sort mail.

100 EXT. IBC BUILDING - DAY

100

Young Frank exits followed by Cabbie and Present-Day
Frank.

PRESENT-DAY FRANK

(holding the Christmas
card)

I must have been nuts. That Tina
was a little minx.

CABBIE

What could you do? -- You had
mail to sort.

101 EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

101

Young Frank strolls along the path, trailed by Cabbie and
Present-Day Frank. He hears waltz MUSIC drifting from
Wollman Rink and follows it.

102 EXT. WOLLMAN ICE RINK - DAY

102

Young Frank walks up to the railing and leans against it,
watching the SKATERS.

A blonde BEAUTY twirls on the flood-lit ice. Her brief
silver skating outfit sparkles with every perfect move.

Suddenly a figure blurs INTO FRAME blindsiding the golden
girl.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102 *

It's YOUNG CLAIRE in jeans, a flannel shirt and a too-long scarf. This sets off a chain-reaction collision toppling skaters right and left but somehow Young Claire is left standing, now skating backwards towards the railing.

103 ANGLE ON YOUNG FRANK

103 *

He shouts a warning as does Present-Day Frank REVEALED standing behind him.

YOUNG FRANK
Look out!

PRESENT-DAY FRANK
Look out Claire!

104 ANGLE ON YOUNG CLAIRE

104 *

as she sails headlong over the railing, decking Young Frank who smacks his head on the ground.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Are you alright?

YOUNG FRANK
(rubbing his head)
Ow! You skate like --

YOUNG CLAIRE
An angel?

YOUNG FRANK
No, a truck.

She untangles herself from him and lurches to her feet.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Thank you. I'm sorry...

He stands, still rubbing his head.

YOUNG FRANK
I didn't need that lobe anyhow.

She smiles. They look at each other for a moment.

YOUNG FRANK
Well, see ya.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104 *

YOUNG CLAIRE
Merry Christmas.

YOUNG FRANK
Yeah, you too.

She turns, waddling on her skates toward the rink. He starts to walk away, then gets an idea.

YOUNG FRANK
Hey! You wanna go to a big Christmas party?

YOUNG CLAIRE
No, not really.

YOUNG FRANK
Nah, me neither. Well, goodbye.

He turns and walks toward the CAMERA.

YOUNG CLAIRE
How about Chinese food?

Young Frank breaks into a wide smile.

105
thru
108
OMITTED

105
thru
108 *

109 EXT. CENTRAL PARK PATH - DAY

109 *

Young Claire and Young Frank walk together. She holds a copy of The Hobbit.

*

YOUNG CLAIRE
...Except he's not really evil. I mean, in the end Gollum bites off Frodo's finger and falls into the Crack of Doom. Oh great Claire, tell him the whole ending. I'm sorry.

Young Frank scoops up some snow and puts it to his head.

*

YOUNG CLAIRE
Does it still hurt?

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

YOUNG FRANK
 Yeah, I've got a big lump right
 here.

YOUNG CLAIRE
 Let me feel it.

She gently touches his head.

YOUNG CLAIRE
 Oh yeah.

YOUNG FRANK
 (moving her hand)
 Not there. Here.

YOUNG CLAIRE
 (rubbing the spot)
 Oooh, wow. That is a lump.
 (moving her hand a bit)
 Hey, what's this? You've got
 another -

YOUNG FRANK
 (shaking off her hand)
 It's a sign of intelligence.

Young Claire dashes out into the street.

YOUNG CLAIRE
 (waving at a taxi)
 Hey Lumpy, there's a cab!

The Checker whistles past.

110 INT. CHECKER - DAY

110 *

Present-Day Frank watches her through the rear window.

*

111 CLOSE ON TAXI METER

111

Clicking from 1968 to 1969, with o.s. CAR SQUEALS, etc.
 ending in a resounding CRASH.

112 INT. EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT - NIGHT (DATE - 1969) 112

This living/bedroom is decorated inexpensively but with youthful, exotic, hippie flair. The bed is a paisley-draped mattress on the floor. The room is lit by dozens of candles.

Young Frank stands over a small scraggly Christmas tree which has been decorated with Christmas cards, peace symbols and a solitary strand of lights. He holds a treetop angel.

YOUNG FRANK
(to Young Claire o.s.)
Where's the angel go?

Young Claire walks in, fresh from the tub, a towel wrapped around her.

YOUNG CLAIRE
On top. Haven't you ever trimmed
a tree before?

He sticks the angel on top.

YOUNG FRANK
Uh...no.

YOUNG CLAIRE
My poor Lumpy.

She throws her arms around Young Frank and kisses him.

In the b.g. WE SEE Present-Day Frank and the Cabbie watching through a window at the fire escape.

113 EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - SAME TIME 113

Present-Day Frank stares at Young Claire as her towel falls off revealing her bare back.

PRESENT-DAY FRANK
(to himself)
I forgot how beautiful she was.

The Cabbie pushes past Frank to leer at her.

CABBIE
Are you kidding? She's a total
taste!

Frank shoves the Cabbie away from the window.

114 INT. APARTMENT

114

Young Claire slips on a shimmery silk kimono.

YOUNG FRANK

Can we give the presents now?

She nods.

YOUNG FRANK

Here.

He hands her a large gift-wrapped box. She carefully unwraps it.

115 ANGLE ON BOX OF GENSU KITCHEN KNIVES

115

116 YOUNG CLAIRE

116

stares down at them, a strange smile on her face.

YOUNG CLAIRE

Oh, how... wonderful. Knives.
Lots and lots of knives.
How...how did you know?

YOUNG FRANK

(proudly)

Well I saw how you always chopped
those vegetables.

YOUNG CLAIRE

They really look sharp.

YOUNG FRANK

They are. They're Gensu knives.
I saw 'em on TV. They can cut
through a can. Here, I'll show
you something, you got a can and
a tomato?

YOUNG CLAIRE

(hugging him)

I just love them. Now, here,
your turn. Open mine.

She gives him a beautifully wrapped gift.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

116

YOUNG FRANK
 (tearing the paper to
 bits)
 Ya know, I just got those in time
 because the offer expires at
 midnight...

He looks down at the gift -- a book.

YOUNG FRANK
 The Kama Sutra -- "ancient Indian
 love guide." Far out!

YOUNG CLAIRE
 Read the inscription.

He holds the book up to the light.

YOUNG FRANK
 All I can make out is "Christmas
 1969." the rest is just a bunch
 of wiggly lines.

YOUNG CLAIRE
 It's Sanskrit.

YOUNG FRANK
 What's it say?

She leans over the book.

YOUNG CLAIRE
 (pointing at each word)
 This says "wet" and this is
 "hot." That's all I'll tell you.

Young Frank opens the book, turning it slowly as he
 studies the illustrations.

YOUNG CLAIRE
 You know the Peace Corps expects
 you to at least speak the
 language.

YOUNG FRANK
 (brow furrowed, holding
 book sideways)
 You can't do that. That's
 impossible. These guys gotta be
 double-jointed.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED: (2)

116

YOUNG CLAIRE

Maybe when we get to Nepal we can
rent one of those houseboats
right on the lake.

YOUNG FRANK

(totally absorbed in the
book)

That sounds nice... Wait a
minute. Hold on. I don't
believe this.

YOUNG CLAIRE

What?

YOUNG FRANK

They say there's a secret place
you can touch on a woman that
will make her bark like a dog.

She moves closer to read over his shoulder and he puts
his arm around her.

YOUNG CLAIRE

That's the silliest thing I ever
-- Ruff! Ruff!

Claire begins howling and barking like a wild dog. Young
Frank leans over and kisses her. A long, passionate
kiss.

They both begin howling and baying.

117 ANGLE ON PRESENT-DAY FRANK AND CABBIE

117

standing on the windy fire escape, a few feet away from
the embracing couple.

FRANK

(quietly to Cabbie)
I'm cold. I want to go home.

PAN UP to the full moon. WE HEAR Young Frank and
Claire's howling echo in the night.

CROSS DISSOLVE TO:

118 INT. IBC TV STUDIO - NIGHT (DATE - 1971)

118 *

A white overhead klieg light. The howling continues as WE PAN DOWN to a MAN in a dog suit, on all fours, howling at a cartoonish MIKE THE MAILMAN who wears an exaggerated, corny mailman suit, bow tie and carries an over-size mail pouch. WE ARE WATCHING a children's TV show in progress.

The dog chews Mike's pant-leg, growling in front of a whimsical dog house hand-lettered -- "KIDDIE KENNEL".

MIKE THE MAILMAN

Let go of my leg! I've got something in my mail bag for ya.

The dog still clings to his leg.

MIKE THE MAILMAN

It's a Christmas present from Lassie!

Mike pulls out a big, bone-shaped object wrapped in Christmas paper with a red bow. A tag reads "MERRY CHRISTMAS 1971".

O.S. applause and children's cheers.

The dog sits up, tongue out, begging for the bone.

119 ANGLE ON AUDIENCE OF CHILDREN

119

sitting on bleachers screaming and laughing at the show. Seated dead center in their midst is a stone-faced Present-Day Frank and the delighted Cabbie.

120 ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG

120

Mike studies the gift.

MIKE THE MAILMAN

What could it be? Is it a book?

121 ANGLE ON KIDS

121

KIDS

(shouting)

It's a bone! It's a bone!

122 ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG 122

MIKE THE MAILMAN
Is it a...basketball?

123 ANGLE ON KIDS 123

KIDS
(shouting)
It's a bone! It's a bone!

124 ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG 124

MIKE THE MAILMAN
Is it...a pair of mittens?

125 ANGLE ON KIDS 125

KIDS
(shouting)
It's a bone! It's a bone!

The Cabbie leaps up from the crowd of children.

CABBIE
IT'S A BONE YA FUCKIN' DORK!

The Kids, of course, can't see or hear him but Frank buries his face in his hands.

126 ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG 126 *

The Mailman pulls a huge bone from the gift-wrapping.

MIKE THE MAILMAN
Oh look, it's a bone!

He sticks it in the panting dog's mouth as the o.s. children cheer.

STAGE MANAGER
And we're in commercial.

WE HEAR the top of a Seventies Hasbro Toy commercial as Young Claire runs up to the dog, hugging him, waving a letter.

YOUNG CLAIRE
We made it! They took us! We're
in the Peace Corps.

(CONTINUED)

The dog takes off his costume head to REVEAL Young Frank.

YOUNG FRANK
(without emotion)
Really? We're in? That's great.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Of course we didn't get Nepal.
They're sending us to Africa but
here's the best part -- they want
us there the first week in -

Lew Wexler, wearing a pumpkin-colored alpaca sweater,
saunters over.

LEW
Listen, I got an idea.
(winking at Claire)
Hi sweetheart.
(to Frank)
Why don't you eat the dog food.

YOUNG FRANK
I thought I was gonna throw the
dog food.

LEW
Well eat it and then throw it.

YOUNG CLAIRE
You can teach irrigation and
contour plowing and I'll show the
women how to prepare well-balanced -

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
Thirty seconds to air!

YOUNG FRANK
Contour plowing. Ya know, honey,
I'm not so sure -

Lew cuts in.

LEW
I got a better idea. You try the
dog food, it tastes like crap,
and then you throw it.

YOUNG FRANK
Well wait, if it tastes like
crap, why don't I do a spit-take?

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED: (2)

126 *

LEW

Perfect.

YOUNG CLAIRE

It'll be so cool. Maybe we can sail down the Nile -

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)

(yelling)

Fifteen seconds!

YOUNG FRANK

(to Young Claire)

I'm sorry. Floating down the Nile? What?

YOUNG CLAIRE

Frank, we've been talking about this trip since the day we met.

YOUNG FRANK

I can't just walk out of here at the drop of a hat. I owe a little something to the kids. Look, why don't you go and as soon as I can, I'll meet you there.

LEW

Are we clear on this?

A shapely PROP GIRL sidles over holding a big dog bowl brimming with dog food.

PROP GIRL

(smiling flirtatiously)

Frankie, here's your bowl.

YOUNG FRANK

Yeah. I try the dog food, it tastes like crap, I do a spit-take, then I throw the dog food.

YOUNG CLAIRE

I've got an even better idea. Why don't you wear the dog food?!

She grabs the bowl and dumps it over his head. The Kids go wild.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED: (3)

126 *

YOUNG CLAIRE
Merry Christmas.

She turns on her heel and leaves.

Young Frank watches her go, the brown, lumpy dog food crawling down his face.

YOUNG FRANK
Honey? What's wrong? You angry?

STAGE MANAGER
Frank! Your head! Three-two-one--

127 ANGLE ON KIDS

127

squealing with laughter. The Cabbie is doubled over, wailing. Frank grimly gets up to go. The Cabbie follows.

CABBIE
(catching his breath)
That was great! What was that show?

FRANK
Huh? Oh, it was just a children's thing.

CABBIE
(wiping away tears of laughter)
Yeah, but what was it called?

FRANK
(reluctantly)
Uh..."Frisbee The Dog."

CABBIE
You left her for the "Frisbee The Dog Show?" You must be insane?

FRANK
Hey, I made a few mistakes, okay? I'm only human. Well, fine, I can live with that. I know who I am, I know what I want, and I know what's going on. I am not insane!

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

To drive home his point, he whirls around and slams his fist into the wall.

DR. ROSENBLUM (O.S.)
Of course you're not, Frank.

128 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY (DATE - THE PRESENT)

128

A balding middle-aged man, DR. ROSENBLUM, pats Frank on the back. Frank cradles his bruised hand.

DR. ROSENBLUM
You're just a little upset.

Frank desperately tries to get his bearings.

FRANK
What ... is ... going ... on?

DR. ROSENBLUM
(examining the broken wall)
You're just experiencing a little stress. Which is perfectly natural. Frank, you are in a high pressure job and Christmas is a particularly stressful time of year.

Frank leans toward the Doctor.

FRANK
But ... there was this ... ghost.

DR. ROSENBLUM
That's what psychiatry is all about, Frank, dealing with ghosts.

FRANK
But Doctor Rosenblum, he took me -

DR. ROSENBLUM
My god, you're doing a TV show about a man who's visited by ghosts. I'd be worried if you weren't dreaming about them.
Look

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED: 128

Dr. Rosenblum grabs the remote control and clicks on the monitor.

ON SCREEN

129 INT. SCROOGE'S OFFICE - DAY 129

YOUNG EBENEZER SCROOGE stands mutely as BELLE, his fiancée, ties her bonnet and readies to exit.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

(over P.A.)

Alright just give me a sound level on that.

BELLE

(to Young Ebenezer)

I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the masterpassion -- Greed -- engrosses you. Farewell, Ebenezer. May you be happy with the path you have chosen.

130 ANGLE ON FRANK 130

watching the TV.

FRANK

Well I am happy with the path I've chosen you little bitch! I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER!!

DR. ROSENBLUM

(calmly)

Now Frank, I'm going to double your prescription and I suggest -

FRANK

(to TV)

Let's just see how your life turned out!

He storms from the office.

131 OMITTED 131 *

132 EXT. IBC BUILDING - DAY 132

Frank exits the building, still ranting at Claire, and heads west on foot. An IBC Guard regards him suspiciously. *

FRANK *

Just for the record, you left me!
You're the one who ran off to
 Africa! Not me!

DISSOLVE TO:

133 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MOBILE BLOODBANK - DAY 133 *

Big signs on the truck offer top dollar for pints of blood. WE HEAR "Eliot's Theme" played on a violin. It's snowing. *

Unshaven and wild-eyed, Eliot Loudermilk exits holding a fistful of cash. Walking unsteadily toward the curb, he counts the money, grins, and pitches forward into the snow, passed out cold. The violin MUSIC STOPS.

REVEAL who's been playing the MUSIC -- a STREET VIOLINIST with his upturned hat sitting empty on the sidewalk. He picks up the hat, comes over to Eliot, plucks the money from Eliot's hand, puts on the hat, and strolls away.

Frank passes by, not noticing the man in the gutter, caught up in his rant. *

FRANK *

I stayed right here! You're the
 one who had to help the
 Hottentots or whatever the hell
 they're called!

134 EXT. HOMELESS SHELTER - AFTERNOON 134

The shelter, once a Cadillac showroom, has papered the big windows over with bright murals painted by the inner-city children of the community. The name of the project -- "OPERATION REACH OUT" -- is spelled out in giant multi-colored letters.

Collar up, shivering in the wind, with Claire's card in his hand, Frank strides toward the one-story building. *

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

FRANK

I couldn't just go traipsing off
somewhere! I had commitments!
I had obligations!

135 OMITTED

135 *

136 INT. SHELTER - DAY

136 *

The large room is warm and busy with Christmas activity. PEOPLE hang crepe-paper bunting, decorate folding tables, string Christmas lights.

Several cafeteria tables set up in the center of the room feed the HUNGRY and the HOMELESS of every age and color.

Frank enters still babbling.

FRANK

What about my needs? Face it
lady, you treated me like dirt.

HAZEL, a middle-aged black woman who works at the shelter, notices Frank.

HAZEL

Honey, you look frozen. Lemme
get you a nice hot cup of coffee.

FRANK

...Thanks.

HAZEL

You go ahead and sit over there.
I'll bring it to you.

Frank goes to the nearest table and sits down with the HOMELESS. Sitting beside is HERMAN, a dirt-caked, wine mess, who stares into his soup. He wears a grimy t-shirt that reads "FRANKIE SAY RELAX". Above the table, a remnant from the showroom days, is a glittery sign on the wall which reads -- "THE STYLE YOU DEMAND. THE LUXURY YOU DESERVE."

Hazel brings Frank's coffee, wraps a blanket over his shoulders and bustles off. Frank clutches the steaming styrofoam cup.

(CONTINUED)

Herman edges closer to Frank. He pulls an old "music box" pocket watch from his soiled jacket and opens it. Beautiful Dreamer PLAYS as he checks the time.

HERMAN

Ah, the cocktail hour!
 (sidling against Frank)
 Now, Dick, you know your fine
 wines -- your Great Westerns,
 your Lancers, your Mateus. But
 for my money, you can't buy
 nothin' better than --

He slams a half-empty bottle of Mogen David concord grape wine on the table.

HERMAN

Mad Dog 20/20.

He snaps the pocket watch shut, Beautiful Dreamer STOPS. Herman takes a long swig and passes the bottle to Frank.

HERMAN

C'mon Dick, drink up!

FRANK

Why do you keep calling me
 "Dick?"

HERMAN

I'm sorry, Mr. Burton, maybe I
 don't know you good enough to
 call you Dick but after Exorcist
II and Night of the Iguana I
 thought we had a certain -

FRANK

Listen, I am not Richard -

HERMAN

And if you could just do a line
 or two from Hamlet -

FRANK

Leave me alone.

HERMAN

(breathing Mad Dog fumes
 in Frank's face)
 Or The Sandpiper.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

No!

HERMAN

Cleopatra?

FRANK

(in perfect Richard
Burton voice)

"I am Marc Antony and you shall
be my queen, Cleopatra, and
together we will bring Egypt to
her knees!"

(regular voice)

Now beat it ya old lush.

Claire suddenly appears, reaching over and snatching the
wine.

CLAIRE

Herman! Make yourself useful.
Go help hang the lights.

(noticing Frank)

Frank?! What're you doing here?

FRANK

I'm having a real bad day.

Frank stands. Claire fixes his collar.

FRANK

You said if it ever happened
again. I should drop by, and it
did.

Claire scoops up an armload of balloons.

CLAIRE

Here, give me a hand with these.

They cross the crowded shelter to a pyramid of gifts
topped by a new TV set with banner "GRAND PRIZE". A sign
tacked across the base of the display reads: "CHRISTMAS
FAIR RAFFLE -- Save Our Shelter!"

Claire scampers up a rickety step-ladder and begins
taping balloons to the TV set. Frank, bracing the
ladder, has misgivings.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Do you want me to do this?

CLAIRE

(leaning on one foot)

No, I'm fine.

FRANK

I've been thinking a lot about
the past lately.

CLAIRE

Why?

FRANK

You know how you make choices and
at the time they seem like the
only choices. But then, later,
you wonder what would've happened
if you'd made different choices.
You know what I mean?

CLAIRE

...No.

(suddenly realizing)

Frank, are you talking about
regret?

FRANK

Yes! Exactly. Regret.

CLAIRE

How does that look?

FRANK

You could use a few more on the
other side.

Claire teeters precariously as she adds balloons to the
other side.

CLAIRE

You know Frank, the only good
thing about regret is that it's
never too late. You can always
change. If you want to. Believe
me, I deal with that every -

BLAM! The balloon she's taping pops, startling her,
causing her to lose her footing and fall on top of Frank.
They land on the floor in a giggling heap.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (2)

137 *

They lean on each other trying to stand. Frank puts his arms around Claire, holding her, hugging her. Their laughter fades as they become aware of the contact. They step back.

CLAIRE
Are you okay?

FRANK
(rubbing his head)
I think so. Hey, ah, let's get out of here. You wanna get some Chinese food?

Hazel rushes up.

HAZEL
We got a problem. Do you know where the fuse box is?

CLAIRE
Uh...yeah.
(to Frank)
Right now?

FRANK
Sure. Why not? We could -

HAZEL
And you better call the A&P about the turkeys.

CLAIRE
They're not here yet?
(to Frank)
Wait a minute. I'll be right back.

FRANK
(straightening himself out)
Listen, don't bother.

CLAIRE
It'll only take a second.

FRANK
You know these people are just using you.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (3)

137 *

CLAIRE

I hope so. That's why I'm here.
What's wrong?

FRANK

Nothing. I'm just sad to see you
wasting your life. Again.

CLAIRE

(indicating people in
shelter)
What about them?

FRANK

Scrape 'em off. If you wanna
save somebody, Claire, save
yourself. Thanks for the coffee.

He walks away.

138 ANGLE ON HERMAN

138 *

He clutches his Mad Dog to himself.

HERMAN

(singing Jingle Bell
Rock)

"Giddyap jingle-horse, pick up
some speed..."

Frank walks by.

FRANK

(to Herman)
You're in my way.

HERMAN

(putting out his hand)
Listen, Dick, think you could
lend me a few bucks so's I -

FRANK

I give at the office.

CUT TO:

139 OMITTED

139 *

140 INT. IBC STUDIO 8H - A LITTLE LATER

140

It's snowing on the London street of the Scrooge set. For a moment WE DON'T REALIZE that we are now watching the rehearsal of the television show.

SCROOGE
(to an URCHIN)
Now be off with you or you'll
feel my stick across your back!

WE TRACK Marlon Brando as Scrooge as he strides down the cobblestone street, waving his cane, scattering the STREET URCHINS who beg for handouts. John Houseman narrates.

JOHN HOUSEMAN (V.O.)
"Ebenezer Scrooge hurried past
the ragged boys who stood
shivering in the snow, gnawed and
mumbled by the hungry cold as
bones are gnawed by dogs."

URCHIN 1
Spare a penny, sir? A ha'penny?

URCHIN 2
A crust of bread?

Scrooge buttonholes a BOBBIE standing under a lamppost. CAROLERS sing Good King Wenceslas in b.g.

SCROOGE
Excuse me, my good man! Can't
something be done about them?
Must I be constantly harassed by
these damned sea urchins?

BRICE (O.S.)
Marlon, buddy,...

REVEAL Brice on edge of set with TV cameras, TECHNICIANS, Censor with gauze-wrapped head, etc. The rehearsal halts, Carolers break off singing, snow stops falling.

BRICE
...That's street urchins, not sea
urchins.
(to set)
Guys, that's it, dinner break.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

140

BRICE (Cont'd)

Let's be back in one hour. And I don't mean an hour and five minutes.

Frank storms up to Brice.

FRANK

Excuse me, I call the dinner breaks around here.

BRICE

Well Frank, if it means that much to you, I'll get them back and then you can say it's time for dinner.

FRANK

I think it's time you and I had a little talk.

BRICE

You're right. But I promised Preston I'd drop by and have a drink with him so lemme take a raincheck on that, okay champ?

Brice squeezes Frank's arm, winks and joins the other cast and crew exiting the set.

Frank stands bewildered as the BOBBIE, STREET URCHIN 1 and SOME SOLID GOLD DANCERS pass by.

URCHIN 1

I gotta call my service.

SOLID GOLD DANCER

If you're goin' downstairs, pick me up a pack of Merits.

Frank wanders down the now-deserted 19th Century London set. He passes the cobbler's, the ladies' emporium, the tobacconist's, the candlemaker, till he reaches Scrooge & Marley's and goes inside.

141 INT. SCROOGE'S OFFICE

141 *

The office is musical comedy real with period furniture and low dark-beamed ceiling. A frost-edged, many-paned window looks out on the studio/London street. Frank slumps wearily at Scrooge's massive desk.

Grace arrives holding papers and a mobile phone. *

GRACE

Mr. Cross, I've been looking all over for you! They've shot Leroy Neiman! *

Frank ignores her, lost in thought.

GRACE *

The East German border guards just opened up on -

He whirls around.

FRANK

Get me Preston Rhineland on the phone.

(grabs the phone from her)

In fact, forget it. I'll get him myself.

(starts dialing)

Don't you have something to do?

She leaves. Frank is the only one left in the studio.

FRANK

Judy, it's Frank, is he in?
Yeah, I'll hold. Preston, this kid Brice is really getting on my nerves. Yes, yes, no I understand that. But he's not helping. I'll tell you what he's doing -

The studio goes black.

FRANK

He...uh...I...uh...

Through the window, he sees a follow spot cut on, throwing a bright circle of light on a golden easel in the center of the darkened London street.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

FRANK
...Wait a minute...

A woman's hand enters the circle of light and places a big artcard on the easel that reads, in a flowery style: "THE BALLBREAKER SUITE".

FRANK
...Hang on just a second...

He puts the phone aside and goes to the doorway to get a better look.

142 INT. LONDON STREET SET - SAME TIME

142

WE HEAR an o.s. celeste begin the familiar strains of the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from the Nutcracker Suite and, indeed, an exquisite SUGAR PLUM FAIRY with translucent wings and shimmering tutu tip-toes into the light.

Frank can scarcely believe his eyes.

She dances superbly, gracefully executing leaps and spins and twirls and arabesques and pirouettes and lots of other things with fancy French names. Her wings quivering excitedly, she glides over to Frank and, at a key point in the music...

WHUMPH! ...Kicks him solidly in the balls.

His eyes cross. He staggers, barely able to stand.

As the MUSIC starts up again, she gaily flounces off, finishes with a flourish, does a little curtsy, and introduces herself to Frank.

FAIRY
Hello, Frank. I am the Ghost of
Christmas Present.

She speaks somewhat like Glenda, the Good Witch, with a delicate British accent in a sing-song falsetto.

FRANK
(hoarsely)
Why'd you do that?

(CONTINUED)

FAIRY

(sweetly)

"Sometimes you have to slap them in the face just to get their attention."

FRANK

Fine. Slap me in the face, that's fair enough, but you kicked me in the -

FAIRY

Oh hush, Frank. It's time to begin our journey. Now close your eyes.

FRANK

You close your eyes. I'm through -

FAIRY

Don't be quarrelsome. Close your eyes...

He reluctantly closes his eyes.

FAIRY

...And think of snowflakes and moonbeams and whiskers on kittens...

He sneaks a wary look at her.

FAIRY

There there, no peeking. Of rainbows, forget-me-nots, of misty meadows and sun-dappled pools. Oh look, there's Mister Hedgehog! I wonder where he's going? Perhaps to...dreamland!

She leans back and unloads a freight-train right to Frank's jaw.

In a shower of pixie dust, WE

CUT TO:

143 INT. GRACE COOLEY'S LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS EVE

143

Frank lands on the floor. WE HEAR angelic, bluesy electric GUITAR playing Away in a Manger.

He groggily sits up.

FRANK

Where am I, in heaven?

The Fairy stands over him, smiling serenely.

FAIRY

No, in Harlem.

Gramma sits on a threadbare sofa, playing the soulful, string-bending guitar. She is surrounded by six of Grace's children who all sing along. The shabby living room is bright with Christmas lights and decorations. An electric space heater adds to the cheery atmosphere.

FRANK

(rubbing his jaw)

Ow! That really hurt.

FAIRY

Sometimes the truth is painful, Frank. And besides, it's made your cheeks rosy and your eyes bright as stars.

Frank slowly gets to his feet, shaking his head to clear it.

The front door opens and Grace and Calvin enter.

GRACE

Merry Christmas Cooley family!

Some of the kids rush over and hug her, helping Calvin out of his coat.

LANELL

Oh mom, you didn't have to come get me. I can -

GRACE

I'm not having you ride that subway alone at night. You almost ready?

Lanell nods.

144 ANGLE ON THE TWINS

144 *

Shasta and Randee, huddle over a top-like plastic puzzle trying to get all the metal balls into the holes.

Frustrated, Shasta pulls it away from her sister.

SHASTA

Get away! You don't know how to do it!

RANDEE

(trying to grab it back)
Gimme that! It's mine! Gimme!

Shasta hits her with the puzzle and Randee bursts into tears.

FAIRY

Good gracious, what a fuss!

She sprinkles a little pixie dust over them and instantly they're all smiles.

SHASTA

Here take it. You try.

RANDEE

No, it's your turn.

Frank notices Calvin sitting near them, eyeing the puzzle.

FRANK

Cute little guy. What's wrong with him?

FAIRY

He saw his father killed and just ...drifted away. Like Sleeping Beauty.

FRANK

I didn't know her husband died.

FAIRY

Do you remember that period she wore black for a year?

FRANK

Yeah, but I always thought it was just a new look; some fashion thing.

145 ANGLE ON GRAMMA

145 *

GRAMMA
y'all ready to dance?

KIDS
Yeah!

Gramma bends over, cranks up the volume on her battered Pignose amp, and tears into Three Dog Night's Joy to the World.

146 ANGLE ON FAIRY, FRANK, CALVIN AND TWINS

146 *

The twins go off to dance, leaving the puzzle on the floor. The Fairy prances off to join them. Frank is alone with Calvin. Unseen, he watches him.

The little boy stares at the puzzle. Suddenly he reaches over and, with a flick of the wrist, spins it.

147 CLOSE ON PUZZLE

147 *

as all the metal balls click into place.

148 ANGLE ON FRANK

148 *

stunned.

Calvin blankly moves away.

Frank crosses the room to the dancing Fairy.

FRANK
That kid -- the little one -- is
he gonna be okay?

FAIRY
It's his choice. Only he can
break the spell.

Frank glances back at Calvin, sitting by himself on the floor.

FAIRY
My this is a merry tune! Come,
join the dance!

She does a quick pirouette.

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED:

148 *

FRANK

Huh? No. No thanks.

Gramma wails, singing the chorus.

GRAMMA

"Joy to the world,
All the boys and girls.
Joy to the fishes in the deep
blue sea..."

Steven joins her, drumming on the phone book. Shasta and Randee grab Grace and rock around the room. All the Kids are dancing now. The Fairy leaps onto the coffee table and does a grande jeté over the Barcalounger. Everyone is swinging heavily.

149 CLOSE ON A KITTEN

149 *

curled up in the middle of the Nativity scene, opens a drowsy eye, yawns, and goes back to sleep.

150 BACK TO SCENE

150 *

Frank begins tapping his foot, shyly snapping his fingers.

Gramma jumps up, windmilling her beat-up Telecaster for all she's worth.

FRANK

(to Fairy)

You sure they can't see me?

He finally surrenders to the beat and dances, timidly at first but quickly progressing to full-out party beast.

The Fairy prepares to depart.

FAIRY

Come, we've tarried long enough.
We must be -

FRANK

(frugging wildly)
Lighten up Mama! Let's get into
the zone! Let's get ill!

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150 *

FAIRY

This is a disgrace, Frank. Look at that ceiling. A woman in your employ living like this. Shame on you!

Still dancing, Frank glances up at the crumbling ceiling.

FRANK

You're right. When I get back, I'll give her a -

The Fairy sucker-punches Frank with a Mike Tyson right.

In another burst of pixie dust, WE

MATCH CUT TO:

151
thru
152

OMITTED

151
thru
152 *

153 EXT. JAMES CROSS' BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

153 *

ESTABLISH a brownstone under renovation. A large dumpster sits outside. O.S. NOISE brings us to:

154 INT. JAMES CROSS' BROWNSTONE LIVING ROOM -
CHRISTMAS EVE

154 *

The blow sends Frank crashing into a bar trolley loaded with glasses and party snacks. He struggles to get up, picking cocktail cherries off his lapels. A big MONGREL DOG growls at him.

FRANK

Fairy or no fairy you do that one more time and I'm gonna rip your wings off!

WENDIE CROSS (O.S.)

Cujo! Bad dog!

WENDIE, James' wife, a long-limbed stunner with an easy smile, rushes over to the trolley and begins cleaning up. A GUEST lends a hand.

GUEST 1 (O.S.)

It's your turn, Wendie.

(CONTINUED)

154

CONTINUED:

154 *

WENDIE

Go ahead, I can hear you.

The Fairy helps Frank to his feet and gestures around her.

FAIRY

Ah, what a gay feast!

WE SEE a warm, homey place full of FRIENDS and food. Cujo curls up in front of a roaring fire. WE HEAR medieval Christmas carols played by a chamber quartet on the stereo. A bushy Christmas tree, strung with real popcorn and real cranberries, soars to the ceiling of this lovingly restored Victorian room. Strewn at the foot of the tree lie opened gifts.

FRANK

This looks like a
Lowenbrau commercial.

GUEST 1

Okay, all set? "On
Gilligan's Island, what
was the name of the
shipwrecked boat?

FAIRY

(sweetly)

Do not vex me Frank or
I'll fix your mouth so
it won't hold soup.

JAMES

The S.S. something.

WENDIE

Minnow!

As Frank looks at her apprehensively, Wendie notices an unopened present under the tree and brings it over to James.

WENDIE

You haven't opened your brother's
gift yet.

155

WIDE SHOT

155

of living room with everybody gathered around James opening gift. In the b.g. is Frank and the Fairy.

GUEST 2

This oughta be great. What'd he
get you last year?

JAMES

I don't remember ...

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

155

WENDIE
A shower curtain.

They all laugh.

FRANK
(to Fairy)
It was a beautiful shower
curtain. It was gray. It had
little IBC's stamped all over it.

James unwraps the large present.

WENDIE
What did you get him this year?

JAMES
Nothing really. I made a frame
for an old snapshot of the two
of us when we were kids.

James reaches into the box and with difficulty pulls out
a top-of-the line VCR.

JAMES
I don't believe it. A VCR!

Frank explodes.

FRANK
I'm gonna kill her! I distinctly
said towel! I remember saying
the words!

WENDIE
He probably got the gifts mixed
up.

FRANK
I didn't get the gifts mixed up!
The ex-secretary got the gifts
mixed up!

JAMES
(over his friends'
laughter)
You really don't know him.

WENDIE
And I'm never going to know him.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED: (2)

155

WENDIE (Cont'd)

Every year you invite him to
Christmas dinner and every year
he's too busy to come. When are
you going to learn?

JAMES

Never. He's my brother.

The Fairy looks over at Frank.

FRANK

What the hell. It's Christmas.

WENDIE

Can we please get back to the
game. We're winning.

The party gathers around Guest 3 and a Trivial Pursuit
game.

GUEST 3

Okay, "on The Adams Family, what
musical instrument did Lurch
play?"

FAIRY

Frank, we must be off.

FRANK

Wait a second, I'm
starving. Lemme grab a
turkey leg or something.

FAIRY

I'm afraid we've
lingered long enough.

FRANK

Let's just hang out.
This is sort of fun.

The Fairy attempts to throw
her trademark right-cross
but Frank easily blocks it.

FRANK

Come on babe, gimme
your best shot.

JAMES

(to Wendie)

I think it was a violin

GUEST 4

Is that your answer?

WENDIE

It couldn't have been a
violin. He only had one
hand.

JAMES

That wasn't Lurch; that
was Thing.

GUEST 2

Wasn't he on The Munsters?

WENDIE

Let's say piano --
(to James)

-- Okay? We're saying he
played the piano.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED: (3)

155

He feigns, does an "Ali Shuffle," hands up "peekaboo" style.

GUEST 3
Wrong! It was the harpsichord.

She glances above Frank's head and smiles.

JAMES
Piano, harpsichord -- same thing!

FAIRY

Oh, how sweet -- mistletoe.

Frank looks up and, before he realizes his mistake, she rockets him to dreamland.

With a blast of pixie dust, WE

MATCH CUT TO:

156 INT. SOUTH BRONX TENEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

156

The blow sends Frank sprawling into a shadowy one-room apartment. It is bitter cold.

He angrily picks himself off the floor, ready to duke it out.

FRANK

Okay! That's it! That does it!
(sensing he's alone)

Hello? Miss...Fairy woman?
Ghostess? Anyone?

Frank tries the door. He yanks it. Locked tight. He pounds on it with both fists.

FRANK

Come back! Please! Don't leave
me here!

The door won't budge. Frank stumbles back into the room, shuddering in the bluish light, exhaling cold clouds. He fumbles out his lighter and flicks it on. It doesn't shed much light. He grabs an old newspaper off the floor, rolls it tightly into a torch and sets it on fire.

A few feet away on a decaying couch sits Herman the wino. He watches Frank wordlessly.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED:

156

FRANK

Ah! I'm sorry, you scared me.
I thought I was alone.

Herman continues to stare at him.

FRANK

I'm not going to hurt you. I
need your help. It's me uh...
Dick.

He reaches out and gently shakes Herman.

The gold pocket watch falls from Herman's hand and the
lid opens as it lands. It BEGINS PLAYING Beautiful
Dreamer.

Frank holds the torch closer. Herman's white face and
blank eyes confront him.

FRANK

Oh my God.

He's frozen to death. Frank backs away, slowly looking
around the room. Herman stares at him, as if in
judgement. *

157 FRANK'S POV

157

While Beautiful Dreamer plays, WE SEE where Herman came
to his end -- ROACHES crawl over an empty, doorless
refrigerator; a plume of ice hangs from a broken water
pipe; the floor is littered with rags, cans, newspapers,
bottles.

The watch runs down and stops.

Frank, lost in this sad inventory, doesn't notice the
torch has burned to his hand.

FRANK

Ahh!

The flame sputters out, leaving Frank in darkness. He
panics, smashing the boarded-up windows with his shoulder
but they won't give. *

Frantic, he tries kicking the door. Nothing. Grabbing
a chair, he batters the door with all his might. The
chair shatters. *

(CONTINUED)

157 CONTINUED:

157

Frank gathers his last bit of strength to make a final charge into the door. *

He breaks through!

158A INT. IBC STUDIO 8H/SCROOGE SET - CHRISTMAS EVE

158A *

Frank bursts through Scrooge's office door, flattening the Lady Censor and tumbling to the floor.

WE HEAR heraldic HORNS play a fanfare. The IBC Announcer steps up to the mike.

ANNOUNCER

Tonight, live on IBC, the world premiere telecast of a Christmas classic -- Charles Dickens' immortal Scrooge.

WE SEE REACTION SHOTS of EXTRAS in Victorian costume, TECHNICIANS, Solid Gold Dancers, "Tip" O'Neill dressed as Marley, Brice and Grace, all staring at Frank in stunned silence.

BRICE

(hissing to Grace)

Help me get him off the set!

Frank, dazed and confused staggers to his feet, stammering inarticulately. As Brice and Grace try to lead him away, he sneaks a peek inside the Scrooge office. A Prop Man hurries out.

BRICE

Here, grab his arm.

(to set)

What're you looking at? Let's get with it.

STAGE MANAGER

Thirty seconds to air!

GRACE

I've been worried about you.

Brice steers him off the set and towards the elevator.

BRICE

We've all been worried about you, Frank.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

158A

CONTINUED: (2)

158A *

BRICE (Cont'd)

Now, why don't you just go upstairs and kind of "supervise things" from that big office of yours, huh? You could check those satellite linkups.

FRANK

Yeah. Okay.

(to cast and crew)

Good luck guys...uhm...I feel magic tonight!

158

INT. IBC STUDIO 8H/BACKSTAGE - CHRISTMAS EVE

158 *

Now at the elevator, the doors open and standing before Frank -- hooded black cape billowing, red eyes glowing in a skull -- is THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE. *

Frank shrieks, dropping to his knees. He clutches pitifully at the Ghost's cape.

FRANK

Take me! I give up! Do whatever you want!

The Ghost tries to pull away, stumbling back into the elevator.

GHOST

Help! Guard! SECURITY!

A husky IBC SECURITY GUARD moves for Frank.

BRICE

(lifting Frank up)

That won't be necessary. Frank just needs a little rest and he'll be fine.

(to Grace)

Get this nutcake the hell outta here!

Frank stares wide-eyed at the Ghost who edges past him. The Ghost waves his Scrooge script angrily. *

GHOST

Listen, I gotta show to do. I don't need this!

(CONTINUED)

158 CONTINUED:

158

FRANK
 (as Grace gently guides
 him into the elevator)
 I'm okay! False alarm! Go get
 'em kids!

The elevator doors close.

GHOST
 (to Brice)
 This is live TV! Not tape, not
 film, live!

BRICE
 Calm down.

GHOST
 Don't tell me to calm down!
 There's gonna be a hundred
 million people watching this show
 and I'm the one who's gonna be
 out there! Not you!

He turns on his heels and stalks away, cape luffing
 behind him. WE TRACK him through the congested backstage
 area. *

GHOST
 Anybody have a valium?

A Solid Gold Dancer looks up from fixing the run in her
 stocking.

SOLID GOLD DANCER
 There's some in my bag in the
 dressing room.

GHOST
 Thanks honey.

STAGE MANAGER (V.O.)
 (over PA system)
 Fifteen seconds. *

The Ghost walks thru a quieter area. He reaches the
 dressing room and enters. *

159 INT. DRESSING ROOM

159

The Ghost shuts the door behind him and crosses the empty
 room to the lit make-up mirror.

(CONTINUED)

159 CONTINUED:

159

He tosses back the black hood and very slowly removes the horrific skull mask with blazing blood-red eyes. Beneath it -- a horrific skull face and blazing blood-red eyes. This really is the Ghost of Christmas Future!

Lightbulbs EXPLODE around the mirror.

The skull stares at his nightmarish reflection. There is an evil SIZZLING SOUND as smoke curls from his eye sockets.

160 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

160

Frank sits at his desk, confused and exhausted.

161 ON TV SCREEN

161

John Houseman sits in a wing chair. He opens the leather-bound copy of Scrooge and begins to read.

HOUSEMAN

"It was a cold, bleak Christmas Eve. The fog-draped streets of London were deserted save for an occasional carriage that moved like a phantom through the dingy mist."

WE HEAR the CLIP-CLOP of horses' hooves on cobblestones.

162 BACK TO SCENE

162

Frank pours himself a water glass full of vodka.

HOUSEMAN (O.S.)

"Old Ebenezer Scrooge sat alone in his gloomy chambers, more bitter than the night. 'Christmas,' he thought. 'Bah! Humbug!'"

Frank takes a big swig.

163 INT. STUDIO 8H HALLWAY

163

MARY LOU RETTON, dressed in rags as Tiny Tim, hobbles a few feet on her wooden crutches. Suddenly she stops, flings the crutches aside, somersaults down the corridor, flies into a full-twisting back-flip and lands on her feet.

MARY LOU
God bless us every one!

Sitting in a folding chair against the wall is a wide-eyed Calvin Cooley. He stares up at Mary Lou with strange intensity. Calvin's sister Lanell pulls up a chair beside him.

Mary Lou's COACH approaches her.

COACH
Try it again, and this time,
really stick it.

Mary Lou nods and returns to her original position. In the b.g. John Houseman walks briskly to the dressing room trailed by his DRESSER.

Grace comes over to Calvin and Lanell. She puts a hand on his shoulder.

GRACE
You kids having a good time?

Mary Lou Retton hurtles down the hallway, landing right in front of them.

MARY LOU
God bless us every one!

Calvin can't take his eyes off her.

164 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE

164

Over Frank's shoulder WE SEE the TV monitor with Brando as Scrooge sitting in his dreary counting house. His NEPHEW proudly sets a glass case on the desk.

SCROOGE
And what are these supposed to be?

NEPHEW
Why they're doormice, Uncle,...

165 CLOSE ON MICE

165

with antlers glued to their tiny heads.

NEPHEW (O.S.)

...The rage of London. I brought
a pair for my -

166 INT. RHINELANDER'S BEEKMAN PLACE BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

166

Preston Rhinelander and his handsome, white-haired WIFE
sit in their classic WASP parlour watching Scrooge.
Their TWO PERSIAN CATS paw the screen after the doormice.

NEPHEW (O.S.)

...Wife.

SCROOGE (O.S.)

Doormice, indeed!

RHINELANDER

(to wife)

Works like a charm.

167 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

167

SCROOGE

I've never heard of such foolishness-

Frank mutes the sound with the remote control.

Frank is totally gone. He pours himself another Stoly,
setting down the bottle without looking. It falls,
spilling over his cluttered desk. He grabs it and begins
sopping the liquor with an envelope. Seeing a wrapped
gift among his papers, he stops and picks it up.

The tag on the gift -- "To Frank."

WE STAY ON Frank as he opens the package. He freezes,
when he sees what's inside. His eyes fill up. Tears
begin to stream down his face. Brushing them aside, he
sets the gift on the desk and walks away.

CUT TO:

168 THE GIFT -- BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH

168

of Frank and James as little boys in front of tract
house. They have their arms around each other and smile
happily into the camera.

(CONTINUED)

168

CONTINUED:

168

Inscribed at the bottom of the picture --

"To Frank,

The best brother a guy every
had. Merry Christmas.

Love,

James

Frank pours himself another drink. Scrooge continues
in monitor, showing a street scene. *

169

INT. STUDIO 8H

169

The Victorian "Scrooge" street is in full glory: the
poulterers hung with geese and turkeys; the grocers
bursting with polished fruit; wind-up toys dance in the
toy store windows; VENDORS hawk their chestnuts. Crowds
of happy SHOPPERS bustle down the snow-covered street.
CHILDREN CAROLERS sing God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
beneath a flickering gas lamp.

Brando, as Scrooge, walks beside a jolly giant wearing
a long velvet robe and a holly wreath on his head --
Dickens' GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT. WE TRACK them down
the cheery street.

SCROOGE

This has indeed been a night of
revelations. Thank you for
showing me the true meaning - *

Big Ben begins CHIMING o.s.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Thank me not, Ebenezer, for soon
you will be visited by the final
Spirit; the thing all men fear
the most!

CUT TO:

170 EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

170

A huge blood-tinged moon sits ominously on the horizon, dwarfing the silhouetted skyline.

CUT TO:

171 EXT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

171

Frank, framed by the criss-crossed window grids, stares out at the swollen moon. He stands imprisoned, a solitary, lonely figure.

172 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

172

Frank, his back to the CAMERA, stands at the far end of the spacious office, staring out the window.

He turns, and dull with booze, slowly crosses the room. The vodka bottle, upside-down in his hand, leaves a trail along the carpet.

As he passes the TV monitor, WE SEE appearing on the screen, wreathed in grey mist, the black-hooded Ghost of Christmas Future. The solemn phantom points a long bony finger at Frank.

Frank continues on, oblivious. WE SEE the Ghost, a skeletal hand pointing straight at Frank, take over all the monitors. *

Suddenly the door flies open. Eliot Loudermilk -- unshaven with crazed, red-rimmed eyes; wearing pajamas, an overcoat, mud-caked galoshes, harlequin sunglasses, and carrying a double-barreled shotgun -- stands in the doorway. Smiling. *

ELIOT

Honey, I'm home! *

He BLASTS the vodka bottle out of Frank's hand.

With a sobering jolt of adrenaline, Frank dives behind his desk.

ELIOT

Remember me boss? The guy you canned the day before Christmas!?

Another SHOTGUN CHARGE slams into the desk; blowing the phone to bits.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

172

Eliot calmly breaks apart the smoking gun and slides two more shells in.

FRANK
 (cowering under the desk)
 Eliot, I've been trying to get
 you on the phone! Firing you was
 a big mistake.

Another BLAST blows out the TV monitors. Frank winces. *

FRANK
 As of now consider yourself
 rehired! Bonus and everything!

He breaks cover, bolting out the door. Eliot fires --
 missing him by inches. *

173 INT. HALLWAY/AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

173 *

As Eliot coolly reloads, Frank tugs on an office door.
 It's locked. He runs to the next door, also locked,
 yanking on the handle. The door knob comes off in his
 hand.

ELIOT
 How was my day you ask? Well,
 my wife left me, took my little
 girl with her. And that's all
 I can remember because ever since
 then I've been blind drunk!

Eliot clicks the gun in place with a metallic snap.

ELIOT
 (singing softly)
 "You better not shout,
 You better not cry,
 You better not pout,
 I'm tellin' you... "

Frank hides behind a secretary's desk.

FRANK
 You were right, I was a jerk.
 I've missed the whole point of
 Christmas, I know that now.

(CONTINUED)

Eliot appears above him. Frank looks up to see both barrels inches from his head.

FRANK

But I've been through a lot today. And, and I've learned a lot.

He gets to his feet.

ELIOT

(singing)

"He knows when you are sleeping...."

Eliot backs Frank up against the wall.

FRANK

I've done some terrible things. Not just to you but to people who love me. But the wonderful thing is it's not too late!

ELIOT

(singing)

"... Knows when you're..."

FRANK

Please, just give me a chance ...

Eliot aims with both barrels at the CAMERA. Over his shoulder, WE SEE the Ghost holding out both his skeletal arms in a death embrace.

FRANK (O.S.)

...And I promise you -

Both barrels EXPLODE with a deafening roar.

Frank drops to the floor, barely dodging the blast. Two smoking holes are blown out inches above him.

Frank scampers on all fours down the hall. Eliot, in no hurry, reloads.

Frank springs to his feet as the water cooler explodes near his head.

Eliot follows him down the hall, the shotgun dangling casually over his elbow.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED: (2)

173 *

ELIOT
 (singing)
 "...Knows when you've been bad
 or..."

Frank runs until he reaches the elevator bank. Incredibly, the elevator bell RINGS and the doors slide open. Frank leaps inside, hits "L" and frantically punches "CLOSE DOOR." Eliot rounds the corner.

ELIOT
 (singing)
 "...So be good for..."

The doors close on Eliot aiming both barrels into the car. Frank is safe.

174
 thru
 175

OMITTED

174
 thru
 175 *

176 INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

176 *

Frank stares up at the descending floor lights, sweat beading his forehead, panting heavily. Suddenly he realizes there is someone else breathing in the car -- low, death-rattle breaths. He whirls around to see the Ghost of Christmas Future standing right behind him.

FRANK
Ah!..Oh god, it's you. Scared
 me to death.

Frank wipes his brow, recovering.

FRANK
 What the hell are you doing here?
 Shouldn't you be downstairs in
 the studio? We're on the air. *

He notices something rustling beneath the Ghost's black cape.

FRANK
 Hey! Whatta you got under there?

He pulls back the cape to REVEAL hellish faces writhing and moaning in pain, trapped inside the hollow Ghost's bloody rib-cage prison. *

(CONTINUED)

176

CONTINUED:

176

Frank yanks the cloak shut. Eyes wide with dread, he slowly looks up to the Ghost's hooded face. Wisps of smoke drift from the coal-red eye sockets.

FRANK

Oh shit...Whoa, that's...that's
some costume. Really, really
works. Whew. I'm scared.

Elevator doors open behind him.

FRANK

Whoops. My floor. Gotta run.

As the Ghost silently glowers at him, Frank bolts out of the elevator into a situation too horrible to be described here. *

Frank shrieks, pulls a U-turn and dives back into the elevator as Bernard Hermann's piercing Psycho sting strings pursue him.

177

INT. ELEVATOR

177

Frank hysterically jabs all the elevator buttons as the doors close. The Ghost stares down at him.

FRANK

My mistake...So...You don't say
much huh? I uh I like that in
a man. Strong, silent type.
Chicks love it.

The Ghost doesn't respond. The elevator descends for a few more floors, finally stopping. The doors open to REVEAL --

178

INT. WILLOWBROOK MENTAL INSTITUTION - LATE AFTERNOON

178 *

WE-SEE, squatting in a shadowy corner of this snakepit nightmare, a slightly older Calvin, wearing a grimy nightshirt.

179

REVERSE ANGLE

179

on Frank and Ghost watching from inside elevator.

(CONTINUED)

179 CONTINUED:

179

FRANK
 (to Ghost)
 So. What? Am I suppose to know
 these people?

180 ANGLE ON CALVIN

180

as an older Grace Cooley brings him a cup of water. *

GRACE
 (handing it to him)
 Now be careful sweetheart. Drink
 it slow -

A HOSPITAL ORDERLY taps her on the shoulder.

GRACE
 Please. I just got here. *

ORDERLY
 Visiting hours are over.

He starts to escort her away. Grace breaks free, running to her son. She hugs him tightly. The boy stares at nothing. He is lost. The Orderly pries her off, leading her from the room.

GRACE
 (crying)
 Don't worry Calvin honey. I'll
 be back. You be a good boy.

The elevator doors close.

FRANK
 (to Ghost)
 Is this true? Is this the
 future? But I can change it,
 right? I will. As soon as I get
 back.
 (making a note in his
 pad)
 "Take Grace's son to specialist."
 See. It's a done thing. That
 easy.

The elevator descends and stops again. The doors open
 on -

181 EXT. RODEO DRIVE SIDEWALK BISTRO - DAY

181

A trio of middle-aged Beverly Hills HARPIES gossip over their nouvelle salads at the outdoor cafe. The women have too much jewelry, too much makeup and too much cosmetic surgery. They wear expensive fringed and studded designer jumpsuits and distressed hair.

The woman with her back to the Camera flicks a red-taloned hand through her orange shag.

WOMAN

...So by now the new girl is
waxing my legs -

WE MOVE AROUND her to SEE -- it's Claire! She has become tough and brassy.

WOMAN 2

You mean the Korean?

TWO CHILDREN, ragged and gaunt, walk to the cafe's railing, watching the ladies eat.

CLAIRE

I guess, they all look -
(seeing the kids)
Hey! Beat it!
(searching over her
shoulder)
Waiter!

WOMAN 3

Come on Claire, they're just kids.

182 ANGLE ON FRANK

182

eyes widening as he hears Claire's name -- recognizing her beneath the garish mask.

183 ANGLE ON CLAIRE

183

lighting a cigarette, her puffy face set in a sneer.

CLAIRE

Don't tell me. I wasted twenty
years on losers like them. Thank
God a friend took me aside one
day and said "Save yourself
Claire. Scrape 'em off." Best
advice I ever got.

(CONTINUED)

183 CONTINUED:

183

The Children continue to stare at her. She sips her drink, a tear in her eye. *

CLAIRE
(to herself)
Yeah, best advice I ever got. *

The elevator doors close on this scene.

184 INT. ELEVATOR

184

Frank turns to the ghost.

FRANK
I didn't mean it! I was angry
and, and hurt. I didn't
want...She was right. The
second I get back I'm gonna call
Claire - No! I'll go over and
see her. Thanks. Thank you for
showing me this. This was good. *

The elevator descends, finally stopping at the bottom floor. This time the doors slowly swing open with a chilling stone against stone sound. The Ghost wordlessly floats past Frank out of the car. *

FRANK
Hey! Wait up.

Frank follows the spectre into --

185 EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

185

Frank looks over his shoulder to see he has just stepped out of an age-worn, marble mausoleum. He shudders, dashing through the Michael Riva graveyard after the Ghost.

They walk/float side by side through the moonswept headstones and crypts towards a bare hill.

Wendie Cross stands there, alone, head bowed.

FRANK
Oh no. James. My brother is
dead. Oh what a waste. I should
have...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

185 CONTINUED:

185

FRANK (Cont'd)

I don't know what my problem was with him? He's my brother and I love him. I do! When I get back I'll --

James Cross steps out from behind a monument and joins his wife. He is sobbing. She holds his hand, comforting him.

FRANK

(happily)

James! He's okay!

(realizing)

Well then...who's buried in there?

Frank looks at the Ghost who simply points towards the freshly dug empty grave. Frank is drawn up the hill.

186 CLOSE ON HEADSTONE

186

which reads -- "FRANCIS CROSS -- BELOVED BROTHER". The birth and death dates are obscured by a floral wreath.

187 ANGLE ON FRANK

187

shaking his head, mouth open in disbelief.

FRANK

What? I'm dead? What the hell are you saying here!? I've died? That's...crazy. I mean...if I'm dead, how, how can I change any of this? Why bother showing me these things if I can't do anything about them?!

(backing away from his grave)

No. I'm sorry. That's it. That's enough. You're not getting me in there!

He wheels, fleeing back to the mausoleum/elevator, his only possibility of escape.

The spectre points a bony finger after him.

188

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

188

Frank races inside and pushes the 22nd floor. The doors slide shut.

He looks up at the floor lights. The car is still. He's breathing hard. Suddenly with a wrenching metallic sound, the walls of the elevator begin to close in on him. The ceiling slowly drops. Frank jams his arms out, trying to fight it, but the elevator tightens to fit his body. The lights flicker and, in the instant before they go out, WE SEE that the elevator car has become Frank's coffin!

From outside WE HEAR hands roughly grab the coffin and turn it sideways.

GRAVEDIGGER 1 (O.S.)
Easy, easy. Watch it!

GRAVEDIGGER 2 (O.S.)
I got it. You get the back.

GRAVEDIGGER 3 (O.S.)
Damn it's cold!

FRANK
Hey! What's going on? I'm in here!

189

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

189

THREE GRAVEDIGGERS carry Frank's coffin up the hill to the grave where James and Wendie wait.

GRAVEDIGGER 1
Not much of a turnout.

190

INT. FRANK'S COFFIN

190

WE HEAR Frank's panicked breaths.

FRANK
Anybody out there? Can anybody hear me? Hello?

WE HEAR creaking, jostling SOUNDS.

FRANK
Help!

191 EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT 191
They lower the coffin into the pit.

JAMES
"The Lord is my shepard. I shall
not want."

192 INT. COFFIN 192
In the blackness WE HEAR James' muffled voice.

JAMES (V.O.)
"He leadeth me beside the
still..."

FRANK
(whispering to himself)
Oh my god! I'm being buried
alive.
(screaming)
Help! Help me!

193 EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT 193
James closes the Bible, scoops up a handful of dirt and
drops it on the coffin below.

194 INT. COFFIN 194
In the total darkness WE HEAR the SOUND of dirt hitting
the coffin lid. Frank goes berserk.

FRANK
GET ME OUT OF HERE!

He pounds frantically against the casket. The wood
creaks.

FRANK
(hysterically)
NOOOOOOOOO!

Shovelfuls of dirt hit the coffin. Frank's pounding
increases.

FRANK
I WANT TO LIVE! I WANT TO LIVE!

(CONTINUED)

194 CONTINUED:

194

With his last ounce of strength, he slowly pries open the coffin lid.

MATCH CUT TO:

195 INT. IBC 22ND FLOOR ELEVATOR BANK - NIGHT

195

Frank bursts out of the elevator and lands on the floor.

FRANK
I WANT TO LIVE!!!

Church bells RING loudly on the TV monitor above him.

Frank stops thrashing. He looks around, recognizing that he's back safe on the 22nd floor. As the reality hits, a big smile spreads across his face. He bounds to his feet. He giggles, laughing louder, finally shouting with joy.

FRANK
I'M ALIVE!!!

Eliot steps from around the corner, aiming a shotgun squarely at Frank.

ELIOT
(smiling)
Not for long.

Frank brushes the gun aside and throws a brotherly arm around Eliot.

FRANK
Okay, here's my final offer -- you're hired back at twice the salary, you move upstairs to a big office, and I'm making you vice-president in charge of programming.

Eliot lowers the gun.

ELIOT
Excuse me, I'm looking for a Mister Frank Cross. I must have the wrong --

Frank stops him as he turns to go.

(CONTINUED)

195

CONTINUED:

195

FRANK

No, it's me but ... it's not me!
I'm a new man! I'm a lover!

He gives him a big kiss on the cheek.

FRANK

I'm a singer!

He hits a high note. On the TV monitor, the clanging BELLS of London change to the Carolers singing I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.

FRANK

I'm a dancer!

He grabs Eliot and waltzes him wildly down the hall. But Frank freezes in mid tango-spin, letting go of his partner's hand. Eliot sails across the floor and topples over a desk.

FRANK

Wait! Are we still on the air?

Eliot climbs from behind the desk.

ELIOT

(apprehensively)

Got about ten minutes left.

Frank helps him to his feet, throws an arm around him and steers him towards the door.

FRANK

Ten minutes! Come on Eliot!

Frank pulls a shiny red Christmas ball from the corporate wreath, hooks it around his ear, and flashes a wacky grin.

FRANK

Let's have a little fun for once
in this life!

196
thru
197

OMITTED

196
thru *
197

198 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

198

Scrooge, wearing a night shirt and tasseled cap, throws open the bedroom shutters and looks out. *

SCROOGE

Oh what a glorious day! Never
has there been such a day!

He shouts to the Street Urchin lobbing snowballs in the street below.

SCROOGE

You there! Lad!

The boy stops and looks up at the window.

URCHIN 1

Yes sir? Are you talking to me
sir? *

Scrooge holds up a shiny coin.

SCROOGE

Here's a gold sovereign! Go buy
me the biggest goose in all London!

He tosses it to the boy o.s.

SLOW MOTION of the tumbling coin.

But it's caught by a different hand.

WE HEAR gasps. WE SEE the shocked REACTIONS of Brando,
Grace.

199 INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

199

The place is in a panic.

TECHNICIAN #1

He's drunk!

TECHNICIAN #2

He's nuts!

BRICE

He's finished!

Eliot has appeared with the shotgun behind the Director. *

ELIOT

Just stay on him. *

200 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

200

The hand opens. And Frank Cross looks down at the coin he just caught. As more cameras glide over to shoot him, Frank takes charge.

FRANK

Which camera am I on? This one?
Come in a little closer, Tony.
(into camera)

Hi, I'm Frank Cross. I'm the
President of this network. And
I gotta ask you one question.

201 INT. RHINELANDER'S DEN - NIGHT

201

Bolt upright in his chair, nervously sipping a drink, Preston Rhinelanders glares at Frank on the TV set. It has started to snow outside.

FRANK

-- What the hell are you doing
watching television on Christmas
Eve?

Rhinelanders does a spit-take and lunges for the phone.

202 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

202

FRANK

Don't you have a family? I do.
I have a brother. And he's the
best.

203 INT. JAMES' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

203

James, Wendie and the other couples crowd around the TV, watching Frank.

FRANK

(waving)

Hey James. I should be there
with you guys right now. Not
here. We could be drinking
punch, telling jokes, eating
mince pie -- I don't know. But
I should be with people I love.
It's Christmas Eve.

(CONTINUED)

203 CONTINUED: 203
They all cheer, startling the Dog.

JAMES
You tell 'em Frank!

204 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT 204

FRANK
No family? What about your
friends -- the gang you work
with?

205 INT. RHINELANDER'S DEN - NIGHT 205

Rhinelanders on the phone and Frank's on the console.

RHINELANDER
Control room? Who let
that idiot on the air?

FRANK
...Your college roommate,
the car pool,...

206 INT. 8H CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT 206

Eliot is on the other end of the line, holding shotgun,
one foot up on the Director's chair. Frank's in the
monitors.

ELIOT
Brice Cummings did, sir.

FRANK
...Your bowling team, an
old army buddy, your
personal banker,...

RHINELANDER (V.O.)
Put him on the phone
immediately!

WE PAN AWAY from Eliot to FIND Brice festively trussed
up in Christmas ribbon, gagged, with a big bow stuck to
his head.

ELIOT
I'm sorry, sir. He's tied up
right now.

(CONTINUED)

206 CONTINUED: 206

Brice attempts to hop out of the room but Eliot deftly slams his foot down on the end of Brice's ribbon and he topples to the floor with a BIG CRASH. *

FRANK

Call 'em up and get 'em over there. Have a party. *

207 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT 207

FRANK

When I first started here my boss gave great Christmas parties. We're gonna do that again. Tonight! Why? Because it's Christmas Eve. *

208 ANGLE ON CAMERA MEN, 208

sound guys, prop men, actors, technicians in studio whooping delightedly.

209 ANGLE ON FRANK 209

FRANK

Yeah, we're gonna get a band down here. You grab somebody you like and dance and you kiss 'em under the mistletoe.

(thinking about Claire)

Boy, there's a girl I'd like to be with tonight.

210 INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT 210

Claire watches Frank on the raffle TV. *

FRANK

A girl I loved a long time ago.

MOVE IN ON A TIGHT SHOT of Claire.

FRANK (O.S.)

A girl I still love.

(CONTINUED)

210 CONTINUED: 210

WE SEE Frank on TV, Claire watching. *

FRANK
(brightening)
But that's the beauty of it,
Claire. It's not too late. It's
Christmas Eve. *

211 EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT 211

It is snowing. Claire runs out into the street and hails a cab. A Checker fishtails to a stop. She jumps in.

212 INT. CHECKER - NIGHT 212

CLAIRE
I have to get to the IBC building
in two minutes.

The Cabbie turns, a wide, pointy-toothed smile slapped on his demon face.

CABBIE
No problem.

He punches the accelerator and the cab peels out.

213 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT 213

FRANK
No friends? Go make a friend.
Visit a neighbor and introduce
yourself. What do ya think,
they're gonna slam the door in
your face? Don't worry. I got
an idea.
(leaning in
conspiratorially)
Bake 'em some cookies.

214 INT. DR. ROSENBLUM'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 214

Frank's psychiatrist sadly shakes his head as he watches Frank on TV.

(CONTINUED)

214 CONTINUED:

214

FRANK

Not just ordinary cookies -- no,
no, no, no. Special cookies, the
ones shaped like bells and stars
and little snowmen.

DR. ROSENBLUM

(to himself)

He came to me for help and I
failed him.

215 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

215

FRANK

Then put some red and green
sprinkles on top, knock on their
door and say, "Merry Christmas!
Want a cookie?" It'll work. It's
Christmas Eve. Or caroling.
That's a cool thing to do.

Grace, Calvin, Lanell and Mary Lou Retton watch Frank
from the floor.

FRANK

Get together and sing some of
those classic old Christmas
songs.

(he demonstrates)

"Deck the halls with boughs of
holly, Fa-la-la-la-lah ..."

216 INT. IBC LOBBY/GUARD CONSOLE - NIGHT

216

The two Guards harmonize loudly, their voices echoing in
the marble lobby.

IBC SECURITY GUARDS

"I'm dreaming of a white..."

217 INT. GRACE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

217

Gramma on the Telecaster and the Cooley kids sing.

COOLEY FAMILY

"Jolly old Saint Nicholas, Lean
your ear..."

218 INT. CLAIRE'S HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT 218
 HOMELESS are gathered around a beat-up old upright
 singing while Hazel plays. *

SHELTER CROWD
 "Oh little town of Bethlehem, how
 still..."

219 OMITTED 219 *

220 INT. RHINELANDER'S DEN - NIGHT 220
 The TV is still on but Rhinelanders chair is empty. As
 Frank continues to speak, WE PAN over to the window and
 the SOUNDS of caroling outside.

FRANK
 Get out there! Wake the
 neighbors! It's Christmas Eve.

His arm around his Wife, Preston Rhinelanders stands
 looking out at CAROLERS who are serenading them.

221 EXT. RHINELANDER'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT 221
 WE SEE A REVERSE of the Carolers, a cross-section of New
 Yorkers, with the Rhinelanders framed in their parlor
 floor picture window.

CAROLERS
 (finishing the song)
 "Troll the ancient Yuletide carol,
 Fa-la-la-la-lah-la-la-la-la."

Preston applauds. His Wife beckons to them, throwing
 open the window.

WIFE
 Merry Christmas! Want a cookie? *

222 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT 222

FRANK
 (taking off the Christmas
 ball)
 There are people around you who
 are having a terrible Christmas.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

222 CONTINUED:

222

FRANK (Cont'd)

They're cold and they're hungry.
 Things couldn't be worse. Hey,
 if you're not doing anything --
 and you're not; you're just
 sitting around watching me on TV
 -- why don't you drop by and see
 'em? Give 'em a sweater, an old
 blanket. Make 'em a sandwich.

Frank notices Calvin.

WE SEE Calvin staring back.

FRANK (O.S.)

Show 'em you care.

Frank presses on.

FRANK

Do something, for God's sake.
 It's Christmas Eve.

223 EXT. WATERFRONT - NIGHT

223 *

THREE BUMS huddle around a fire in an oil drum during
 the snowstorm. SIREN wailing, a cop car pulls up and
 hits them in the face with a searchlight.

COP #1

Alright you, get over here! Take
 this!

He shoves a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken at them.

COP #2

And don't tell anybody where you
 got it!

224 INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

224 *

FRANK

For one night, we act a little
 nicer, we smile a little quicker;
 we share a little more. For a
 few hours, we are the people we
 always hoped we would be. Isn't
 that amazing?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FRANK (Cont'd)

It's really sort of a ... a miracle! A miracle that happens every year. On Christmas Eve. Don't waste it. Get involved! Wake up!

WE SEE Calvin, unnoticed by his mother, slip away and wander toward Frank.

FRANK

Take a chance! Get out! Celebrate! It's gonna be a great night. After all, it's Christmas Eve.

He notices that Calvin has come over and is standing beside him. He reaches down and Calvin shyly slips his hand in Frank's.

They share a smile.

Frank turns to the TV camera.

FRANK

Merry Christmas!

Calvin turns to the camera too.

CALVIN

And God Bless us, every one.

Grace is stunned. She bursts into tears.

Lanell and Mary Lou look at each other in amazement.

Frank laughs and scoops up Calvin in his arms. Grace gives them both a hug.

The whole studio applauds Frank including many persons we've seen before -- the London Bobbie, the Lady Censor, Prop Man 1, Prop Man 2 holding Doormice, the Nurse, "Tip" O'Neill, the Street Urchins, the Carolers, the Carpenters, the Painters, the Technicians, Wayne, Ted, the Solid Gold Dancers, Lanell, Mary Lou Retton, Mary Lou's Coach, Scrooge's fiancée Belle, Scrooge's Nephew, Scrooge's Ghost of Christmas Present, Tony the cameraman, the Stage Manager, the other IBC Execs, Eliot and Marlon Brando. Claire can barely get through them.

(CONTINUED)

Frank spots Claire fighting her way through the crowd. He hands Calvin to Grace and Claire rushes into his arms.

THEY KISS!

CLAIRE
(tears streaming down her
face)
Merry Christmas Lumpy!

FRANK
Christmas?...Bah humbug!

He winks at someone high over her shoulder and kisses Claire again.

WE CRANE BACK AND UP SLOWLY on the reunited lovers embracing in a pool of light, framed by a cheering throng, until WE CATCH Lew Hayward and the three Ghosts perched on a Victorian roof-top, smiling triumphantly. Sitting with them, now an angel with wings and a crooked halo, is Herman the wino.

JOHN HOUSEMAN (V.O.)
"And from that day forward, it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if anyone alive possessed the knowledge. He became as good a friend, as good a brother, as good a boss, as good a father, as the good old city knew. And he worked to make the world a happy place where children laugh and men dream dreams of peace and angels sing."

"THE END"

ROLL END CREDITS as all sing Angels We Have Heard on High.

EVERYBODY
"Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the
plains..."

FADE OUT.