

"MALL SANTA"
Written by Gracie

OPEN ON:

Dark sky. Snow is falling.

CHRIS (V.O.)

A lot of people will tell you Santa isn't real. But I've seen him myself.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS'S CHILDHOOD HOME-NIGHT

In a cozy living room with a Christmas tree and a TV, YOUNG CHRIS, a 5 year old, lies on the carpet in front of the TV, avidly watching a commercial for snowglobes.

CHRIS'S MOM

Time for bed.

CHRIS'S MOM, in a red robe and red slippers, shuts off the TV and takes his hand. She walks him to his BEDROOM. Childs drawings of snowglobes and a cutout magazine ad for a snowglobe are tacked to the wall beside the bed. CHRIS'S MOM tucks YOUNG CHRIS into bed and turns out the light.

Footsteps sound from the living room. Young Chris sneaks out of bed to investigate. In the LIVING ROOM, he hides behind the Christmas tree. From his vantage point, he can only see the intruder's feet, which are clad in red slippers.

YOUNG CHRIS remains in hiding until the intruder leaves. When Chris stands up, he sees that a parcel has been left under the tree. He unwraps the parcel to find a snowglobe, which he eyes with wonder.

CUT TO

INT. CHRIS'S HOUSE-DAY

The same snowglobe now sits on a shelf. Pan to a massive collection of other snowglobes. A fishbowl sits amongst the snowglobes, with a little igloo inside. The room is aggressively Christmas themed.

CHRIS alarm goes off, playing christmas tunes from the radio

BILL (FROM RADIO)

It's Bill from the Bills Big Mouth show, back with more Christmas tunes for your listening enjoyment. After these tunes will have a segment of more juicy stories and shocking developments!

CHRIS, a 60 year old chubby man with a fluffy white beard, sits up and stretches cheerily. CHRIS leans over and sprinkles flakes of fish food into the fishbowl, where they fall like snow.

CHRIS

Morning, Dancer. Prancer. It's finally December!

The fish swim silently in the bowl. CHRIS crosses the room to a calendar on the wall. His calendar reads "pre Christmas month," at the top, and he turns the page to "Christmas month," as it is December 1st.

CHRIS goes about his morning routine, putting on a Santa costume. He brushes his teeth in the bathroom mirror.

CHRIS

(to his reflection)

You're going to do great today. Make him proud.

He makes a large breakfast in his overwhelmingly Christmas-themed apartment and eats. He hugs the fishbowl and heads out the door.

CHRIS

It's even snowing! Who could be sad on a day like this?

CHRIS closes the door behind him.

CUT TO

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT-DAY

NICK's alarm goes off, a jolting noise cutting off the Christmas music abruptly. Nick smacks at the alarm and rolls over, groaning. NICK is a stick-thin, disheveled man with patchy facial hair around 60, sleeping on a bare mattress.

NICK peers through the blinds and lets them snap shut.

NICK

(dejectedly)

Great, snow. The roads'll be iced.

NICK goes to the kitchen and stubs his toe. He scratches a tally into the wall labeled "reasons we won't get the security deposit back." He looks at the clock.

NICK

Late again.

NICK puts a slice of toast in the toaster and goes to FRANKIE's door.

NICK

(yelling)

Frankie!

Nick bangs on Frankies door and it swings open. FRANKIE is a tall, gangly man in his 40s. He sports a hideous leopard printed robe. He is brushing his teeth.

FRANKIE

Where's the fire?

NICK

We gotta be at work ten minutes ago. Suit up.

FRANKIE looks around at the air, which has become smokey.

FRANKIE

But seriously, where's the fire?

NICK and FRANKIE run into the kitchen, where the toaster has caught fire. NICK screams. FRANKIE whips out a fire extinguisher and sprays the toaster.

NICK
(winded)
Where- where did you get that?

FRANKIE shrugs, and hands NICK a piece of burnt toast, which Nick eats.

FRANKIE
(muttering)
For someone so scared of fire you sure make us go through a lot of extinguishers.

NICK
I'm not scared, I'm appropriately cautious.

FRANKIE
Potato, tomato. Hey, before we go, do you want to listen to my new song? I finished it last night, picture this, it's a haunting ballad about unrequited-

NICK
For the millionth time, no one wants to listen to a six hour album of kazoo music.

FRANKIE
You haven't even heard this one yet!

NICK
Pretty sure the whole building has heard you playing it, especially since there's that big hole in the floor.

FRANKIE
The landlord hasn't fixed that yet? I emailed him.

NICK

Nope. (Checking watch) We need to go; if we're late again then we're canned.

The two hurriedly dress, passing each other costume items. It is clear that this is routine. FRANKIE dresses as an elf in a corny, ill-fitting tight green costume, NICK as Santa Claus in a baggy Santa suit that droops off his frame.

FADE TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK- DAY

NICK and FRANKIE walk quickly, bickering.

FRANKIE

I'm just saying, kazoos are coming back into the mainstream. I'm going to rise to fame and my kazoo tape is going to sell out.

NICK

When's the last time you even saw a kazoo? Or a cassette tape for sale? Seriously, stop bringing it up. It's so lame.

CHRIS walks on the opposite side of the street. NICK notices CHRIS.

NICK

Annoying coworker at 2 o'clock.

FRANKIE

Come on Nick, he's not-

Nick grabs Frankie and they duck behind a bush. But it is too late, Chris has seen. CHRIS crosses the street and joins them behind the bush.

CHRIS

Hey! I can't believe I caught you, you never walk to work this early.

NICK exits the bush and continues walking quickly, ignoring CHRIS and continuing to talk to FRANKIE

NICK

What were you saying about kazoos?

CHRIS

Does this new belt make me look fat?

NICK

Yes.

CHRIS

Perfect. Now, I mean no offense, but youre looking a little scrawny today. This might need fluffing up if you're going to pass as santa.

CHRIS pokes at NICKs fake belly.

NICK

The kids won't know the difference.

CHRIS

As your friend-

NICK makes a noise of disagreement.

CHRIS

-Acquaintance?

NICK

No.

CHRIS straightens as if about to give a lecture.

CHRIS

As your coworker, I must remind you that as a mall Santa, you have a duty to uphold. You wouldn't want to disappoint the real Santa, he's relying on us.

CHRIS looks into the distance wistfully.

CHRIS

He's always watching.

FRANKIE

What exactly- What do you mean, the "real-"

NICK (interrupting)

-For one day, cut the Christmas crap. It's barely even December. You know this (he indicates his getup) is just a job. You know that, right? It's a seasonal job? That we do to make money, and that's it?

CHRIS

You are such a kidder.

A car pulls up, full of other mall Santas.

OTHER MALL SANTA

Hey, it's cranky, dopey and weirdo!

Frankie and Chris look each other up and down.

CHRIS

I don't think those are real dwarves.

FRANKIE

Wait, which one of us is 'weirdo?'

Other SANTA

See you at work.

Santa puts on a beard and speeds past the light.

FRANKIE points at the car.

FRANKIE

See? See?! He has a kazoo. You owe me five dollars.

NICK

That's a vape.

FRANKIE inhales deeply.

FRANKIE

Huh. Dayquil flavored.

CUT TO

INT. MALL-DAY.

TEACHER approaches with a group of STUDENTS

TEACHER

Okay everyone, go do whatever it is kids do. Except you Joey,
you're still on punishment for biting me.

JOEY, a scrappy girl around 10, rolls her eyes. She is on a
child-leash. The TEACHER turns away from her for a second, and
when he turns back, the leash harness is empty.

CUT TO

INT. EAST MALL- DAY.

CHRIS sits in a Santa chair and a long line of kids wait to see
him. CHILD IN MALL sits in his lap.

CHRIS

Ho, ho ho. And what do you want for Christmas little boy?

CHILD IN MALL

A pony!

CHRIS

If you've been a good kid, I'm sure Santa can make it happen.

CHRIS writes "pony" neatly in a little notebook, filled with
other entries of names and gift requests. He fishes through his
bag and hands the child a candy cane.

CUT TO

INT. WEST MALL-DAY

FRANKIE sucks a candy cane of his own. Frankie stands beside
NICK. NICK sits on a chair, and a short line of children wait to
sit on his lap, Joey at the front. Nick carelessly manhandles
Joey onto his knee.

NICK

What do you want, chump- uh, champ?

JOEY

I have a list of demands. (She takes out a piece of paper with a long list on it)

NICK

Pick something quick, we got a line here.

JOEY

Fine. Gimme a toy, I guess. (She holds out her hand and waits.)

NICK

Asking a lot of ole Santa. Here- how 'bout this instead? Let's see what Santas got in his bag of goodies.

NICK gestures to FRANKIE. FRANKIE fishes through his bag and pulls out a wad of unidentifiable candy and hair.

JOEY

Gross.

NICK

Grow up, it's just a... Well, I don't know what it is.

NICK snatches the bag from FRANKIE and pulls out some loose change. Joey kicks him in the groin, and Nick doubles over in pain. Joey uses the opportunity and takes his wallet. FRANKIE gives NICK a glance, looking like he wants to say something.

FRANKIE

You gonna eat that, or-

NICK hands back the change. FRANKIE puts it in his mouth, and sucks the candy cane again. The coins grate against the candy cane in his mouth, making a horrible grinding noise.

Nick

What are you doing, man?

FRANKIE

Sharpening it for self defense. (he pulls it out to show him the sharpened tip of the candy cane). The coins are metal so they make it sharper. Like a whetstone. I read it in an article in the news.

Nick

What news is that?

FRANKIE

The same place I get all my news, the back of those shampoo bottles. On a side note, did you know earth is a cube?

NICK pulls a slip of paper from his pocket.

NICK

(reading the paper)

"You get your money back when you deliver the stuff on this list."

The ORPHANS walk up and NICK groans.

NICK

It's the kids from the orphanage. Lemme guess, you guys want new parents this year, AGAIN.

MALL OWNER, a bespectacled middle aged woman in a professional vest and slacks, comes over, carrying a clipboard and looking overly cheerful. Her son RAMY, a boy around 6 with slicked back hair and wearing a tiny version of his mother's outfit, follows at her heels.

NICK

Hey boss.

MALL OWNER

Nick, I'm gonna address the elephant in the room. This is a place of business, and as such we are trying to dig into the challenges of synergizing our staff as a family to empower us through vertical leveraging. That means making seismic shifts in personnel.

NICK

Huh?

MALL OWNER

We're doing surplus personnel reallocation.

NICK

What?

MALL OWNER

I'm offering you a career change opportunity.

NICK

I don't understand what you're trying to say.

MALL OWNER

You're fired.

NICK

Me? But I'm a total delight with the kids! They're my life!

A CHILD runs up.

CHILD

Mister Santa, can I take a photo with-

NICK

Buzz off, the grownups are talking.

MALL OWNER

Nick. Let me level with you. I've made a chart of your performance, and it's sub-par. We're going to have to let you go.

MALL OWNER shows him a graph of his performance. It is a flatline.

FRANKIE

If he's fired, I quit too.

MALL OWNER

...This mall doesn't have an elf. Who are you?

(beat.)

The three of them stare between each other awkwardly. FRANKIE turns and runs away.

CUT TO

EXT. MALL-DAY.

NICK and FRANKIE are being escorted out roughly by security.

NICK

Never liked that stupid job anyway. I can't stand kids. If I wanted some nose-picking grimy thing in my lap, I'd steal a chimp.

FRANKIE

No need to steal. you can borrow mine whenever.

NICK

I thought I told you to return the poor thing to the zoo before someone calls animal control.

FRANKIE

I cant return Georgie, he's part of the family now!

CHRIS walks by and notices the two standing there and approaches. CHRIS takes off his fake santa beard to reveal a real, identical beard underneath.

CHRIS

(with disgusting sincerity)

Ho ho ho, I'm taking lunch too. Care to join me?

NICK

Can't talk now, I have to pretend to take this.

NICK holds out a hand and Frankie sets a banana in it. Nick puts it to his ear.

NICK

Hello? (he does a double take.) This isn't my phone.

FRANKIE

It's for Georgie.

NICK

Again, I am begging you to get that thing out of the apartment.

NICK runs a hand through his fake beard.

Chris

You guys are too funny. Your beard is crooked, buddy! Let me help you out. Wouldn't want the kids to see that the beard's fake.

FRANKIE

He can't grow his own.

NICK

(to Frankie) I told you that in privacy. (to Chris) I don't have to listen to your Santa crap anymore, I just got fired.

CHRIS

It's not in the Christmas Spirit to fire somebody this time of year. Let's talk to Sheila, she'll sort this out-

NICK

Sheila?

CHRIS

Our boss who owns this mall. How long have you worked here?

NICK

Of course. How could I forget.

FRANKIE chokes on a coin and it falls to the ground.

Chris

Should I... call an ambulance?

FRANKIE

Don't worry, that happens sometimes. I'm sharpening it.

Nick

(confidently)

He's sharpening it.

Chris

And that...works?

Nick

Yeah, idiot, ever heard of a whetstone? Oh wait, you're too busy thinking about compassion and the Christmas Spirit. You don't have time to worry about rational, manly things like self defense. Right Frankie?

NICK claps FRANKIE on the shoulder and he coughs up another coin.

FRANKIE

Right.

CHRIS

(contemplative)

You know, maybe that's true. I don't think about self defense much. For some reason, kids don't try to steal my wallet as often as they do yours.

Chris continues his contemplation. Nick shoulders past him and FRANKIE follows behind.

CHRIS

(calling after them)

Once I'm done with work, do you guys want to hang out?

(beat of silence.)

CUT TO

INT. MALL- DAY.

Chris sits in the chair. RAMY comes to the front of the line.

CHRIS

Ramy, you've grown since last year!

RAMY

You remember me?

CHRIS

Of course. Santa never forgets a face. And what do you want for Christmas?

RAMY

(skeptical)

You're sure you didn't forget? Because last year I told you what I wanted and I didnt get it.

CHRIS

What do you mean?

RAMY

I wanted a paint set but on Christmas all I got was a stupid watch and a tie! And I was good all year!

CHRIS

(troubled)

How strange.

RAMY

My friend Naia didn't get hers either, she wanted a bag of sour candy but she got socks too.

NAIA stands in the line.

CHRIS

Naia, is that true?

Naia nods. Chris sets Ramy down and walks down the line of kids.

CHRIS

Did you get what you wanted for Christmas last year? Did you?
What about you?

The children shake their heads as he makes his way down the line. CHRIS is visibly shaken by this development.

CUT TO:
INT. CHRIS' HOUSE- NIGHT.

The clock shows midnight.

Chris paces around his apartment, manic. His hair is in disarray, beard included, and papers are spread haphazardly over his desk.

CHRIS
I've been over it a thousand times, it just doesn't make any sense. Every year I send the lists in the mail. I write down every kid's name and what they want. Is he not getting the letters? Is his address wrong? Is he being robbed? Is the postage bad?

He slams a fist down on the table in frustration. The letters to Santa read "NORTH POLE" and have no other text, as the rest of the envelope is covered entirely with stamps. He stands over the table in turmoil.

CHRIS
Something is wrong. This is all wrong. I can't do this by myself.

CHRIS sighs, gazing into his favorite snowglobe.

CHRIS
I'm gonna need help. Someone capable. Someone... responsible.

CUT TO:
INT. BAR- NIGHT.

NICK is surrounded by empty bottles, still in his Santa suit. He sits next to RUDY, a guy who looks just a little bit pathetic, and MALL OWNER.

RUDY (looking off)
That guys got game.

They look to the dance floor, where FRANKIE is surrounded by women and men, dancing and being social.

NICK
Oh, him. **Yeah**. He says it's some secret cologne he uses that reels em in. Ever since I found mustard in his soap dispenser, I've been afraid to ask.

RUDY
Wish I knew how to talk to women. There's this lady at the school- I'm a bus driver, see, and she's a teacher- She comes out to the parking lot all the time so I thought maybe she was interested?

NICK
Maybe she's just parked there and is going to her car?

RUDY
That's one theory, sure. But either way, I can't talk to her. Every day, I can't do it. I clam up. All I know to talk about is bus driving and my bus decals, and there's no way she's interested in hearing about that...

NICK
Decals?

Rudy takes out his phone and shows him a picture of a bus with a decal of a reindeer on it. The reindeer looks just horrible. It also has shoelaces on its hooves for some reason.

NICK
Why does it have shoelaces?

RUDY

You wouldn't get it. No one gets my art. (Sigh) I'll never find love.

NICK
Randy was it?

RUDY
Rudy.

NICK
Sure. Look, Randall, who needs love?

RUDY
Everyone?

NICK
Wrong. Nobody. All you need in this life is yourself. Caring about anything is a waste of time.

RUDY
Really? You seemed pretty upset five minutes ago.

NICK
It's different. I was crying because my team lost.

He gestures to the bar TV.

RUDOLPH
Lost at...

Pan to the tv. A Christmas talk show called BILLS BIG MOUTH is playing.

RUDY
...a talk show?

NICK
Talk shows are basically a sport, man.

Everyone at the bar mutters in agreement.

FRANKIE walks up.

FRANKIE

Hey, I brought you this.

He hands Nick a drink. They do their secret best friend handshake and Frankie goes back to the dance floor.

RUDY

Woah, you're that guys best friend?

NICK

No, we aren't friends. We're roommates.

RUDY

What about your (he mimes their secret handshake) and all that?

NICK

Ehhh. I'm kind of a lone wolf.

RUDY

If you're a lone wolf who hangs out with other people... doesn't that make you a regular wolf?

NICK

No, I- It's not the same. He's nuts in the head. I have to look out for him or he'll die. But he's good to have around. He does whatever I say. Watch this. Hey, Frankie.

FRANKIE

Yes, Nick, my roommate and best friend in the world?

NICK

Stop saying that.

FRANKIE

Okay.

NICK

And get me another drink.

FRANKIE
Anything else?

NICK
Go to the bathroom and give yourself a swirly.

FRANKIE
Got it boss!

MALL OWNER walks up and sits down.

MALL OWNER
That's so heartless. I'm glad I fired you, you might've taken my job one day acting like that.

NICK
Are you gonna keep up that whole thing with Chris?

MALL OWNER
Oh, the 'Santa is real' thing? Of course. The kids love him, he brings in more money than any other mall in the area. If someone clues him in to the fact that Santa isn't real-

NICK
-He would be devastated and wouldn't come to work ever again. Huh. That would slow down traffic to the toy store in winter, wouldn't it?

MALL OWNER
Don't get any ideas about telling him simply because you're mad at me. Firing you was nothing personal. It's only that you're a terrible worker and a bad person. I wish I could help you in some way.

MALL OWNER dabs her tears with a stack of money.

MALL OWNER
But there's no need to do anything cruel to Chris. It would break his heart if-

NICK

Relax, I'm not gonna tell him and ruin your stupid business. If it's up to me, I'll never see him again.

CHRIS enters. NICK sighs deeply.

NICK

Speak of the devil... If it isn't Satan Claus himself.

CHRIS

(sniffing the air)

Have you been drinking?

NICK

We are at a bar.

FRANKIE comes over, soaking wet, an entourage still hanging off of him.

FRANKIE

I'm actually completely sober. Look.

He lifts his hair to reveal a DESIGNATED DRIVER tattoo on his forehead.

CHRIS (staring)

You need help. I mean, I- I need your help.

NICK

(Immediately)

Pass.

CHRIS

It's important.

NICK

Let me level with you. I may not have been able to say it at work, but you are annoying as hell. And you may have noticed I'm busy at the moment. So buzz off.

CHRIS

With what, drowning your woes?

NICK

I'll show you who's drowning.

NICK pours his drink on CHRIS. CHRIS pushes NICK. NICK pushes back. They get into a slap fight. A bar fight ensues.

Pan to Bills Big Mouth playing on TV. Bill, the host, sits on a chair by a fireside.

BILL

This Christmas, let's remember what's important.

PAN TO shots of everyone beating each other up. Bill's voice plays over these shots.

BILL

Christmas is a time of year about peace, and love, and family. It's not about the gifts you receive, but how much love you give others! So, who wants to win a \$10 gift card? Tenth caller gets that and one of my special edition teddy bears! Just call the number below!

FRANKIES head pops up in front of the screen, in the middle of fighting, and he watches the screen. He spits out a tooth and picks up his phone.

FRANKIE

Hello, is this Bill's Big Mouth radio show? Oh, I'm the first caller? Okay.

He hangs up and then calls again.

FRANKIE

Hello, is this Bills Big Mouth radio show? Oh, I'm the second caller? Okay.

He hangs up and then calls again.

FRANKIE

Hello, is this Bills Big Mouth radio show? Oh, I'm the-

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY-NIGHT.

NICK and CHRIS stand in an alcove outside the bar. Both are disheveled and beat up.

CHRIS

That wasn't at all how I wanted that to go.

NICK

I'm going home.

CHRIS

Wait. I came here because... I need your help.

NICK

Why in the world would I help you?

CHRIS

Because I know deep, deep, deep, deep, deep, down, at the bottom of your soul, in the darkest and smallest crevice of your consciousness- you have a heart. I know there's good in you.

NICK

(after a beat) Nope. Not convinced. There's nothing you can say that'll make me-

CHRIS

-And I'll pay you.

NICK

I'm in.

FRANKIE stumbles out and does an elaborate secret handshake with NICK.

NICK

Frankie, buddy, we got a new job!

FRANKIE

Really? Where? When do we start?

CHRIS

This is pretty urgent, so... now.

NICK

Urgent? What do you need us to do?

CHRIS

Come with me. I'll show you.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE-NIGHT.

CHRIS has laid out a map.

CHRIS

Apparently, kids haven't been getting their gifts from Santa.

FRANKIE

Because Santa isn't'-

CHRIS

Before you ask, yes, I am certain these are good kids. They're definitely all on the nice list. I looked at their records online.

NICK

Ethical of you.

CHRIS

I always write down what they ask for and mail it to the North Pole. Every year.

FRANKIE

But you know that Santa's not actually-

CHRIS

I think Santa's not getting my letters, for some reason.

FRANKIE

Because he's not re-

NICK

-eeeeally good at remembering to give presents.

NICK shoves a hand over FRANKIE's mouth, and rubs the fingers on his other hand together to indicate that they are just here for the money, glancing at CHRIS.

(HE DOESN'T KNOW,) NICK mouths.

FRANKIE looks at Chris and back at Nick and they have a silent argument. NICK makes continuous money signs with his hands. In the end, FRANKIE throws up his arms in defeat.

CHRIS does not notice any of this occurring, as he has turned to stare contemplatively out the window.

CHRIS

I guess it's obvious what we have to do. We need to find the real Santa and talk to him. Ask what's up.

NICK gives CHRIS a thumbs up, smiling fakely, and FRANKIE only shrugs, clearly still not on board with lying.

CHRIS

(relieved) Thanks guys, you have no idea what this means to me. Also, I got you something.

NICK

(excited) A bribe?

CHRIS

No! An early Christmas gift! I know we haven't always gotten along, but since we'll be working together to find Santa, I thought we should start off on the right foot.

NICK

Hm. Well, we didn't get you anything, because we aren't your friends. Let's get to work looking for Santa or whatever.

FRANKIE

Where do we start?

CUT TO

INT. CHRIS' ROOM- NIGHT.

The room contains an aging computer and hundreds of snowglobes.

CHRIS

Excuse the clutter, I haven't cleaned in ages. It may not show,
but I don't have very many friends over.

NICK

Don't worry, it shows.

FRANKIE elbows him.

FRANKIE

Sorry about him.

CHRIS

It's fine. It's true. (he laughs, and shakes his head. He slaps
a hand on the globe over the north pole.) Let's get to it, shall
we?

NICK

Let's... find Santa.

CHRIS (VO)

Since we're on a budget, we can't exactly go to the north pole.
But he doesn't hang out there all the time. Since he didn't get
my mail, it's possible he changed addresses. Any ideas of where
to look for him?

(Beat.)

CHRIS

Anything. There are no stupid answers.

FRANKIE

He likes... cold places?

NICK

Let's check my ex wife's heart. Huh? Huh?

(No one laughs. He is pathetic)

CHRIS

Cold places. It's a place to start.

FADE TO:

INT. WALMART REFRIGERATION AISLE-DAY

NICK

This is so stupid.

CUT TO

INT. MALL- DAY.

MALL OWNER sits in her office, typing. She glances at the clock and stands.

MALL OWNER

Late. This isn't like him.

CUT TO

INT. GROCERY STORE- DAY.

MALL OWNER approaches NICK as he halfheartedly digs through frozen peas.

MALL OWNER

Chris didn't show up to work.

NICK startles, dropping peas everywhere.

NICK

Which is my problem why?

MALL OWNER

Because he's in the next aisle with your little elf friend talking about looking for Santa Claus. I can connect dots, Nick.
Does he have something over you?

NICK
You don't seriously think that guy is capable of blackmail. nah,
we're only here to help figure out why Santa isn't delivering
gifts.

MALL OWNER
Santa isnt real.

NICK
Yeah.

MALL OWNER
And you haven't told him because-?

NICK
I like money.

MALL OWNER
I wonder what would happen if someone let the cat out of the
bag.

NICK
As much as I'm sure you'd love to screw me over, you need him in
the dark as much as I do. He has money, he works IT the rest of
the year. he doesn't really need to work at the mall. If he
found out Santa wasn't real why would he even come to work?

MALL OWNER
Hm. Make sure he comes to work. He can't pay you unless he's
making money, can he?

CHRIS wanders into the aisle.

CHRIS
Oh no! (Checks watch) I'm so sorry. I'll get to the mall right
away.

MALL OWNER
You had better.

MALL OWNER walks away.

NICK
You're not seriously going to work, are you?

CHRIS
I have to.

NICK
You could skip out, there's no way they would fire you. I mean
you're a seasonal mall santa. And you're the only one who wants to
do that.

CHRIS
It's not about that, I want to do the right thing. All those
kids at the mall are relying on me.

NICK
Okay. We'll keep looking around here while you're gone.

CHRIS
Thanks Nick.

CHRIS leaves.

NICK
What a moron. Frankie, let's go.

FRANKIE
Where?

NICK
Home?

FRANKIE
But what about finding Santa?

NICK gives him a look.

FRANKIE
Oh. Right.

CUT TO
INT. MALL. DAY

CHRIS
Sheila. Did... did you know Santa- the real Santa, I mean- hasn't
been giving kids the presents they want?

MALL OWNER
(sweetly condescending)
Ohhhh. I'm sure it's all a big misunderstanding.

CHRIS
But-

MALL OWNER
Do you mind picking up Nick's shift after this?

CHRIS
But I really need to look into-

MALL OWNER
I know you have things to do. But you're our best Santa, and
more importantly, you're part of our corporate family, Chris.
Think of me as your mother!

JOEY
Mom, there you are. I need you to sign my permission slip for
the school play so I can-

MALL OWNER
Not now sweetie, Mommy's working. (To Chris) And our corporate
family needs you to step up, because your symbolic deadbeat
brother Nick left. What would the, um... "real" Santa do? He would
want you to spread as much Christmas joy as possible, yes?

CHRIS
Okay, I'll take another shift.

The clock on the wall ticks on as Chris works a 12 hour shift. After his shift the camera pans back to him looking tired. The mall is closed and dark. He takes out his phone and calls MALL OWNER.

MALL OWNER
(Sleepy) Hello?

CHRIS
Hi. I finished my shift and took the liberty of cleaning and waxing the floors. Anyway, Since I worked a 17 hour shift today, can I have the weekend off?

MALL OWNER
I dunno ... I'm giving you lunch breaks AND bathroom breaks, which is already unfair to the other workers who don't get them.

CHRIS
I know it's a big ask. It's just that I have some important investigations to do regarding Santa, and I need some time to do it.

MALL OWNER
You have plenty of time after work!

(He looks unconvinced. MALL OWNER catches this.)

MALL OWNER
You know... the real Santa had a lot of good things to say about you on our phone call.

CHRIS
(No longer upset) Really? Did he have any notes on my performance?

MALL OWNER
He said you're doing a great job, and you need to keep it up. We simply have to push through the holiday season. We can do it. Together. Now go get some rest, I need you back here bright and early.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE- NIGHT.

Nick and Frankie sit on the couch. Chris bursts through the door.

FRANKIE
How was work?

CHRIS
Fine. You two see anything today?

NICK
Nothing unfortunately.

CHRIS
I made up some missing posters this morning but I forgot to bring them with me. Have you seen them?

FRANKIE
Oh, is that what those were for? I drew moustaches on them. I'm sorry.

CHRIS
You drew moustaches over santas already existing moustache?

Frankie
Yes. Sorry. In my defense I thought they were missing posters for some random old man.

CHRIS
Why would that be better?!

NICK
Hey, I had an idea. Maybe we could lure him out.

FRANKIE
Like with a trap? Maybe a bear trap?

NICK
...Like a dating profile. We catfish him into meeting us.

CHRIS

But we're gonna revisit that bear trap idea. Good idea, Frankie.

FRANKIE smiles.

NICK

Don't encourage him.

NICK pulls up a dating app.

NICK

(typing) I'm a Ms. Claus seeking my Mr. Claus. I love...

Nick looks to the other two for ideas.

CHRIS

Bing Crosby.

NICK

Bing Crosby, and long walks on the... tundra.

CHRIS

Say you're a dog person.

FRANKIE

You mean a Werewolf? Those things that pull Santa's sleigh?

CHRIS

Nick, you're suspiciously good at this.

NICK

I've been divorced three times, you think I haven't used this newfangled technology? I'm not the weird one in this situation.

You're the one who has a celebrity crush on freaking Santa Claus.

FRANKIE

Mine's that old man from the syrup commercials.

NICK

Someone's responding.

CHRIS

He's saying hi, and sending a photo of- oh, this is not Santa, guys, Santa wouldn't... Oh my goodness. Santa wouldn't say *that*.

NICK

Let me see that.

CHRIS reads over his shoulder.

CHRIS

'Can't tell if you still seriously believe in Santa or you-'

NICK snatches the phone away and deletes the app.

NICK

(Unconvincing) Oh no, I accidentally deleted it.

CHRIS

It's okay. That was worth a shot. Time to try a new approach?

FADE TO:

EXT. PARK- DAY

NICK and FRANKIE set out LooneyTunes-style traps, boxes held up by sticks over a plate of cookies and milk.

NICK

This is by far the stupidest thing I've ever done for money.

FRANKIE

I used to do yo yo tricks for money. maybe I should get back into it. I hear it's going to be popular again any day now.

NICK

I know I ask this every day, but who told you that?

FRANKIE

My psychiatrist.

NICK

you're finally seeing someone? Thank god.

FRANKIE

Did I say psychiatrist? I meant my psychic.

CUT TO

INT. MALL OFFICE- DAY

The mall is not getting much traffic. People are lined up by the Santa chair, muttering about how there is no Santa there.

MALL OWNER watches from her office, sitting in a chair and glancing at the clock.

MALL OWNER takes a sinister bite from an apple.

Pan to RAMY, who sits in a smaller chair and also takes a bite from an apple.

RAMY

Mom, are you being diabolical?

MALL OWNER

I'm never diabolical, Ramy. Just business minded.

RAMY

Can I color with crayons?

MALL OWNER

Yes, color this. It will be good practice for when you own this place.

She hands him a stack of tax documents.

RAMY

(crestfallen) okay.

JOEY enters the office.

JOEY

Where's Santa?

MALL OWNER

Why don't you make yourself useful and go find him for me?

JOEY

If I do, will you sign my permission slip?

MALL OWNER

What?

JOEY

For the school Christmas pageant? I was hoping you would come and-

MALL OWNER

I don't have time. I'm working.

JOEY

Right. (Crestfallen.) I'm still going to be in it, I just need you to sign my slip. I'll find your Santa and bring him back, and you sign it.

MALL OWNER

Joey, negotiating like that, you might not be a disappointment to my legacy after all.

FADE TO

INT.NICKS APARTMENT- DAY

CHRIS

Santa, if you're here, please give us a sign.

NICK, CHRIS and FRANKIE join hands around an occult summoning circle with cookies and milk in the center.

NICK

no dice. I gotta be honest, guys, I'm running low on ideas. (He indicates the detective yarn board they have set up.) We've looked everywhere.

CHRIS

I think we're close. One of these leads has to take us to him.

NICK

Definitely. If not, we'll have to keep searching forever until we find him.

FRANKIE

Unless he's- hypothetically- not out there, for some reason.

NICK

Except that he is out there. We would be bad friends if we didn't help search, no matter how hard it seems.

FRANKIE

I'm just saying, sometimes you think someone is out there and that person turns out to not be out there as much as you thought.

NICK

Don't listen to him. We are absolutely going to find him, even if it takes years.

FRANKIE knocks over the milk, spilling it over NICK's lap.

NICK

Hey!

FRANKIE

When you set milk on the floor it's bound to spill sooner or later.

NICK

Actually, it isn't, if everyone keeps it in their glass.

FRANKIE

Maybe if the cup wasn't so manipulative, it wouldn't have been on the floor while holding a bunch of milk that it could spill in the first place.

NICK

Maybe if the milk glass wasn't so guilt-trippy, the milk could stay in the glass, and whoever had the milk cow could keep making money off it indefinitely and that person would never have to get another job.

CHRIS

...Guys, it's just milk.

FRANKIE

It's spoiled milk.

NICK

(whispering to Frankie) I know you're being metaphorical, but it is spoiled. The fridge stopped working.

FRANKIE

The landlord didn't fix that? After I faxed him about it?! I'm so sick of this. My mother always told me 'son, don't move into the apartments on the corner of Elm, and stop putting those toys in your mouth.' Turns out she was right, the toys were made of lead and it's a miracle I'm alive.

NICK

Yeah, Chris, your place is a lot nicer than ours. I'd rather live on 34th street than Elm street any day.

A brick comes crashing through the window.

NICK

This place really is a nightmare.

CUT TO

EXT STREET-DAY.

NICK and FRANKIE walk down the street.

FRANKIE

I think we should come clean. Christmas is in a few weeks.

NICK

No way. (flipping through a stack of cash) he would be devastated. At this point, we're basically doing him a favor by not telling him.

FRANKIE
(unconvinced) Whatever you say, man.

JOEY appears in the background. She sees them and runs over.

JOEY
Hey! You!

NICK
What do you want, kid?

JOEY
You're Santa from the mall, right? Read my demands yet?

NICK
Hmmm. I'll be sure to read that right away.

JOEY
Good, because it might take some time to acquire what I'm asking for... in exchange for your wallet back.

NICK
I got my cards cancelled already, and there was barely any cash in there.

JOEY
I used all the cash already. I needed a costume for the christmas pageant. (JOEY reaches into Nick's pocket, stealthily stealing his wallet again.)

NICK
(disinterested) Who you playing?

KID
An angel.

NICK

(Snorts) You, an angel? You stole my wallet. Here to extort me again?

JOEY

Came to offer a truce. (She holds out her hand. He takes it, and it shocks him. He jerks his hand back.)

NICK

Ow!

JOEY laughs and shows him the hand shocky thing she has on.

JOEY

Just kidding. I'm actually here to capture you and bring you back to the mall for my mom.

NICK

No way am I going back there. You sure you've got the right Santa?

CHRIS

She probably wants me. But I'm busy right now, sorry.

JOEY

Okay. Suit yourself, I'll force you to come.

She tries dragging him, but being that she is a little kid she is not able to.

JOEY

Okay. New plan. Can you forge my mom's signature here really quick?

NICK and FRANKIE exchange glances and shrug. Nick quickly signs the form.

JOEY

Thanks. While I'm here, I was thinking, I want to trade my list of christmas wishes out for a new one. My school Christmas pageant is coming up and I was wondering if you would get my mom to come see it.

NICK

Sure, not like I have anything better to do than bribe your mom to come see your play.

JOEY

Come on, please?

NICK

Seriously, I got crap to do. (he blocks her attempt to steal his keys.) What makes you think I got the time?

JOEY

What if I trade in my other Christmas wishes? Then you would have to do it.

NICK

What are you talking about? (he blocks another attempt at taking his money from his pocket.) I'm not going to do that.

JOEY

Oh. It's because I'm on the naughty list, isn't it?

NICK

Naughty list?

JOEY

(shrugs) yeah.

Nick starts to feel guilty.

NICK

That's crazy talk. Hey. (he catches her hand where she is attempting to sneakily steal his santa hat.) You aren't on the naughty list. Santa thinks you're a funny kid, your pranks-

JOEY

They're magic tricks.

NICK

Okay, your magic tricks- are pretty impressive.

JOEY
So you'll do it?

NICK
Bye.

JOEY
That wasn't a no!

NICK stands. As he walks away, he turns and takes his wallet out of his pocket to show JOEY he stole it back. JOEY pats her pockets in disbelief.

FRANKIE
What was that all about?

NICK digs through his pockets. He finds a slip of paper and pulls it out. It's the list JOEY gave him earlier.

JOEY (VO)
Dear Santa, I want a magic kit. Every year I get ties and socks and stuff. I want to be a wizard when I grow up. I've been asking for the same thing every year. Asked last year but you didn't deliver. How hard is it to do one simple thing? You suck at your job. Seriously. Try harder. -Joey.

NICK
What a little asshole.

NICK crumbles the paper back up and shoves it in his pocket.

CUT TO
EXT. CHRIS HOUSE- NIGHT.

NICK and CHRIS sit outside on a clear night.

CHRIS
Move those to the side (he moves the snowglobes.)

NICK

So, uh, how'd you come by all these snow globes, anyway?

CHRIS

Santa brought me the first one when I was only a kid.

NICK

Really.

CHRIS

Yeah. I'll admit, finding Santa is partially selfish for me.

He's my hero. I wasn't very well off as a kid, but he would always bring me something really nice and it gave me something to look forward to even when things felt hopeless.

NICK

Uh huh.

CHRIS

We're finally making progress, I can feel it. And I'm going to finally see him in person, and I'm gonna tell him how I couldn't have done it without you guys. You're good friends, you know?

NICK looks uncomfortable.

NICK

Yeah... Chris, I gotta tell you something.

CHRIS

Yeah?

FRANKIE comes out onto the patio.

FRANKIE

Hey, the mall has a 40% discount on yo-yo grease, I think we should check it out again.

CHRIS

I'll be darned.

NICK

(quizzically mouthing to Chris)

Yo-yo grease?

FRANKIE

The pizza place has my number blocked so I made dinner myself.

CHRIS

What did you make?

FRANKIE

I call it Culinary delight.

CHRIS

Sorry, NICK, what were you saying?

NICK looks away, having lost his nerve.

NICK

I was just gonna say, I think we'll find Santa any day now.

CHRIS

I sure hope so.

(beat.)

I remember when I saw Santa for real.

FLASHBACK to the house from the very beginning of the movie. He peers out from under the Christmas tree. All he can see from his vantage point is Santa's feet, clad in red slippers. We see him open the snowglobe again.

FLASH FORWARD TO PRESENT.

CHRIS

He was wearing slippers, weirdly enough.

NICK

I guess the, uh, boots get uncomfortable after a while.

CHRIS

Have you ever seen him?

NICK

Me? No. I was always on the naughty list, he wouldn't want to see me.

CHRIS

Is that why you hate Christmas so much?

NICK

I don't hate Christmas.

CHRIS

So you just hate me.

NICK

(reluctantly) I don't. I never hated you.

CHRIS

It's okay, it doesn't hurt my feelings. I know I can be a little too competitive about the mall Santa thing.

NICK

I'm serious. I always thought you were full of it. But the truth is I wanted what you have. You're a good man. You're... nice.

He trails off. Chris puts a hand on his shoulder.

CHRIS

You're nice too. More than you think.

NICK rolls his eyes.

NICK

We better go in and pretend to eat Frankies food. 'Culinary delight' is his vegan hotdog watergate salad recipe.

CHRIS

I'll order wings if you throw the bowl out while he's not looking.

They go inside. Chris lights a fire. Nick sits a cautious distance away and the other two sit close. FRANKIE and NICK teach CHRIS their best friends handshake. The Culinary Delight sits in the trash can. Pan out from the window; snow falls outside.

NICK

Frankie, the lie has gone too far. We can't keep taking Chris's money, eventually someone is definitely gonna tell him the truth--

FRANKIE

Finally, I knew you'd come around.

NICK

--So to keep that from happening, I hired someone to pretend to be the real santa.

FRANKIE

...Oh.

NICK

(out the door) Santa, get in here!

FAKE SANTA, who doesn't look santa-ish at all, comes in.

FAKE SANTA

Sup.

FRANKIE

Where did you-

CHRIS walks in.

CHRIS

Guys, I found this flyer for- who's this?

NICK

The real santa! We found him!

CHRIS

Santa?

FAKE SANTA
That's me. Ho ho ho.

CHRIS
You- How did they find you?

FAKE SANTA
Uhhh.... (he glances between them.) The yellow pages.

CHRIS
Of course. Why didn't I think of that? Oh, Santa, I can't believe it's you!

Chris sits on FAKE SANTA's lap.

FAKE SANTA
(wheezing from holding up Chris' weight) Nice to...meet you.

CHRIS
Where were you, anyway? We've been trying to find you!

FAKE SANTA
Work trip. Secret business, I'm afraid it's confidential.

CHRIS
(starstruck) Don't worry, I won't pry, I understand completely.

NICK
Okay, you've seen him, time to get going! Santa has a lot of work to do. And Chris, you can forward our last check, we won't need to keep coming around now that we've found the big guy.

CHRIS
One more thing- Santa, I want you to have one of these. To say thanks.

CHRIS holds out a snow globe.

FAKE SANTA

(picking his nose) Why would I want one of these?

(beat.)

CHRIS

Don't you remember? Christmas eve, 1968.

Beat.

CHRIS

It's me, Christopher Mills.

FAKE SANTA

I don't, uh... I see a lot of faces out there. As Santa Claus.

(beat.)

CHRIS sets the snowglobe back on the shelf.

CHRIS

Get out.

NICK

What?

CHRIS

This man is not the real Santa.

NICK

Look at him, he's so... Santa-y.

CHRIS

The real Santa would remember.

CHRIS ushers him out and slams the door.

CHRIS picks up a phone.

CHRIS

I can't believe that guy would pretend to be the real santa. Who does he think he is?

NICK
Sorry-

CHRIS
I don't blame you for getting fooled. He was very convincing. However, this does complicate things. If anyone can pretend to be the real santa, there's no way we can find him unless he wants us to.

NICK
(hopeful) So we stop looking?

CHRIS
And start doing. Don't you see what this means? If Santa hasn't found us or reached out, it means he must have a reason. He could be undercover. We need to do his job for him until he comes back. I can't believe I didn't think of it before.

NICK
We can't deliver billions of presents though.

CHRIS
Not by ourselves!

He lifts the phone to his ear.

CHRIS
Hello, is this the US mall directory?

CUT TO:
INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT-DAY

CHRIS lays out a map of the world on a table. A ton of old bearded men sit around him.

CHRIS
Attention everyone. You're probably wondering why I asked you all to come here. All of us have one thing in common- we are mall Santas. It has recently come to my attention that Santa has not been delivering presents. Without Santa, who is going to spread Christmas cheer and give people their gifts?

There is a long awkward silence.

CHRIS

The answer is... us! We are going to deliver the gifts and be Santa!

SANTA 1

We're already Santa. That's our entire job.

CHRIS

That's the spirit! I propose we organize Mall Santas around the world to get lists of what kids want, acquire the gifts, and deliver them.

SANTA 3

I'm too old for that kind of thing, it seems like a lot of work, and for what?

CHRIS

Don't you care about the kids?

SANTA 3

Save me the hoity toity speech. That stuff might work on the kids, but we aint kids.

CHRIS

I understand if you want to leave-

SANTA 1

Yeah, I want to leave. You brought us here for this?

SANTA 5

This is the worst idea I've ever heard.

The SANTAS criticism overlaps as they continue to heckle CHRIS.

CHRIS

Excuse me for a moment.

CUT TO

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM-DAY.

CHRIS looks in the mirror. NICK comes in.

CHRIS

I don't know what I'm doing wrong.

Nick

I think you can get through to them. Be cool.

CHRIS

In case you hadn't noticed, I'm not really "cool."

NICK

Level with 'em. You have to tell 'em your corny idea in a way
they can understand.

CHRIS

It's a good idea! Can't they do it because it's the right thing
to do? Why do I need to convince them?

NICK

You can't expect things to happen by magic, man, it takes work.
And I hate work. That's why I don't get anything done.

CHRIS continues staring in the mirror.

NICK

(sigh.) Come on.

They exit the bathroom and go back to the restaurant. Nick
addresses everyone.

NICK

We're all crusty old dudes, right? We hate our jobs?

SANTAS

YEah.

NICK

Sure, we can't pay you to act like Santa, but the mall barely pays us for it either. I'm betting half of you started this job for something other than the shitty pay, didn't you? Dig inside yourself, remember why you started doing this. You, big fat guy, why'd you take the job?

SANTA

My granddaughter kept badgering me about it.

NICK

Boom, there you go. Do it for the kids.

SANTA

What made you do this job?

NICK

It was supposed to be a fresh start. The classic story, my ex wife burned my house down and I used up all my retirement money on the divorce and getting a new place, we've all been there.

Some of the Santas mutter in agreement.

NICK

And come on, it'll take, what, a couple weeks? And then Christmas is over and we can go back to our lives. We're all looking for something to believe in, right? What do you say?

SANTA

Alright, alright. I'm in.

SANTA

My only plans this weekend were to watch Matlock, anyway.

The Santas all seem to be coming around to the idea.

CHRIS

(to Nick) I didn't know you had it in you.

NICK

Yeah, well, I want it out of me. Let's go, I'm getting acid reflux just standing in this grease trap.

Pan to MALL OWNER, who has dressed up as a santa and is watching this all go down. She looks on nefariously.

MALL OWNER

Well well well. Looks like I've found where our Santa's been during work hours.

CUT TO

EXT. OUTSIDE MALL -DAY.

CHRIS, NICK and FRANKIE walk swiftly.

CHRIS

So what's the plan? How are we gonna distribute gifts? The Chimney?

NICK

Chimney is a no-go.

CHRIS

But it's tradition!

NICK

Jumping into a fire is tradition?

CHRIS

Don't knock it till you've tried it.

CUT TO

EXT. BUILDING. DAY.

Chris Frankie and Nick are on the roof of a building with a chimney.

CHRIS

You just jump right in. Easy peasy.

NICK

Easy peasy.

Nick stares down the chimney into the fire.

CHRIS

You put one leg in, and then the other, and you kind of jump off into there.

NICK

I'm trying!

CHRIS

Take your time! I think you'll get it with a little practice.

Nick almost steps in but then stops at the last second.

CHRIS

What's the big deal?

NICK

I'm appropriately cautious around fire, is all.

CHRIS

Is this related to your house burning down thing?

NICK

What? No. No way. Look, why don't you go in first and show me how it's done?

CHRIS

Okay, I will.

CHRIS looks down into the fire.

CHRIS

Oh, it's further than I... hm. That fire looks hot, doesn't it?

NICK

Are you going in?

CHRIS

Of course. Any second now.

(45 minutes later)

CHRIS

(windy) Okay. No chimneys. Let's consider our other options.

FRANKIE

Air vents, maybe.

CHRIS

How about the door?

FRANKIE

The door. Makes sense.

NICK

Yeah, door, I'm good with doors.

CHRIS

Great. Door. Why didn't I think of that sooner? (he writes it down in his scrapbook). So, we need money and supplies if we're going to pull this off.

NICK

What if we stole donations from the salvation army?

CHRIS

Or we could get our OWN donations. We could have a charity event at the mall so people can donate to us, and hopefully it will be enough to get everything we need.

NICK

How much do we need?

CHRIS

According to my calculations... 100,000 dollars. At least.

CUT TO

INT.MALL-NIGHT.

There is a sign that says CHRISTMAS CHARITY EVENT INSIDE- MEET SANTA. They have the mall space set up for an event. A few people mill around and a lot of santas are there.

NICK
No one's here.

CHRIS
Give it a few minutes.

NICK looks around.

NICK
You think people will go for this?

CHRIS
Hopefully, since we're also auctioning valuable vintage
christmas decor.

Chris' extensive collection of snowglobes sits on the auction
table.

NICK
Chris, you- you can't do that.

CHRIS
It's no big deal.

NICK
But collecting those is your life's work, you love them. You
cant auction them off for-

CHRIS
I love Christmas because of what it does for people. I want to
be a part of it. Being a mall Santa- that's my work. These are
just... stuff.

NICK reaches for the favorite snowglobe, and CHRIS snatches it
before he can touch it.

CHRIS
Except this one. Don't touch that.

CHRIS pockets the favorite snowglobe.

CHRIS

We're just in time, it's starting.

They go into the other room and there is a crowd of people. CHRIS walks to the podium and taps the mic. It makes a horrible screeching sound.

CHRIS

Ho ho, ho. Welcome to the Christmas charity event everyone. Line up to sit on santas lap, and to bid on auctioned items. Our first snowglobe is a vintage 1901 snowglobe, this was from back when they still used special sugar in the recipe. Bidding starts at (he looks at his notebook full of toys children have requested) seven Jigsaw puzzles and an American Girl doll.

Several hands in the audience go up. Montage of People bidding various toys for the snowglobes. The SANTAS fill huge tubfuls of toys. All is going swimmingly. Their money counter goes up to \$50,000, then \$75,000, and finally to \$100,000.

MALL OWNER enters, followed by several SECURITY GUARDS. A hush falls over the room.

MALL OWNER

I'm going to have to ask all of you to leave the mall.

NICK

We have every right to be here.

MAIN MALL OWNER

Actually, you don't. This is private property, and you're carrying dangerous items in my mall.

CHRIS

They're only snowglobes.

MALL OWNER

Are they? Because I'm pretty sure this (picks up snowglobe) wouldn't fly past TSA.

NICK

What? This isn't an airport.

MALL OWNER

Isn't it?

MALL OWNER points through the window of the toy shop, where a tiny toy airplane takes off from a tiny airport. The SECURITY GUARDS begin roughly removing the SANTAS from the mall.

NICK

(to Chris) You didn't clear this with her?!

CHRIS

I didn't think I'd need to, she's always talking about Santa wanting to do the right thing, and this is the right thing to do!

MALL OWNER

The right thing to do is to come in to work for your shifts, which you've been failing to do for weeks. (holding the snowglobe) I'm afraid I'm going to have to keep these. And all these toys. And this money. It's a matter of mall security, you understand. I can't let you collect free toys outside my toy store, it cuts into profit.

CHRIS

This is for Christmas. Where's your Christmas spirit?

MAIN MALL OWNER

Hiding somewhere under the cash register.

CHRIS

But you were always telling me to come into work to make Santa proud.

MALL OWNER

Want to know a secret? Santa doesn't call me. I lied.

CHRIS

I thought...

MAIN MALL OWNER
You thought wrong.

CHRIS
(pointing at MALL OWNER) If this weren't a family friendly event,
I'd have a few choice words for you.

CUT TO
EXT. ALLEYWAY-NIGHT.

A piece of shit sits on the ground. Pan up to see that the
SANTAS all sit and stand around dejectedly. A RAT scuttles
across NICKS feet.

CHRIS
This was a stupid idea. What was I thinking? That this would
magically come together?

NICK
It was a good thought.

CHRIS
It's over. Without those toys, or that money, we got nothing.

(beat.)

SANTA 1
I got 30 dollars.

Santa 1 places the money on the ground in the middle of the
circle.

SANTA 2
I have 50 cents.

SANTA 3
(digging through wallet) Coupon to 6 Flags.

The RAT places a dollar on the pile.

The SANTAS voices overlap as they all offer up money and the
PILE OF MONEY grows.

CHRIS
(cautiously hopeful) This... could be a start.

FRANKIE
We could rob a bank for the rest.

NICK
How do you all feel about theft?

MALL SANTA 3
Depends who it's from. I'd rob a bank, sure, but would I take
candy from a baby? Sure. But steal a woman's purse? Well, sure.
But would I do video piracy? Sure. But would I-

MALL SANTA 2
So who are we hypothetically robbing, Nick?

NICK
How about the people who just screwed us over?

They all look back at the mall building, and then to Chris.

CHRIS
For the record, normally I would be morally opposed to this-

Everyone groans.

CHRIS
-But I'm willing to make a special exception.

SANTA 3
It's a Christmas miracle.

CUT TO:
INT. NICKS APARTMENT- NIGHT.

NICK, FRANKIE and CHRIS sit around plotting.

CHRIS

we need to get the stockroom key. I was thinking we could sneak in using costumes.

NICK

That would be a good move.

FRANKIE

Or we could blow through the ceiling.

NICK

Frankie, if I want crazy ideas I will ask for them.

FRANKIE

You don't trust me?

NICK

With stealing toys? No. With my life? Also no. So. We impersonate workers, and make our way to the janitors closet to find the key. Chris, you worked at the mall longer than me, do you have a map of this store?

CHRIS

No, they keep the backroom locked down pretty tight. It'll be tough to get in.

FRANKIE

Or, maybe... we blow through the ceiling.

NICK

No. Then we unlock the stock room and take the stock out on dollies. The only problem is there's a ton of boxes, so there's no way we can get them all out before they get suspicious.

FRANKIE

I actually have an idea for that.

NICK

Is the idea blowing off the ceiling? Be honest.

FRANKIE
well, yes, but-

NICK
The day I will follow that plan is the day hell freezes over. In
3 days we'll be responsible for orchestrating break and entry
into potentially billions of houses to deliver presents, let's
not add any more felonies on top of that.

FRANKIE
(mockingly, under his breath)
When hell freezes over.

CUT TO
INT. TOY STORE ENTRANCE-NIGHT

A TEENAGE RETAIL WORKER sits at the counter, texting. NICK and
CHRIS enter the toy store, wearing employee uniforms.

NICK
Hello, it's us, normal workers who work here. We're gonna
squeeze past you to the stockroom.

TEEN
(distractedly) Uh huh. Go on in.

NICK
Oh. You're not gonna ask for ID or anything?

CHRIS elbows him.

NICK
(under his breath) What? Frankie spent a lot of time making
these.

NICK
Seriously, you're just gonna let some random people claiming to
be workers come in?

TEEN
(not looking up) uh huh.

NICK
That was a little too easy.

FRANKIE speaks through the radio.

FRANKIE
You know what would've been even easier? Blowing through the-

NICK shuts off his radio earpiece.

NICK CHRIS and FRANKIE walk inside and the door slams behind them.

RETAIL WORKER comes from behind the door.

RETAIL WORKER
Clearance level?

NICK
Oh. The hard part.

CHRIS
(mouthing over his shoulder to NICK) Clearance level?

CHRIS
Fiiiiiiiiiiiive?

RETAIL WORKER
(He glances up suspiciously.) I haven't seen the two of you around here.

CHRIS
We're from the West branch.

RETAIL WORKER
Really? Heard you guys were releasing a new Bills Big Mouth themed teddy bear to add to your collection.

CHRIS
Uh, we-

NICK
Yep.

RETAIL WORKER
That's impressive. You guys have a pretty large stock, right?
How many types of bear do you have again?

NICK
Two hundred...and eighty two of them. () Earlier bills radio
says some trivia that he remembers

RETAIL WORKER
Uh huh. (RETAIL WORKER jumps over the counter)
There were 285 teddy bears released last month. I have mall
security on speedial. Move and I hit the call button. Who are
you, really?

CHRIS
Okay, okay, take it easy.

FRANKIE (OS through earpiece)
The roof is thicker than I thought, I'm not gonna be able to get
in there in time.

NICK
I'm, uh, not with him.

CHRIS
What?

NICK
(To Chris)
The Santa thing was a great thought, but it's insane. It always
was. I can't let it get in the way of my life. How am I supposed
to get a job and make money with something like this on my
record? I have to look out for number one.

CHRIS

I thought we were in this together.

NICK

I'm sorry. (to RETAIL WORKER) They're here to steal your inventory.

RETAIL WORKER

(To RETAIL WORKERS) take him to the lego brick room.

RETAIL WORKERS drag CHRIS off.

CHRIS

I thought you were my friend!

NICK glances to the RETAIL WORKERS desk, where the snowglobe sits.

RETAIL WORKER

I'll be sure to tell the boss of your loyalty to the mall.

NICK

That was brave of us, taking down a robber. A big guy like that, too.

RETAIL WORKER

Do you think I'll get a promotion?

NICK

Absolutely.

RETAIL WORKER

Too bad we have to arrest your buddy. But hey, at least you're not going down with him. Good call. You could move up the ladder and take my boss' job, making moves like that. brutal, man. Low down. Totally heinous. Scummy, even.

NICK

Yeah. Yeah, I guess it is.

(beat.)

Nick reaches into his pockets.

NICK

What's your name again?

RETAIL WORKER

Fred. Yours?

NICK

Nick.

He holds out his hand to shake hands. Fred takes his hand and gets shocked intensely, falling to the floor unconscious. NICK pulls back his hand and looks at it, and we see that he has used JOEY's hand-shake shocker.

NICK

Geez. That kid was trying to kill me. (NICK looks at the RETAIL WORKER, still lying on the floor.) Hope he doesn't have a pacemaker.

NICK searches the room for keys. He finds the key labeled STOCK ROOM, and pockets it, along with the snowglobe.

He turns around to find himself surrounded by mall security officers.

NICK

Oh. (NICK turns his earpiece back on.) Frankie?

FRANKIE

Yeah boss?

The MALL COPS pull out their tasers. NICK closes his eyes in defeat and braces himself.

NICK

Hell has frozen over.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF- NIGHT.

FRANKIE puts on goggles and blows off the ceiling of the stock room.

Boxes of toys are stacked to the ceiling. FRANKIE reaches down and picks up a magic kit. He lowers himself into the stock room secret agent-style using the neverending handkerchiefs

FRANKIE
(Into radio) I'm in.

FRANKIE makes his way through the stockroom. He absently looks through some of the boxes taking in the different toys inside.

CUT TO
HALLWAY

GARBAGE MAN is mopping the hallway. FRANKIE ducks into a side hall.

FRANKIE
Hi.

GARBAGE MAN
Hi. What are you doing here?

FRANKIE
Me and my buddies were hoping to rob this store. If you don't mind, of course.

GARBAGE MAN
Oh, go ahead. I hate my boss. She likes to sit in this spinny chair with a cat and chuckle darkly to herself while I'm cleaning. And I'm allergic to cats.

FRANKIE
The gall of some people.

GARBAGE MAN
I know! I mean, I just want to do the garbage. Whatever you need, let me know.

FRANKIE
Thanks a lot.

FRANKIE sees the MALL COPS dragging NICK down the hall.

FRANKIE
Hey, check this out.

FRANKIE trips the MALL COPS with a yoyo string. They fall,
letting NICK go. FRANKIE yanks NICK into a side corridor.

NICK
Frankie, thank god. Our cover's blown, and they've got Chris.

FRANKIE slaps him across the face.

FRANKIE
If we had gone with my plan from the start, we wouldn't be in
this situation!

NICK
This doesn't seem like the time to say 'I told you so!'

FRANKIE
Okay. Okay, here's the plan.

CUT TO:
INT. STOCK ROOM- NIGHT

FRANKIE stands under the hole in the stock room ceiling.

FRANKIE (VO)
We get the team in. We need to move the goods fast.

FRANKIE
(into radio) Team Dasher, drop in.

SANTA'S drop through the ceiling on ropes and carry boxes up
through the ceiling.

FRANKIE (VO)
Step two, we break Blimpy out.

NICK (VO)
Who?

FRANKIE (VO)
That's Chris's codename.

NICK
He got a codename and I didnt?

FRANKIE
Everybody got one. I just didn't tell you guys about them.

NICK
So what was the point of them if we don't- (FRANKIE gives him a
pissed off look.) sorry, continue.

FRANKIE
Okay. Hot Elf and Scrampy-

NICK
Why is my nickname Scrampy?!

FRANKIE
-Like I was saying, Hot Elf and Scrampy break Blimpo out.

CUT TO
INT. STAFF BREAK ROOM-NIGHT.

GARBAGE MAN mops the floor. A can of canola oil sits nearby.
MALL COPS enter.

MALL COP
Any mall traitors or anti-mall conspirators come through here?

GARBAGE MAN
Can't say I've seen any.

The MALL COPS push past GARBAGE MAN and slip on the oil, sliding into a heap on the floor.

NICK climbs over them, using their bodies as a bridge.

CHRIS

What are you doing here?

NICK

Getting you out.

CHRIS

Do you have a key to this thing?

NICK hits the jail with a hammer and it shatters.

CHRIS

Huh.

FRANKIE (VO)

Phase three, and this is where it gets good- These guys can't be reasoned with. So we're gonna use the opposite of reason: mild to severe violence.

THE SANTAS dump out the toy boxes, revealing their contents. One contains toy instruments,
MALL COPS enter the stockroom. Chris puts puppets on his hands.

CHRIS

(through puppet)

They went that way.

Everyone bursts into action at once.

FRANKIE

Live fast, die furious!

FRANKIE throws the DVDs like shurikens. One MALL COP dodges the DVDs and tases FRANKIE. FRANKIE does not fall, but farts loudly and knocks the taser from her hand. The two grapple. FRANKIE holds up a piece of mistletoe.

FRANKIE

Would you look at that. According to the law, we have to kiss.

MALL COP

What? That's not a law.

FRANKIE

You're a cop, can't you make it one?

MALL COP

Do you think cops make up laws? How stupid are you?

FRANKIE

I don't have to answer that! I plead the ninth!

MALL COP

It's the fifth!

FRANKIE

It's the twenty-first, and I know that because I have an advent calendar!

They continue to grapple. Frankie climbs up the miniature buildings and grabs a tiny plane from the air to throw at the mall cop. She jumps over it and they grapple again. She almost falls to the floor but Frankie catches her.

MALL COP

You're so stupid... but you smell so good. You're irresistible.

NICK

More like insufferable.

FRANKIE

Oh, I'm insufferable? Tell that to all the people who have suffered me!

Mall cop and Frankie almost kiss. Mall cop pulls back.

MALL COP

I'm sorry.

Mall cop tases him. Frankie takes the sharpened candy cane out of his mouth and stabs her in the leg. NICK dumps jacks across the floor and the mall cops trip over them. The Santas carry boxes up the handkerchief ladder, Chris passing boxes up.

FRANKIE takes out a boombox and places a cassette labeled FRANKIES TOP 100 HITS, and presses play. It starts playing terrible sounding kazoo music and screeching sounds. The MALL COPS cover their ears.

A box tumbles over, dumping snow globes across the floor. They are Chris' snowglobes. CHRIS sees his favorite snowglobe.

NICK
Chris, hurry up!

CHRIS
Wait, I-

NICK
Leave it, we gotta get out of here!

CHRIS reluctantly climbs the handkerchief chain without the snowglobe.

CUT TO
INT. STOCKROOM-NIGHT.

MALL OWNER breaks down the door to find the stockroom empty except for a few scattered items. She steps over the downed MALL COPS and picks up the snowglobe. The MALL OWNER TEAM follows behind her.

MALL OWNER
They'll pay for this.

MALL OWNER smashes the snowglobe under her heel.

CHRIS
We did it!

NICK
I can't believe we did it.

CHRIS
That moment when I thought you betrayed us? That was really great acting!

NICK
Haha... yeah, acting!

CHRIS
And when Frankie blew through the ceiling? So badass! This is going to work, we're really doing it!

Chris stops, seeing a flyer attached to a street sign. Chris rips it off.

CHRIS
'Santa convention. The biggest bash extravaganza bonanza of the year. Featuring live music and a chance to meet the real life Santa Claus himself.' We should go!

NICK
I don't know... A bash, extravaganza AND bonanza? Sounds suspicious, right? Besides, we don't need the real santa for this, we've got so many fake santas already.

CHRIS
If the real Santa is there, we can show him what we've been up to! At the very least, we can recruit more people for the project.

NICK
I...yeah. Yeah, okay, let's go to it.

CUT TO
INT. MALL-DAY.

Crowds of people. Santas and elves and Christmas stuff galore.
There is a big sign that says MEET SANTA.

CHRIS, FRANKIE and NICK arrive.

CHRIS

This is it, I bet this is really him. Why would there be so much
mystery around it if it wasn't the real santa?

NICK

That's why you brought that binder?

CHRIS

It's full of our plans. I want to show him our progress. Even if
he decides he's going to deliver the presents himself this year
instead of us, maybe he could use our help.

NICK flips through the binder. It's full of goofy pictures and
stickers and stuff.

NICK

This is a scrapbook.

CHRIS

Tomato, tornado. He's going to love it.

They walk up to the front of the line. A cashier waits there,
admitting people.

CHRIS

We're here to see santa.

CASHIER

Sure! Where's your kid?

(silence.)

CASHIER

You have a kid, don't you?

CHRIS

We were hoping to meet Santa and ask some questions about his toy distribution process. So if you would please let us pass.

CASHIER

Toy distribution?

NICK

(whispering to the cashier) Please just play along.

CASHIER

Seriously? You're grown men, I'm not gonna sit here and do the Santa facade with you.

NICK

Uhhh... this one is a kid at heart. I mean look at him.

NICK motions to FRANKIE, who is kneeling on the floor, talking to an ant.

FRANKIE

(to the ant) She did what? Unbelievable. And you said you found a pile of crumbs where? No, I'm not going to steal it from you, I only wanted a little bite.

CASHIER

Nice try.(to Frankie) Hey, Frankie.

FRANKIE

Hey Bob. How's the kids?

CASHIER

Doin well. How's Linda? (he points to the ant.)

FRANKIE

The usual. Drama in the colony.

CASHIER

(to FRANKIE) If you two need anything you just let me know. (to NICK) Frankie helped me out big time. He loaned me his special

cologne, which is how I met my partner. And he paid part of my kids college tuition.

NICK

So that's where his half of the rent goes.

CASHIER

However, I can't let you in without a kid. For all I know you guys are weirdos.

CHRIS pulls NICK aside.

CHRIS

We can't rely on Frankie every time we need to get into a 'parents and kids only' area.

JOEY and RAMY walk by. NICK grabs the two by their shoulders.

NICK

There you two are, we were looking for you. (To cashier) Here's my kids.

JOEY

You're not my dad, you-

NICK passes her a 20 and she shuts her mouth. They walk past the cashier and into the Santa zone.

NICK

Ah, kids these days right? Come along... What's your name again?

RAMY

Who are you?

NICK

Seriously? You saw me the other day. You sat on my lap.

RAMY

No, I sat on SANTAS lap. *you're* a hobo.

He points to Chris, wearing the Santa hat. CHRIS puts the hat on NICK's head. RAMY gasps.

RAMY
Santa!

CHRIS
And what's your name, little girl?

JOEY
Joey.

Chris crouches down and looks her in the eye.

CHRIS
Hi Joey. I bet you're a 'Joey' to be around.

JOEY bites him, and doesn't let go.

CUT TO
INT. SANTA AREA. DAY.

CHRIS
Nick, what did he mean by "facade" earlier?

NICK
Uh, no idea.

JOEY
You made it in, yippee, can I go now?

NICK
(distractedly) Yeah, run along.

They approach BILL who sits on his santa chair.

CHRIS
Santa?

NICK
(groans) Chris, it's Bill from that stupid show.

BILL
It's not stupid. People love my show.

NICK
(to Chris) This guy is not Santa.

CHRIS
He might know something though. We came all the way here, may as well ask.

NICK glances around and can see that there's recording equipment and cameras. He gets nervous.

NICK
I don't know that we should be asking about this stuff on live TV--

CHRIS
(to Bill) Can we ask you a few questions?

BILL
Who's asking?

NICK
We have no credentials to speak of. We just want to ask you a few things.

BILL
Make it quick, my break ends in ten minutes.

CUT TO
INT. INTERROGATION CLOSET-DAY.

They stand in a closet, a makeshift interrogation table made of cardboard boxes separating CHRIS AND NICK from BILL.

NICK
Let's do a good santa, bad santa type deal.

CHRIS

(scoffing) there's no such thing as a bad Santa, Nick.

They look at BILL, who is on the phone while clipping his toenails onto the table.

BILL

No, mom, I won't move out of the basement and I won't stop taking your pills. Oh, always bringing up your back pain. You're only using that to guilt me into paying rent, which I won't. For that, I won't let you give me a bedtime kiss tonight, or a story.

NICK

(Turning back to Chris) Look me in the eye and say that again.

CHRIS

Fine. Let's do this.

CUT TO

INT. THE INTERROGATION ROOM- DAY.

NICK slams his hands on the table. CHRIS copies him, also slamming his hand on the table.

NICK

Hey. We've got some questions for you.

CHRIS

Yeah, we've got some questions.

NICK pulls CHRIS aside.

NICK

(quietly) Why are you being bad cop? I'm the bad cop.

CHRIS

Cops? I thought we were Santas.

NICK

I- you're supposed to be the nice one.

CHRIS

Why does one of us have to be the bad one anyway? Let's both be nice.

CHRIS slams his hands on the table.

CHRIS

Are you, or have you seen, this man? (CHRIS holds out the santa missing poster.)

BILL

Are you serious?

CHRIS

No, I'm Chris. And this (he points to the image on the poster) is the real Santa, and we really need to find him and talk to him about our concerns with the Christmas present distribution this year. He hadn't been giving out presents, and he hasn't answered any of my letters. So we're wondering if you have any information on his whereabouts.

BILL laughs. Seeing the look on CHRIS' face, he slowly stops laughing.

BILL

You're serious. Wow. (he rubs his forehead.) I hate to be the one to break it to you, but there's something you need to know about the 'real' santa.

NICK

(nervously) Don't try to sidetrack this, just tell us what we need to know.

CHRIS

If you tell us, we won't tell the real santa about your... y'know.

BILL

My what?

NICK

Drug habit.

BILL

(mockingly) You're blackmailing me? Not to the police or my publicist, or the runners of my show, but to- to Santa Claus?

CHRIS

Yes. I'm sorry to do it but we need information. Also, don't try that thing where you spit in my face, because I have lightning fast reflexes.

BILL throws a paper ball at CHRIS, hitting him directly in the face. CHRIS ducks after the fact.

BILL stands to leave, and CHRIS blocks the door. BILL's amused expression turns to anger.

BILL

Fine. I'll tell you what you need to know, because apparently no one else has. But I want to get this on video because this will make great TV.

He calls the cameraman into the room.

Bill

So here it is. Viewers, here we got a man with great Christmas spirit who wants to talk to quote unquote the real Santa. I've got a little something I want to share with him!

NICK

Don't--

CHRIS

Lay it on me.

BILL

No one can live in the north pole. There's no postal service there, or anything, it's straight up ice.

NICK

Don't listen to him Chris.

CHRIS

But he's magic! He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake, he knows everything. He doesn't need the postal service.

MAN

If he can really see you all the time, wouldn't he know you're looking for him?

NICK

Chris, let's just leave.

MAN

...So why hasn't he contacted you? Why would the all knowing Santa (BILL steps close, invading CHRIS' personal space) not call you?

CHRIS

Because he... he's busy.

MAN

Too busy to give out any presents, his only job all year? What is he busy doing?

CHRIS

Hes...

CUT TO

FLASHBACK

INT. CHRIS CHILDHOOD HOME-NIGHT

baby chris looks out at the shoes from the stairs and then goes back to bed. Pan up to reveal... It's not Santa at all, it's his mother.

PRESENT

CHRIS

You're saying...

BILL

That's right. Santa isn't real. Everybody knows that, my kids know that, even, and they're five. Viewers, call in now if you knew Santa wasn't real!

He looks at NICK.

NICK

Ah, hell, Chris-

CHRIS

Everybody knows?

He looks accusingly at NICK.

CHRIS

This whole time. So all of this was for nothing? My whole life-my job...

NICK

Let me explain-

CHRIS

I don't care. You let me pay you to help me, and you knew all along...

NICK

You would have been devastated if you found out, we were being nice by not telling you.

CHRIS

It wasn't nice. You're... you're not nice, Nick. I have to go.

He storms out.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET- NIGHT.

CHRIS walks through the town, devastated. It begins to rain.
JOEY and RAMY approaches.

JOEY

Aren't you that guy I bit?

CHRIS
The very same.

JOEY
What's the matter? Did I give you rabies or something?

CHRIS
No.

JOEY
(nodding sagely)
Ah. Hepatitis.

CHRIS
It's not about the bite. I found out some bad news.

JOEY
You wanna sit down?

CHRIS sits, and a fart noise sounds. JOEY laughs and pulls a whoopie cushion from beneath him.

JOEY
Sorry. I know I shouldn't do that crap because I'll get on the naughty list.

RAMY
You're already on it.

JOEY
If I'm already on it, I can do whatever I want.

CHRIS
There is no naughty list. Santa isn't real.

RAMY
Yes he is. He works for our mother.

JOEY

Yeah, we know him. He gave me this.

The KID pulls out the wad of candy NICK gave her.

JOEY sniffs CHRIS, looking suspicious.

CHRIS
Why'd you do that?

KID
Oh, just checking if you're secretly Santa. His elf smells
really good.

CHRIS
(muttering) Yeah, it's his cologne.

JOEY
So you are the real Santa!

CHRIS
I'm telling you, he's not real. I'm not santa.

JOEY
The other Santa said so too. Is that some kind of inside joke?

CHRIS
Are you youngsters supposed to be out right now? It's pretty
late.

JOEY
(scoffs) I sneaked out.

RAMY
And I followed her trail.

JOEY
To snitch on me.

RAMY
I'm not snitching. I'm circling back and reporting
interdepartmental conflict to the department head.

JOEY

You sound just like Mom.

CHRIS

Sneaking out? I bet your parents aren't too happy about that.

JOEY

My mom's never happy.

JOEY swings her legs.

JOEY

Is the other Santa actually gonna give me what I asked for or is he scamming me? Be honest, I won't tell. This will be between you, me, and anyone else in the world who happens to ask.

CHRIS

Why would I know?

JOEY

Because you see people when they're sleeping and know when they're awake?

CHRIS

I'm. not. Santa!

JOEY

Then who are you?

CHRIS

I'm. .. a washed up old man who works a seasonal job at a mall for a couple months a year.

Joey and Ramy stare.

CHRIS

Don't you get it? I dress up in a costume. That's it. I don't grant wishes or give out presents. I'm a regular man. I can't do anything for you.

(beat.)

CHRIS

I always thought if I believed hard enough... but I guess some dreams can come true no matter how much you want them.

JOEY

(in a tone that suggests she knows the feeling) Yeah.

MALL OWNER leans out her doorway.

MALL OWNER

Joey, Ramy, get your butts in here, you were supposed to be in bed a half hour ago!

JOEY

(frantic) Look, Santa- I mean, not Santa, whoever you are- can you loan me some quarters? I have a Christmas pageant and I need a costume.

CHRIS

Who are you playing?

JOEY

The devil.

CHRIS

Tell her I'm sorry I've been missing so much work.

CHRIS forks over some quarters. JOEY runs inside. Chris contemplates.

CUT TO

INT. NICKS APARTMENT-EARLY MORNING

Nick sits on the couch, and FRANKIE stands. They are both somber.

(beat.)

FRANKIE

I really shouldn't have let you lie to him like that.

NICK

Me? You lied too.

FRANKIE

Because you told me to.

NICK

You don't have to do what I tell you.

FRANKIE

(laughs) It seems like that's how it always is. It's always about you. "Make me a sandwich, Frankie." "Carry my bag, Frankie." "Let's lie to our new friend whos the only person to willingly spend time with us since high school, Frankie!" The only time you listened to me was when I said we should blow through the ceiling ,and that was only after your dumb plan had already failed!

NICK

Cmon. We're- we're best friends, that's how it is.

FRANKIE

Are we? You barely even acknowledge our friendship to other people, and you constantly crap on my hobbies and my music career when all you ever do is watch television and eat too much cheese and get heartburn. You said it yourself plenty of times, you don't care about anything. You better find someone else to care about you. because I'm done with it. I'm leaving.

FRANKIE gathers his things and leaves. He then comes back through the door and takes his orangutan as well. He comes back a third time with a hammer and starts hammering the wall.

NICK

What are you doing?!

FRANKIE

This is my half of the apartment, I'm taking it with me!

FRANKIE removes a section of drywall.

NICK

You don't even pay rent half the time!

FRANKIE

Well... you don't pay friendship rent!

NICK

That doesn't even make- (sighs and cuts himself off.) You know if you hit too hard the nest of rats will get agitated and they'll bite you.

FRANKIE

The landlord didn't deal with that? I sent him a letter about it, strapped to a pigeon and everything!

NICK

No, he didn't fix it.

FRANKIE drops the hammer.

(Beat.)

FRANKIE

This is harder than I thought.

NICK

Then don't-

FRANKIE

I'll be back for the rest of my half tomorrow.

Frankie leaves again, slamming the door. NICK chases after him, but he is gone.

Montage of everyone going about their lives dejectedly. Chris calls the Santa meeting depressed and no longer interested in the project, and goes back to work at the mall. Joey buys a wizard costume. Nick sits around on the couch looking depressed.

CUT TO
EXT. SCHOOL- DAY

Rudy and Nick sit by the school bus. Rudy is doing decals on the bus. They look awful.

Rudy
Does this look good?

NICK
It's eyes are, uh...

Zoom in on the eyes, which look horrifying.

NICK
Unforgettable.

RUDY
(sigh.) Where's your entourage?

NICK
Gone. I drove them off.

RUDY
Sorry to hear it.

NICK
This always happens. My ex wife left, my other ex wife left...
Even my hamster ran away from me.

RUDY
Why d'you think that is?

NICK
I don't know, I guess I left his cage open.

RUDY
I meant why do you make people leave you. It seems almost deliberate, like you're trying to get them to hate you.

NICK

Better sooner than later.

RUDY

I think you're afraid to get attached to a good thing because it
might leave.

NICK

You say it like I'm wrong.

RUDY

You're the most jaded old coot I know. You don't really believe
they're gone for good, do you?

NICK

I don't know what I believe.

(beat.)

RUDY

Sometimes you have to believe in people.

NICK

How can I believe something when all the evidence is against it?

RUDY

You gotta just jump into the fire, sometimes.

NICK

If there's one thing I don't want to do, it's-

Vivian walks out of the building and Rudy ducks behind the bus.

NICK

What?

RUDY

That's her! The teacher lady!

NICK

Go say hello or something, don't hide back there like a creep!
You were just now lecturing me on taking a leap of faith, and...
honesty or something. To be honest I wasn't listening very
closely.

Nick pushes him out into the open, and he waves at Vivian
awkwardly.

NICK
I'll leave you two to it. I have to see a man about a kazoo.

CUT TO
EXT. NICKS APARTMENT BUILDING- DAY.

NICK stands outside Frankies window with a boombox, and presses
play. It plays Frankies kazoo songs. Frankie opens the window.

FRANKIE
Nice kazoosic.

NICK
Someone told me it was going to come back any day now.

(beat.)

FRANKIE
(Sigh.) What are you doing, Nick?

NICK
I wanted a chance to apologize.

FRANKIE
Is this gonna be like that time you clogged the toilet and
pretended it wasn't you, and convinced me it was a man who was
living in our walls who only came out to use the toilet, and in
the end you only admitted you did it because I was gonna call an
exterminator to come kill the guy?

NICK
I apologized for that too!

FRANKIE

First of all, no you didn't. Secondly, if you had used the plunger in the first place you wouldn't have to apologize! And then you did it again the next month and I believed you again!

Why did I fall for that seven times? Why won't you use the plunger, man? That's what it's for!

NICK

because you use it as the mic holder for karaoke night! I've told you a million times it can't be both! Look, that's not the point-what I mean is, I know I treated you like crap.

FRANKIE

worse than crap, cuz you flushed me!

NICK

It'll be different this time. I've been feeding George, and I even read the backs of some of those dr bronner bottles you like. Interesting stuff.

FRANKIE

Isn't it?

NICK

A lot of the weird dorky stuff you're into is neat, when I think about it. And you have better ideas than me, a lot of the time. You were amazing during the toy store heist.

FRANKIE

Aaaaand I was right all along about the situation with Chris.

NICK

You were.

FRANKIE

Aaaaaannndddd I can keep the orangutan. Forever.

(beat.)

NICK

(strained) yes.

The kazoo music continues to play.

FRANKIE

You're making a fool of yourself on the street like that.

NICK

I don't care. I want to be your best friend, Frankie, I don't care who knows it, just gimme another chance-

FRANKIE slams the window.

(beat.)

Frankie runs out the first floor door.

FRANKIE

I forgive you. For the lying, not for the flushing. Now we just need to get Chris back and complete our circle of friendship, and we can start a band!

NICK

I don't think Chris is coming back.

FRANKIE

Eh, he'll come around. Hey, me and George were about to take the garbage to the dump, want to come?

NICK

Wasn't our landlord supposed to put out a dumpster so we wouldn't have to do that anymore?

FRANKIE

You know the landlord isn't going to do it. I'm starting to think we don't even have a landlord, and maybe I hallucinated all those emails I sent him, because he never responds.

NICK

Yeah, but it's his job, we really should take him to court or something.

FRANKIE

I'll put that on the calendar for next weekend.

Frankie gets up and throws a dart at a photo of LANDLORD on the wall.

FRANK

(To the photo) Count your days, Lenny. God may spare landlords, but my wrath will not miss. (To Nick) But, you know, we still have all this trash stinking up the place that needs dealing with. If the landlord won't do it, somebodys gotta do it.

Frankie starts hauling bags of trash outside. He is wearing a red hat and coat, and looks very santa-ish as he carries the sack over his back. NICK gets an idea.

NICK

Yeah. Somebodys still gotta do it.

CUT TO

INT. MALL OWNERS OFFICE- DAY.

MALL OWNER

I'm glad you're back, Chris. Hasn't been the same without you.

CHRIS

(Sadly) Yeah... It's not quite the same, is it.

She leaves.

A knock sounds on the door.

CHRIS opens it, and NICK stands there.

CHRIS

I'm still not talking to you.

NICK

Chris, come on.

FRANKIE

Hey Chris.

CHRIS

Hey Frankie. I'm not talking to Nick, so tell him to leave.

FRANKIE

Nick, Chris says to tell you-

NICK

(To frankie) I can hear him talking. (to chris) I know you're still upset, and Santa's still not real, what if we make him real?

CHRIS

What?

NICK

Even if we can't find Santa because he's "fake," and I didnt tell you that because I'm a "liar", with a "crippling inability to express genuine emotions," and "IBS," I think we should still do project Santa. Why does Santa need to be real for this to work? We can do it ourselves.

NICK hands CHRIS a brochure for project santa. It is incredibly tacky and poorly made.

CHRIS

(To Frankie) Tell Nick no way.

NICK

What! Why?!

CHRIS

Tell Nick he wouldnt understand how it feels to realize that everything you thought you knew was a lie.

NICK

It's not all a lie.

CHRIS

I thought Santa was real, and there was some kind of force of goodness in the world. I thought I had friends. But it turns out there's nothing, and it was all a genius plan buy a master manipulator to emotionally destroy me and milk me for money.

NICK

(flattered/earnest) You think I'm a genius at planning?

CHRIS

It- doesn't matter. You shouldn't have come here.

CHRIS goes to shut the door.

NICK

Wait.

CHRIS turns.

NICK

I know you dont forgive me. I respect that. But I'm gonna help out with your dumb Santa thing anyway, whether you're there or not.

CHRIS

(not buying it) Why? You won't get paid. We have no money, you know that.

NICK

I don't care.

CHRIS

And you were right, it's pretty likely we wouldn't even be able to pull it off.

NICK

I know. We could barely pull off a brochure, it's super tacky.

CHRIS

So why?

(beat.)

NICK

Maybe I want to do something good, for once... Something that's not all about me. And I want us to do it together, whether the real Santa is with us or not, because I think we could really do it. I don't believe in Santa, but I believe in you. And it makes me puke in my mouth a little to say this, but I believe in the power of friendship.

(beat.)

NICK

I was stupid to lie to you. I shouldn't have used you for money. You're my friend.

CHRIS

...I was stupid to think there was really a man with a magic sleigh who delivers gifts.

FRANKIE

And I was stupid...

(beat.)

They wait for him to elaborate. He does not. CHRIS looks at the top of the doorframe.

CHRIS

Mistletoe.

FRANKIE

You know what that means.

They do a complex secret handshake under the mistletoe and with that they are again best friends.

CHRIS

So operation santa is back on. We have the toys, now we need transportation. Neither of you have a car, do you?

NICK
I might know a guy.

CUT TO
EXT.SCHOOL PARKING LOT-DAY

RUDY is putting decals on his bus. NICK stands behind him.

RUDY
I dunno, Nick, it's a big ask. I could get in real trouble for this.

NICK
AHh, we're good friends, right, uh...

RUDY
Rudy.

NICK
What do you want me to do, man? I'll do anything.

RUDY
Anything?

CUT TO
INT. RUDYS HOUSE- DAY.

RUDY
Vivian's coming in an hour. I told her it would be a casual dinner with me and my friend, and I need you to make a good impression for me.

NICK
Like a wingman? Sure.

RUDY
And I need you to make dinner. I got some steaks.

NICK
Sure.

NICK stands away from the grill, looking at it like it's going to bite him.

RUDY
You can't grill from back there.

NICK stares at the fire.

NICK
Uh, I'm good where I am.

RUDY
You scared of fire?

NICK
No! I'm appropriately cautious!

RUDY
Sounds like claustopyrophobia.

NICK
What?

RUDY
The fear of Santa catching on fire. (he laughs.)

NICK
Knock it off, I'm doing you a favor.

RUDY
And I'm doing you a favor. (He jingles the keys.)

RUDY leaves, and NICK stares at the oven.

NICK
I can do it. It's just fire.

CUT TO
EXT. RUDYS HOUSE- EVENING

RUDY sits at a table outside. NICK places a plate of uncooked steak on it.

NICK

Don't look at me like that. It's rare. You never had rare steak?

RUDY

I hate you.

The doorbell rings.

RUDY

Oh, she's here. Okay, put the steaks out, pull up some chairs, and whatever you do, don't be yourself.

CUT TO

INT. MALL HQ-DAY

MALL OWNER

A high back swivel chair sits at the head of a conference table. Many MALL OWNERS are seated around the table. The chair swivels, and MALL OWNER is revealed, sitting cross legged and taking the first bite of a crisp green apple. GARBAGE MAN stands in the corner.

MALL OWNER

Welcome, mall stakeholders. You're probably wondering why I've gathered you here today.

MALL STAKEHOLDER 1

I don't, is it the quarterly meeting? because I could have sworn that we already had that last month.

MALL STAKEHOLDER 2

I thought this was a meeting to create an elite task force to take the Mall Santa hooligans down proactively, before they can ruin our pre-Christmas profit margin?

There is a long silence.

MALL STAKEHOLDER 2

What? It was in the email.

MALL STAKEHOLDER 2 turns her laptop. The screen is an email inbox, and the tagline reads "Meeting at 2:30 to discuss creating a task force to take down the Mall Santa Hooligans proactively before they ruin the pre-Christmas profit margin"

MALL OWNER

Yes, that is what the meeting is about. (She takes the first bite of a red apple.) The santas are up to something heinous.

MALL STAKEHOLDER 3

(gasp) Unionizing?!

MALL OWNER

Nothing that bad...yet. At the very least, they have committed crimes against the mall, and they need to be taken out.

MALL STAKEHOLDER 2

Surely you can't mean...

MALL OWNER

(chuckles darkly) Oh yes.

MALL STAKEHOLDER 2

Kill them?

MALL OWNER

No! God, what's gotten into you? Fire them. (she takes the first bite of a dark red apple.) Fire them all. But first, we must thwart their Christmas schemes.

GARBAGE MAN

Hey, do you mind finishing one apple before you start the next one? It's only that the bag gets really heavy. You know children are starving in North America.

PAN TO a trash can overflowing with piles of apples in a trashcan, each with a single bite taken from them.

MALL OWNER

Can you circle back to whatever you were doing prior to this?

GARBAGE MAN

What?

MALL OWNER

I need you to vacate so our team can proactively brainstorm and get our ducks in a row.

GARBAGE MAN

I don't understand.

MALL OWNER 2

She's telling you to leave.

GARBAGE MAN

Ohhh. Gotcha.

GARBAGE MAN hauls the apple bag from the room with great effort.

MALL OWNER

Now. How do we stop the Santas from delivering free presents to poor, innocent consumers?

MALL STAKEHOLDER 2

Maybe it's time to give up. The toys they stole were insured, and they're only going to give out presents, it's not a big deal.

MALL OWNER

No! Christmas Eve is tonight, we can't let them get away with this!

MALL STAKEHOLDER 3

I don't know, Sheila, this is getting out of hand.

MALL OWNER

No... no!

The MALL STAKEHOLDERS get up and start walking away. Only 3 are left. RAMY runs into the room holding Chris' scrapbook.

MALL OWNER
Not now-

RAMY
Mr. Santa left this here when he left.

RAMY hands MALL OWNER the scrapbook. She flips through it. It details their plans to use the buses to deliver gifts.

MALL OWNER
Well well well.

CUT TO
INT. RUDYS HOUSE- NIGHT.

Vivian, Nick and Rudy sit awkwardly around the table.

VIVIAN
So how do you two know each other?

NICK
We met at a bar. I had just gotten fired and he was complaining about-

Rudy kicks him under the table.

NICK
-how much I lie about meeting people. Actually, I've known him since we were kids, and he's the best guy I know.

Vivian
Really?

Absolutely. He makes the rest of us look great in comparison.

Rudy kicked him under the table.

I mean, he... lights up the room when he smiles that big, yellow smile.

Kicked under the table again.

I mean- he's a great cook?

Vivian

Oh... he cooked this? (she stares at the steaks in polite, poorly disguised disgust.)

NICK

No, he made me do it. In exchange for favors, if you know what I mean.

Vivian

Ah.

(beat.)

NICK

No, I meant favor like-

Vivian

You know what, I think I better leave you two to your-

He looks off into the distance out the window. MALL OWNER stands outside with the keys to all the buses in hand. She gets in her car and starts driving away.

NICK

Do you have a bus here?

RUDY

One out back, but it's a beater.

NICK

Great.

He runs outside and they watch through the window and he comes back around driving the bus, crashing through the fence. Rudy runs outside. Nick hits Rudy with the bus and peels out.

RUDY

You are the worst wingman ever!

Vivian

.....I think I'd better go.

RUDY

Understandable.

CUT TO

EXT. ROAD. EVENING.

They are in a car chase. The bus Nick is driving sucks, it won't brake and keeps making unidentified beeping and dinging sounds.

It also has no shocks. Nick finally catches up and drives up next to her and attempts to take the keys, but fails. Then he stops the bus in front of her, forcing her to get out of the car and run for it, but he catches up and takes the key ring.

NICK

Geez. You don't give up, do you?

As he walks away, MALL OWNER smiles to herself and takes a key from her pocket that she had hidden. It is labeled KEY TO THE SCHOOL. She gets back in the car and drives away.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHOOL. EVENING.

Ramy and Joey stand around outside in their backpacks after school. MALL OWNER drives up and parks.

MALL OWNER

I have tickets to your little school play-

JOEY

You did?! Thank you mom, I-

MALL OWNER

-so that I won't look suspicious for being here at night time. They managed to get the bus key back from me, but I have a plan. Joey, you need to lure them inside and steal the keys off them.

I'll use this key to lock them in the building so they can't escape under any circumstances, and then we simply dispose of the keys to the buses so that they can't deliver the presents.

Ramy, you'll be in charge of slashing tires, unless you need naptime in which case I'll call your dad to take you home.

Understood?

RAMY

Yes, boss.

MALL OWNER

Joey?

JOEY

So I won't have time to be in the pageant at all?

MALL OWNER

No, I don't think so. This is important. Can I trust you to steal those bus keys?

JOEY

...Got it.

MALL OWNER

I'm so proud of you. My little business babies.

MALL OWNER hugs them, and Joey steals the door key off her belt as she does so.

CUT TO

EXT. BUS LOT. NIGHT.

The Santas are packing toys into the backs of buses. Joey is there.

NICK

What are you doing here? Schools over.

JOEY

Everyones staying late for the Christmas pageant. Are you guys going to it?

NICK

I don't know, we got a lot of stuff to do back here. He jangles the keys and Joey eyes them closely.

JOEY

Please, would you come? For a minute?

NICK

...maybe for a minute.

CUT TO

INT. AUDITORIUM. NIGHT.

NICK

I thought you said this was a Christmas pageant.

JOEY

It is.

NICK

Why are you dressed as a wizard?

JOEY

I told them it was a wise man costume. I'm supposed to sing 'We Three Kings.'

Joey steals the bus keys.

The curtains open. TEACHER walks onto the stage.

TEACHER

Welcome to our annual Christmas pageant, parents and students.

JOEY

It's starting.

NICK

You're looking a little nervous.

JOEY

Me? No way.

(beat.)

JOEY

Do you think I'll be good, though? I never been onstage before.

FRANKIE

I have a special cologne that smells amazing, and it makes everyone love me.

JOEY

Okay?

FRANKIE

But the truth is... I don't wear cologne. I just tell people I do, and I tell them it's the best cologne they've ever smelled. They believe in it, so it's real to them.

JOEY

What's that got to do with me?

FRANKIE

I think if you believe you can do it, other people will believe it too.

FRANKIE pulls out a little cologne bottle.

FRANKIE

Have a spritz.

JOEY holds out her arm, and he gives her a spritz of the cologne. She subtly puts the bus keys back on Frankies belt, as well as the door key. She whispers something in his ear and points to the door.

FRANKIE
Get out there!

NICK
Break a leg!

JOEY puts on a wizard hat and runs onto the stage. NICK and
FRANKIE stay backstage.

(beat.)

NICK
I know you smell like cologne, it stinks up the whole apartment.
That was all bullshit, wasn't it?

FRANKIE
Not if you believe it wasn't. Cmon, we got things to do.

CUT TO
INT. STAGE. NIGHT.

The instrumental opening for 'We Three Kings' plays, but Joey
does not begin singing. Instead, she takes off her wizard hat.

JOEY
Hello everyone and welcome to the Joey Wizard show. For my first
trick, I will pull a rabbit out of a hat.

In the audience, MALL OWNER glares at her.

JOEY
And now, I need a volunteer from the audience. My mom is here
tonight- would you come to the stage?

MALL OWNER hesitantly walks to the stage.

MALL OWNER
What are you doing?

JOEY (to audience)
I will now cut this lady in half!

CUT TO
EXT. BUS PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

Rudy is backing up one of the buses to try and pack toys into it. There is a thwack sound and he sees that he has hit someone. He quickly gets out and runs to see if they are okay. It is Vivian.

RUDY
Are you okay?

Vivian
Yes, yes, I'm fine, you barely hit me.

RUDY
I'm so sorry. For hitting you with the bus. And for earlier tonight; my friend was trying to do me a favor but he's terrible at doing favors and I should have taken that into account.

VIVIAN
It's okay, it's not the worst date I've been on.

RUDY
What are you doing out here, anyway? The pageant is inside.

VIVIAN
I was admiring these bus decals. I'm an art teacher, so this kind of thing appeals to me.

RUDY
Oh. You, uh, like them?

VIVIAN
I think they're genius.

RUDY
They're mine.

VIVIAN
You designed these?

RUDY

Yes. They're not much to look at, but...

VIVIAN

I like the one with the reindeer.

Pan to the reindeer. The reindeers eyes look horrible. Like no one on earth would ever think they looked good.

RUDY

I always thought reindeers were kind of incredible creatures... the way they have hoofs on their feet, sort of like- well, its going to sound stupid but-

VIVIAN

Like built in shoes?

RUDY

...Yes! Exactly! I wish people had built in shoes.

VIVIAN

I love that idea. And I love the expressiveness. It's eyes are sort of... sad, and lonely and...

They look at each other.

RUDY and VIVIAN

Beautiful.

They look into each other's eyes and link hands.

CUT TO

INT. AUDITORIUM. NIGHT.

Joey finally releases MALL OWNER.

MALL OWNER

We will discuss this when we get home. Now, I have to go lock the buses. Where are the bus keys?

JOEY

I lost them. (to audience) For my next trick...

TEACHER

(from the wings) Joey, get off the stage.

JOEY

I'm not done with my magic show. If you check the doors, you will find them locked by my magical assistant. Now, let's continue.

MALL OWNER

Fine, I can't lock the buses, but I can still slash their tires. You are in a lot of trouble young lady.

Mall owner goes to the door but finds it locked. Mall owner reaches for her keys, but she can't find them. MALL OWNER bangs on the doors furiously.

CUT TO

EXT. BUS YARD- NIGHT.

We see that the key is on Frankies hip with the bus keys.

CHRIS

If we time it right, with these buses, we can deliver presents to every kid in the tri-state area.

NICK

Great. I gotta go inside for a second to pee and then I'm ready to go.

CHRIS

I have to pee too.

CHRIS and NICK go inside down the hallway. MALL OWNER goes down the same hallway, trying different doors to try and get out of the school.

They spot each other at the same time and she takes off running, going out the doors into the crowd of Santa's outside.

NICK
Is that...?

They run after her but lose her in the crowd.

CHRIS
Have you seen a lady run by here?

NICK
Looks kinda like this (He mimes sculpting a face with his hands.)

SANTA 1
Oh, yeah. She went that way.

CHRIS approaches a woman from behind, and puts a hand on her shoulder. She turns, and she has a beard. It's just another Santa. CHRIS pushes past. Finally they catch up to her and restrain her.

MALL OWNER
If you all do this, I'll contact all your bosses and you'll be fired! You'll never work as a mall santa again! But if you join me, I'll make you richer than you could ever imagine.

SANTA
How rich?

MALL OWNER
Slightly above minimum wage.

(beat)

FRANKIE
Get her!

THE SANTAS descend upon the MALL OWNER.

NICK
Okay, I still have to pee.

CHRIS

(checking watch) Let's go, but we have to make it quick.

CUT TO

INT. BUS. NIGHT.

FRANKIE, NICK and CHRIS run outside to where RUDY stands in the empty parking lot.

CHRIS

What happened? Where's everybody?

RUDY

You're late, everyone's already gone to deliver presents. The buses are all gone, except one. We weren't gonna send it out yet because some kids are going home on it right now, but-

CHRIS

We can drop them off for you. Which bus is it?

Rudy nods to something behind CHRIS, and CHRIS and NICK turn simultaneously. The beat up bus that he wrecked earlier sits in the corner of the lot.

NICK

No. No way. That bus is cursed.

CHRIS

It's the only bus left.

NICK

I'm saying no, and that's final.

CUT TO

INT. BUS. NIGHT.

THE SCHOOLCHILDREN sit in the back of the van.

NICK

Okay, everyone comfy?

CHILD
I'm not.

NICK
Save it for your parents. Any questions?

CHILD 2
I want to go home.

NICK
Not a question.

CHILD 3
If you're Santa, why aren't you fat?

NICK
Cigarettes and Keto diet. Next.

CHILD 4
Where's your reindeer?

NICK
Uhh... they went to a nice farm upstate.

CHILD 6
Do you actually fit in the chimney?

NICK
No, we were planning on using the doors. Speaking of which, how many of you can pick locks?

The CHILDREN'S hands all go up.

NICK
We're really doing this. Hey, Chris, Frankie, in the likely chance that we die tonight, or get put in a prison tomorrow, I have to say you guys are my best friends in the whole world.

CHRIS
The old ball and chain.

FRANKIE

I call dibs on the chain, you guys can be balls if you want.

NICK

Wait a second. If I'm the ball and you're the chain... Who's driving the bus?

The three of them look to the driver's seat, where CHILD 1 is driving.

NICK

Who let the infant take the wheel?

CHRIS

Oh, you're asking us? You the one who-

FRANKIE

So you two are gonna have an argument and not include me?

CHILD 1

Don't make me turn this car around! Because I don't know how and I also can't reach the brakes!

FRANKIE looks at a map.

FRANKIE

Stop here, it's the pedal on the right- no, your other right!
This is the first house on our list.

CUT TO

EXT. HOUSE-NIGHT.

Several DOGS bark at the fence, looking vicious.

CHRIS

Easy, guys, easy. I'd appreciate it if you would stay back-

A dog bites him on the butt.

CHRIS

-Understandable.

CHRIS runs around the side of the house, digging through his bag. He finds the tupperware of culinary delight and the dogs perk up. He throws it to them and they start eating it.

CUT TO
EXT. BILLS HOUSE. NIGHT.

Nick opens the door and goes inside.

BILL
You're that creep from the other day!

NICK
I have a present for your kid.

BILLS KID
I don't take stuff from strangers-

NICK
Not even a limited edition 2003 RoboPower play set?

BILLS KID
-except for that.

BILLS KID snatches it.

BILL
Hey, dont-

NICK
I got something for you too, Bill. I think it's gonna blow your mind and change the future of radio.

Nick hands Bill the kazoo mixtape.

NICK
Give it a shot. You'll love it.

CUT TO

INT. LANDLORDS HOUSE. NIGHT

LANDLORD is sleeping in bed. There is a knock on the door and he sleepily shuffles to get it. It swings open and FRANKIE stands there.

FRANKIE
Lenny?

LANDLORD
Who's asking?

FRANKIE
Do you manage the property at West Elm street?

LANDLORD
Uhhh, which one?

FRANKIE
The one across from the gas station, by the corner where they used to sell bagels but then it turned out the bagels contained asbestos?

LANDLORD
Yes, I... I do manage that property.

FRANKIE
Ah, good, just the man I wanted to see.

Frankie starts beating him up.

LENNY
Why are you doing this? What do you want? Money?!

FRANKIE (between punches)
Why won't you fix my refrigerator?! Why, Lenny?

LANDLORD
I'll fix it, I'll fix it!

Frankie takes the sharpened candy cane out of his mouth and moves forward menacingly.

CUT TO
EXT. ROOFTOP. NIGHT.

CHRIS is preparing to go down the chimney. Then MALL OWNER shows up.

CHRIS
Sheila. Didn't think you'd catch up so quickly.

MALL OWNER
Chris. Didn't think you'd deliver toys to my house.

CHRIS
We're delivering to everyone's house, dummy. If you're here to stop me, you won't succeed. I- I don't understand why you're doing this, I mean, it's Christmas. That doesn't mean anything to you?

MALL OWNER
Christmas is our busiest time of the year for business. You're cutting my profit margins, and I can't let that go. It's not personal. Just business.

MALL OWNER kicks Chris' bag of toys over and picks up a pool noodle from it. CHRIS cautiously picks one up as well.

MALL OWNER
You will not deliver toys to my kids! If they get gifts for free, how are they supposed to understand the value of hard work?!

CHRIS
Your son said you got him a watch, socks, and a number 2 pencil last year, when he really wanted some toy cars.

MALL OWNER
He loved the watch!

MALL OWNER swings at him with a foam sword, hitting his pool noodle and making him drop it. CHRIS picks up a horse stick and parries. He places a kiddie pool and an inflator behind him and starts inflating the pool.

CHRIS

Kids don't care about watches. I'm not even sure they understand linear time at that age. And your daughter? All she wanted this Christmas was for you to watch her perform at her Christmas pageant. She was probably amazing, you know she's good at magic tricks?

MALL OWNER

(still outraged) She was amazing! I don't know where she even got that rabbit that she pulled from the hat!

CHRIS

Don't you want to go back to your kids christmas show instead of fighting me on your roof??

MALL OWNER

All I want is for my workers to come to work and make me money, but apparently that's too much to ask.

CHRIS

I think you want more than that. You want money to live a good life, and you want your kids to grow up and be successful... But you don't have to screw everyone else over in the process. Come on, join us. It's not too late.

MALL OWNER

...You would let me join you?

CHRIS

It's Christmastime. Of course I would.

CHRIS holds out a hand. MALL OWNER hesitates, and takes it.

(beat.)

She pushes him, and he falls to the edge of the roof, legs hanging off the side. Nick runs around the side of the house.

NICK

Oh, I thought I was taking this house. You got it handled?

CHRIS

(panicking) Does it look like I got it handled?!

NICK

No, not really. The door here is super sturdy by the way, I think we'll need to get in another way.

MALL OWNER stomps on his fingers.

CHRIS

Chimney!

He points to the chimney, which is smoking.

NICK

You know I can't, it's- I don't do fire.

CHRIS

Nick, you can do it.

MALL OWNER stomps his fingers again, he is losing his grip.

NICK makes his way onto the roof. Nick is staring at the chimney, trying to work up the nerve to jump into the lit fireplace.

CHRIS

I know you can do it!

NICK

It's on fire!

CHRIS

If you get burnt I'll drive you to the hospital! ...Unless I fall and my legs break, then someone will probably have to drive both of us!

NICK

Not exactly comforting!

CHRIS

It's not as bad as it looks, trust me!

(beat.)

NICK

Okay. I trust you.

NICK eyes the chimney nervously. He jumps, screaming, out of the fireplace into the living room.

NICK

Oh, mother-

RAMY sits under the tree, waiting for Santa.

NICK

-Mary.

CUT TO

EXT-ROOFTOP- NIGHT.

CHRIS

You don't have to do this.

MALL OWNER

Of course I have to. Come back to us, Chris. You were the best Santa our mall ever had, you made us so much money. We were family, remember? But you've betrayed our corporate family.

CHRIS grabs her legs and climbs back up on the roof. CHRIS hits MALL OWNER behind the knees, and she falls, only to kick his feet from under him.

CUT TO
INT. HOUSE-NIGHT.

NICK and Ramy stare at each other.

NICK
This isn't what it looks like.

Ramy
Looks like you broke in.

NICK
Maybe it's a little bit what it looks like.

Ramy
My mom says I'm not supposed to take a present from you. And I'm
supposed to call 911 and tell you 'go to hell.'

NICK
Uh huh. What's your name again?

Ramy
Ramy.

NICK flips through Chris' notebook full of names.

NICK
Yeah, I've got you down for some toy trucks, a sketchbook, and
some blocks.

Ramy
Y-yeah. How'd you know that?

NICK
I see you when you're sleeping and know when you're awake and
stuff. Don't think too hard about it.

NICK hands him a small parcel. Ramy begins unwrapping it.

DAD (O.S)
Ramy? Is somebody down there?

NICK

I better go. Turn around for a sec.

Ramy

Why?

NICK

I'm gonna do some serious magic stuff, and it might burn your eyes if you watch.

RAMY closes his eyes. NICK turns to climb back up the chimney. the seat of his pants is entirely burnt off, revealing underwear with little hearts on them.

CUT TO

THE ROOF WHERE CHRIS IS

NICK is on the roof with CHRIS and MALL OWNER. MALL OWNER stands.

MALL OWNER

We at the mall supported you for years, and this is what you do to thank us? What would Santa think? Did Nick finally spill the beans, and tell you he isn't real?

CHRIS

I know he's real.

CHRIS stands, brandishing the horse stick. It's his big moment.

CHRIS

Because he's me.

The kiddie pool has finished inflating and Chris throws it off the side of the roof. CHRIS charges at MALL OWNER and knocks her off, and she lands on the kiddie pool. Frankie has pulled up to the side of the house in the bus.

CHRIS

You okay down there?

MALL OWNER
Curse you!

NICK
Never understood why people say 'curse you' and don't say the actual curse. Commit to it! And by the way, I have something for you.

NICK pulls a box out of the santa bag and throws it into the kiddie pool. It is a magic kit.

NICK
That's for your daughter. And this one's for you.

Nick throws a piece of paper down. MALL OWNER reads it.

MALL OWNER
Approved time off? I don't take vacation time, I don't offer it to employees either.

NICK
Take a few days off. Also, you really should start giving your employees bathroom and lunch breaks because you could definitely get sued for that.

MALL OWNER
You're fired!

CHRIS
I quit.

FRANKIE (from the bus)
Me too!

MALL OWNER
(to Frankie) You don't even work for me!

FRANKIE
Yeah, that's what I just said.

CHRIS

You did it, you went down the chimney! That was so badass!

NICK

I was a badass? You were up there all manly doing your sword fight moves like some kind of warrior! And you were all, 'I am Santa'.

CHRIS

You were the Santa-est Santa ever! And Frankie, nice driving!

FRANKIE

Hey, what did you think the tattoo was for?

They return to the bus.

FRANKIE

We got everyone on our list. We're done for the night.

The midnight bell tolls.

CHRIS

Merry Christmas.

A light snow falls from overhead, and the stars are visible
above the city.

CUT TO:

A kazoo cover of oh christmas tree plays over a montage of news
broadcasts

We all woke up this morning with a little something special
under our tree.

BROADCASTER

Terrorists or merrymakers? A mysterious organization has broken
into peoples houses throughout the Continental United States-

Montage of children opening gifts. MALL OWNER opens a package to
find a new tie, and Joey opens hers to find a magic kit. She
hugs her mom.

BROADCASTER

-Spreading Christmas cheer anonymously. Those responsible have not come forward. Some claim to have seen these intruders.

CHILD 1

I saw him! It was Santa, I saw him!

LANDLORD

A guy dressed as an elf beat the living hell out of me.

CHILD 2

Yeah, they kidnapped us on a bus and made us pick a lot of locks on doors, but they gave me the video game I been wanting, so I'm not mad.

CHILD 3

Santa brought me a stuffed unicorn!

CHILD 4

A giant hourglass so I can learn about linear time!

CHILD 5

He got me this doll!

RAMY

Santa got me exactly what I wanted.

BROADCASTER

The question many of us are asking, where are they now? And what will they do next?

BROADCASTER

And now we return to the Bills Big Mouth show, where he has announced an all day special where he plays 100 never-before-heard kazoo singles.

PAN TO

EXT. OUTSIDE

NICK and CHRIS lie in the parking lot, still singed, disheveled
and bleeding from the night before.

(beat)

CHRIS

What now?

NICK

I'm gonna sleep for a few days. Start job hunting. Destroy my
diet. What's your plans?

CHRIS

(hesitant) Oh. Uh, I don't know.

NICK

Huh.

(beat.)

NICK

(hesitant) So, did you want to start planning for next year?

CHRIS

(suddenly enthusiastic) I have a lot of ideas. For one thing, we
need to think about getting more mileage, and I was thinking we
could-

They start walking and Chris's voice fades.

NICK (VO)

A lot of people will tell you Santa isn't real. And it's just
not true.

FRANKIE (VO)

There's no way one guy could deliver billions of presents
overnight. Not without help. We may not have elves, or reindeer,
or a flying sleigh. Because none of those things are real.

CHRIS

...I'm pretty sure reindeer are real.

FRANKIE

(to chris)

(condescendingly) Sure, buddy. We may not have that stuff, but we have people.

FRANKIE gives a presentation entitled "Breaking and Entering for beginners" to a group of young people in fake beards. A banner overhead reads WELCOME NEW SANTAS. The SANTAS move their santa pom pom from one side of the hat to the other, a parody of tassels at graduation.

NICK (VO)

Some people think our duty is to give out gifts, but that's not the half of what we do. Santa is all over the place.

CHRIS (V.O.)

A lot of people will tell you Santa isn't real. But I've seen him myself.

(Footage of people doing nice things for each other.)

CHRIS (V.O.)

I've seen him in the old guy who cooks at the restaurant that always gives me extra sour cream. I've seen him in the lady who pets the stray cats in the street. I've seen him in the kid who helped her sister put her jacket on so she wouldn't get too cold playing in the snow. Now that I'm looking, all I see is Santa.

CUT TO

INT. CHRIS HOUSE- NIGHT.

CHRIS is in his bedroom and turns off the light to go to sleep. There is a sound of footsteps in the other room. He turns the light back on and gets up to see what's going on.

No one is in his living room, but he notices a package under the tree, tied with a bow. CHRIS opens it. It's a snowglobe.

FADE TO BLACK.

