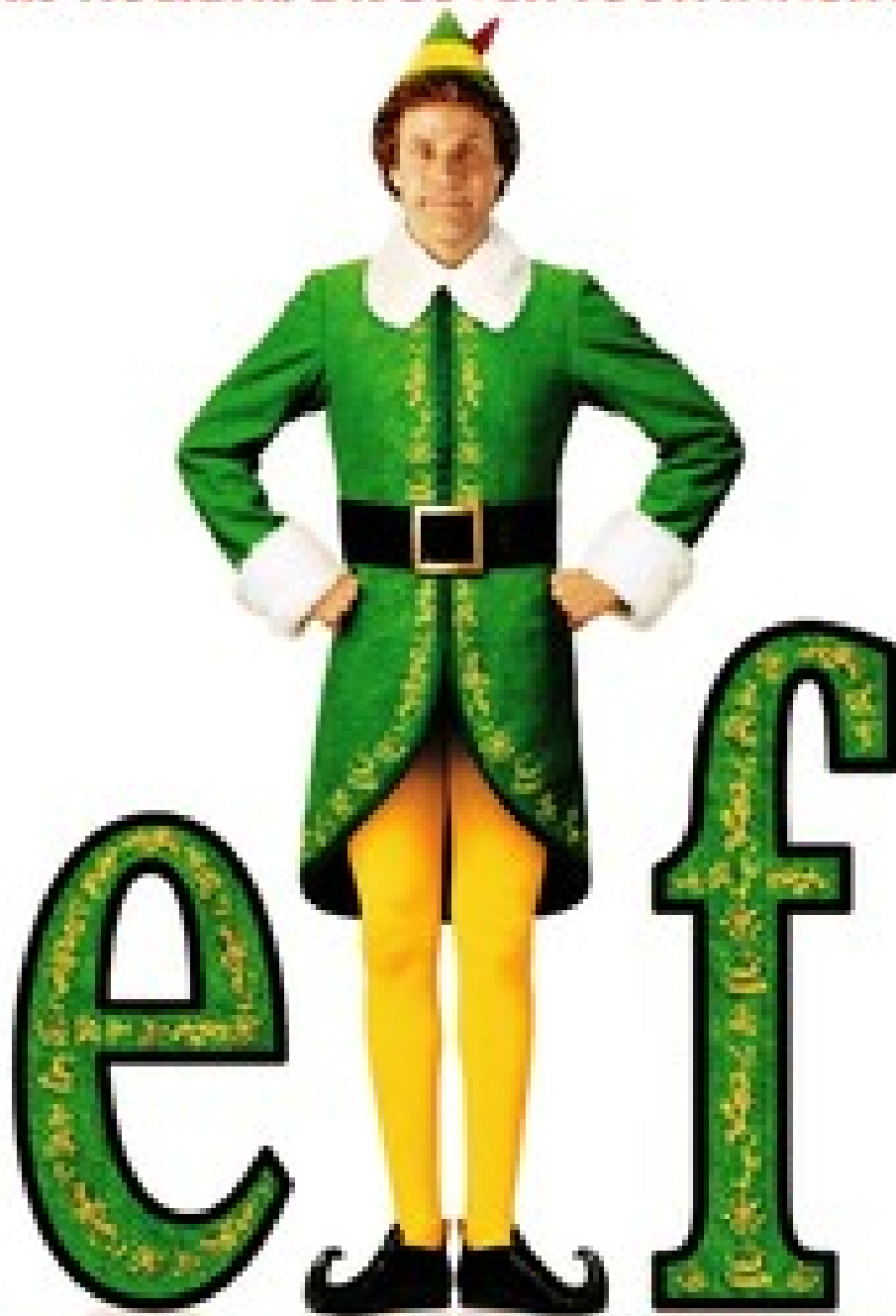


THIS HOLIDAY, DISCOVER YOUR INNER ELF.



WILL FERRELL **elf** **with JAMES CAAN**
NEW LINE CINEMA PRESENTS A JAMES CAAN PRODUCTION
STORY BY BOB FEIN AND CHARLES CRICHTON AND SCREENPLAY BY BOB FEIN
"THE ONLY GUY WHO'S EVER BEEN TO NORTON" AND "THE ONLY GUY WHO'S EVER BEEN TO NORTON"
A NEW LINE CINEMA PRODUCTION
DISTRIBUTED BY NEW LINE CINEMA
NOVEMBER 7 **NEW LINE CINEMA**

CU: A MODERN-LOOKING CHRISTMAS BOOK ENTITLED: ELF

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

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

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - NORTH POLE - DAY

PULL OUT FROM THE BOOK TO REVEAL

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

PAPA ELF

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

He pours himself a shot of milk in a snow-flake shot glass and downs it.

PAPA ELF

(like it's liquor)

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

QUICK CUT AWAY TO

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

DISGRUNTLED COBBLER ELF

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

EXT. ELF TREE - DAY

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

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

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

PAPA ELF

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

CUT TO:

A TRACKING SHOT OF SANTA'S WORKSHOP

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

PAPA ELF

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

CUT AWAY:

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

PAPA ELF

And no human could ever do this work. Their hands are too big and they tend to get testy when over worked. In fact, no human has ever set foot in Santa's workshop. That is until about thirty years ago. And in case you haven't guessed it, that's our story. It was back in 1968. A particularly successful Christmas...

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

NURSE

You're quite a giggler, aren't you?
(lying him down)
Well, it's time for night-night.

She tucks the baby in and exits.

NURSE

(as she leaves)
Merry Christmas, my angel.

CLOSE ON

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

Santa's black boots drop in from the chimney. The baby shakes the gate. Quickly, Santa moves to the Christmas tree,

where he lays out presents. There is an OFF-SCREEN CLANG!
Santa LOOKS UP and sees the empty crib. The gate is down:

BABY'S POV

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

FADE TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

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

SANTA

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

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

SANTA

And now after a lot of hard work
it's time for a vacation, starting
now!

Santa looks at his watch as five seconds click off. The
elves all rest their heads on their elbows.

SANTA

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

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

SANTA

What in the name of Sam Hill...?

More COOING. Perplexed, Santa looks down to his bag just as
a human baby, dressed only in a diaper, crawls out and
smiles.

Silence. The elves stare in awe at the strange visitor. An
ELF looks on the back of his diaper and sees the brand name
"Little Buddy Diapers".

ELF TWIN #2

It's name is Buddy. He must've...

ELF TWIN #1

...snuck into your sack at the
orphanage. What do we do, Santa?

Santa looks befuddled.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Santa had a decision to make. But
fortunately when it comes to babies,
Santa's a push over. So Buddy would

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stay with an older Elf who had always wanted a child, but had been so committed to building toys, he had forgotten to settle down. Yes, Buddy was raised by me, his adopted father. My, how I love that boy.

MONTAGE: BUDDY GROWING UP AS AN ELF

A giant baby is wedged into an extra-tiny crib.

Super 8 home movie of Papa Elf holding a two-year old baby that is almost as big as he is.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)
Tough Buddy grew twice as fast, he wasn't any different from the other little elves. I mean, not really...

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

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

A series of Polaroid photos showing Buddy, 12, dunking a basketball over three elves.

Buddy in Elf school, wedged in a tiny desk. The ELF TEACHER is pointing to the black board where "THE CODE OF ELVES" is written.

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

ELF STUDENTS
TREAT EVERY DAY LIKE CHRISTMAS!

ELF TEACHER
Number two?

ELF STUDENTS
THERE'S ROOM FOR EVERYONE ON THE NICE LIST!

ELF TEACHER
Number three?

We push in on Buddy as he recites...

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

EXT. ELF HOCKEY POND - CURRENT DAY - DAY

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An ANNOUNCER ELF is on a megahorn, doing play by play of an elf hockey team...

ANNOUNCER
(on megaphone)
Lum Lum across the line, feeds it to
Foom Foom, behind the net, looking,
feeds Blinky...Wait! Rimpocorrection, Wombo. I think...and -
uh-oh! - here comes BUDDY!

QUICK CUTS

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

ANNOUNCER
(like an elf Pat Foley)
He SC000000000000000000000000RES! And
it's 14-zero with eleven minutes
left in the first period.

INT. ELF LOCKER ROOM - DAY

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

POM POM
Good game, Buddy.

BUDDY
Thanks! Sorry about your shoulder,
Pom Pom!

POM POM
No sweat. It's just a collar bone!

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

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

RAPID FIRE:

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

BUDDY
Ow...jeez...yikes...golly...charles
dickens! Sone of a nutcracker!

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The FINALE: Buddy attempts to put a star on top of the semi-tall Elf Christmas tree.

But Buddy's pointy Elf slipper gets hung up in an ornament.

The elves step back, preparing for the inevitable: Buddy panics, wiggles his leg and pulls the tree over on top of him, falling into the fire place and engulfing in flames.

Pom Pom sprays him with a mini-fire extinguisher.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)
And no where were Buddy's
differences more obvious than in
Santa's toy shop.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NORTH POLE - DAY

We see an assembly line of elves making Etch-a-sketches with wooden hammers. We pan finally to Buddy as an ELF SUPERVISOR APPROACHES.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ELF #1

You changed the batteries in the
fire alarm!

ELF #2

(absurdly positive)

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

(everyone agrees)

ELF #3

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

ELF #1

In a good way!

ELF SUPERVISOR

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

BUDDY

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

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

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. ELF BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

This bathroom is ABSURDLY SMALL, Buddy squeezes in like
Harry Houdini. The toilet is the size of a Big Gulp cup.
Buddy sits on it and starts to sob. Washing his face in the
tiny sink.

KNOCK KNOCK.

We INTERCUT with Papa Elf at the door.

PAPA ELF

Son? Are you okay?

BUDDY

Go away!

PAPA ELF

(shocked)

Buddy!

BUDDY

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

PAPA ELF

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

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

PAPA ELF
Come sit with your papa.

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

PAPA ELF
Alright, let's hear it.

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

PAPA ELF
Well, there's something I should probably tell you, Buddy. And it's long over due...
(intense beat)
You see...um...

BUDDY
What is it, Papa?

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

PAPA ELF
(changing the subject)
I need your help on something.
(adjusting Buddy's weight)
Up up now, nice and -- ow, OW!...
There we are.

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

SANTA'S SLEIGH

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

BUDDY
Wow. Santa's sleigh!
(hesitates)
Can I touch it?

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

BUDDY
I thought the magical reindeer made the sleigh fly.

PAPA ELF

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And where do the reindeers get their magic from?

BUDDY
Christmas spirit. Everyone knows that.

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

BUDDY
What do you mean?

PAPA ELF
(hard to break the news)
Well, Buddy, as silly as it sounds, there are a lot of people down South who don't believe in Santa Claus.

BUDDY
(shocked)
What? Who do they think puts all their toys under the tree?

PAPA ELF
There's a rumor floating around that parents are putting them there.

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

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

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

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

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

BUDDY
Oh my Gosh!

PAPA ELF
Watch the language son.

BUDDY
Forgive me, Papa. What's that?

PAPA ELF
A Viper turbojet with 358 cubic meters of displacement, high volume

air intake and customized spark timing.

(off Buddy's look)

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

(around him)

Listen, the motor mounts are giving me some wiggle. Do you want to give the ol' man a hand?

BUDDY
(coming around)

Do I?!

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - TOY TESTING - THE NEXT DAY

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

Ahh!
BUDDY

Another one: POP!

UHHHH!
BUDDY

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

AHHHH!!
BUDDY
(biggest one yet)
(to supervisor)
I'm going to take five, okay
Krumpet?

Okay!
KRUMPET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IN THE ELF SHOWERS: Buddy is struggling to wash under a three-foot high shower head.

THE ELF CHOIR PHOTO: Only Buddy's waist is visible, he's cropped out.

An exact replay of those rapid-fire shots of Buddy slamming his head into doorways, beams, cabinets.

BUDDY
Ow...jeez...yikes...golly...charles...Dickens!
Sone of a Nutcracker!

IN THE FACTORY: tinkering with a Ken Doll, Buddy moves the arms like his arms.

BACK ON BUDDY, queasy. His head spins as the CAMERA CIRCLES HIM. The room spins. Buddy's knees go weak.

Pom Pom hurries over, concerned.

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

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

POM POM
(muffled under Buddy)
I'm okay, Buddy. Don't worry about a
thing. I'm warm.

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - TEN MINUTES LATER

Buddy wakes up from his sleep to find himself in Papa's workshop. FOCUS RACKS to Papa tending to his son.

BUDDY
Ooooooh. I had a terrible nightmare.

PAPA ELF
What is it, Buddy?

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

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

BUDDY
You mean I'm not an Elf?

PAPA ELF
No, son, you're a human being.

BUDDY
No wonder I'm always freezing!

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

BUDDY
But I thought elves can't lie.

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

BUDDY
(getting upset)
I thought I had a glandular problem.

PAPA ELF
Your glands are fine.

BUDDY
(emotional)
So, you're not my Papa?

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

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)
I then proceeded to tell Buddy of how his father had fallen in love when he was very young with a beautiful girl named Susan Welles, and how Buddy was born and put up for adoption by his mother. And how she had later passed away. I told him his father had never even known Buddy was born. And most importantly, I told him where his Dad was: in a magical land called New York City.

Papa Elf puts a snow globe in front of Buddy showing the Empire State Building with a sign NEW YORK CITY.

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

Buddy runs off.

PAPA ELF
Buddy?! Buddy?!!

EXT. NORTH POLE - MINUTES LATER

Buddy runs and runs. He passes some ANIMATED ANIMALS, a RABBIT, a RACCOON and a SQUIRREL.

RACCOON

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

BUDDY

Not now Pipsy!!

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(a faint whisper)

Oooohhh! Buddy...

BUDDY

Hi, Jim. What's wrong?

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(very quietly)

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

BUDDY

Sure, Jim.

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(speaking at full volume)

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

BUDDY

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

Of course you're not. You're six-three and had a beard when you were fifteen.

BUDDY

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

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

BUDDY

I guess I am pretty lucky after all.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

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

BUDDY

I understand about your arms, Jim.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

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

BUDDY

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

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - THE NEXT DAY

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

BUDDY

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

Santa steps into frame and puts his arm around Buddy.

SANTA

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

BUDDY

Yeah, but I'm kind of nervous. Jim told me New York is really different.

SANTA

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

BUDDY

Wow. What's it like?

SANTA

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

BUDDY

So much to remember...

SANTA

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

(patting him on the back)

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

BUDDY

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

SANTA

2

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

FAST PUSH INTO:

The NAUGHTY LIST, landing on "Walter Hobbs."

BUDDY

N000000!!!!

SANTA

I'm sorry, but it's true.

BUDDY

My stomach hurts. It feels like evil.

SANTA

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

BUDDY

I'm good at that!

SANTA

I know you are.

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

PAPA ELF

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

(crying)

Now go on, get!

BUDDY

(crying)

Yes, Papa.

(crying and skipping)

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

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

Animals wave as Buddy heads off into the unknown.

ANIMALS

Bye, Buddy.

BUDDY

Bye lovable woodland animals!

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

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

EXT. SNOW FIELD - DAY

2

Buddy trudges through a massive snow field. Each step he takes goes down five feet deep, we DISSOLVE to a series of scenes showing this epic struggle. He wears a beard of ice.

Exhausted, Buddy considers leaving himself for dead, but uses his last ounce of strength to pull out the old PHOTO of his father, WALTER HOBBS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - MEANWHILE

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

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

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - DAY

Walter is the guy from Buddy's picture, only he looks a little older and a little meaner.

A NUN stands in front of Walter's large desk.

NUN

You're taking the books back?

WALTER

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

NUN

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

WALTER

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

(out window; to NYC)

It's called capitalism, Miss Peters. If you can't stand the heat, move to Canada.

NUN

(begging)

The kids really love the books.

WALTER

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

DEB, the secretary, pokes her head in.

DEB

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

WALTER

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

DEB

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

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

DEB (O.S.)

(from intercom)

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

WALTER

(hitting button)

Got it.

(to Nun, compassionate)

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

(beat)

I'll give you a three-week
extension.

NUN

(sarcastic)

Bless your heart.

WALTER

(too busy to hear)

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

EXT. CANADA - DAY

Buddy is half-way there. He's now clearly in the real world.
He walks through a choppy, muddy, snowy terrain past a
rusted propane tank. A REAL LIVE RACCOON crosses his path.
Buddy acts like it's a cartoon.

BUDDY

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

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

BUDDY

Sounds like someone needs a hug!

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

BUDDY

NUT CRACKERS!!!

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

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

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

EXT. MANHATTAN - MORNING

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

BUDDY

Whoa...

EXT. MID-TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER

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

WIDE SHOT

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY

Hi.

(no response; next person)

Happy afternoon!

(no response; next person)

Salutations!

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

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

WALKER

Why don't you watch your ass, buddy!

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

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

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

BUDDY

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

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

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

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

REVEAL: Empire State Building!

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

BUDDY

Dad...

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ECU: The PUPPY AND THE PIGEON book is in Walter's hands. A PRINTER faces him.

WALTER

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

PRINTER

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

WALTER

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

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

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

Another passenger gets on.

ACCOUNTANT

Can you press 67 please?

Unsure of what may happen, he pushes 67. The number LIGHTS UP.

BUDDY

Hey, that's pretty.

Like lightning, he presses ALL 75 BUTTONS.

BUDDY

Look at that!

QUICK CUTS

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

Buddy.

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walter and the printer continue.

WALTER

2

How the hell did this happen,
anyway?

PRINTER

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

WALTER

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

INT. DEB'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

Deb stares dead pan at the Elf in front of her desk.

BUDDY

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

DEB

You look hilarious. Who sent you?

BUDDY

Papa Elf, from the North Pole.

DEB

Papa Elf? That's rich.

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walter and the printer continue.

PRINTER

You really think we should ship
them?

WALTER

(sarcastic)

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

(beat)

Ship them!

DEB (O.S.)

(over intercom)

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

WALTER

Go ahead.

DEB (O.S.)

I think someone sent you a
Christmas-gram.

WALTER

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

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

BUDDY

Dad?

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

WALTER

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

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

BUDDY

I walked all day and night to find you.

WALTER

(playing along)

Looks like you came from the North Pole.

BUDDY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

Go on with what?

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

(trying to make up a song)

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

He hugs him.

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

What's a Christmas gram?

WALTER

(whispering)

Deb, we may want to call security.

DEB

(whispering)

I already did.

Buddy leans in.

BUDDY
(whispering)
I like to whisper, too.

EXT. STREET - FIVE MINUTES LATER

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

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

SECURITY GUARD #2
Must run in the family.
(they laugh)
I wouldn't come back for a while if I were you.

BUDDY
Yeah, it seemed like he may need some 'Daddy time.'
(as he's escorted)
You guys are strong!

SECURITY GUARD #1
Yeah, get lost.

BUDDY
I already am lost!

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

BUDDY
Bye, Glenn. Bye Chris!

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

REVEAL

EXT. GIMBELS DEPARTMENT STORE - CONTINUOUS

It's huge. Full of lights and music, Christmas at its grandest.

BUDDY
(face aglow)
Wow!

Buddy starts skipping across the street toward Gimbels when --

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

BUDDY
I'm okay! Thank you!

EXT. GIMBELS - CONTINUOUS

2

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

PERFUME CLERK
Passion fruit spray?

BUDDY
Fruit Spray? For real?

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

BUDDY
(mouth open)
Ready when you are!

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

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

MONTAGE: Buddy Does Gimbel's

ESCALATOR

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

ANGRY MAN
(annoyed)
Are you going or what?

BUDDY
Um, yeah...

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

BUDDY
Jiminy Christmas!

PUBLIC BATHROOM

Buddy leaves the stall, then accosts a stranger.

BUDDY
Have you seen this toilet!? It's GI-NORMOUS!!!
(to another guy)
Look at this toilet!

STORE

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

ELEVATOR

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

ANGRY MAN
(about to punch him)
You think you're pretty smart, huh?

BUDDY

I'm not that smart, but thanks.

LINGERIE SECTION

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

BUDDY

For that special someone? Hmm...

A HARD-ASS ELF MANAGER walks over.

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

Looking at shiny things.

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

Okay.

INT. GIMBELS - 9TH FLOOR SANTA LAND - LATER

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

BUDDY

This snow looks fake.

ELF MANAGER

It's white, ain't it?

BUDDY

Snow doesn't just pile up unless
it's moved through the use of a
tool, such as a shovel. I would give
this some natural erosion, a slight
wind drift look.

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

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

ELF MANAGER

Well take it down a notch.

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

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

SANTA?!

(eyes wide)

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

(suddenly skeptical)

Wait. Santa Claus?

ELF MANAGER

Yeah. Where've you been?

BUDDY

The North Pole.

ELF MANAGER

Ha. Ha. Start elfing.

(as he leaves)

And don't touch the snow.

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

BUDDY'S POV

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

JOVIE

Are you enjoying the view?

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

Well someone's been drinking the Kool Aid.

(Buddy doesn't get it)

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE
(confused)
Are you serious?

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

JOVIE
Well, thanks, but I don't sing.

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

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

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

JOVIE
Actually, there's a big difference.

BUDDY
No there isn't. Watch.
(suddenly singing loudly)
I'M IN A STORE AND I'M SINGING!
PEOPLE ARE HERE AND I'M IN A STORE!!

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

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

JOVIE
(bewildered)
Wow.

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

All the elves look relieved. Their day is over.

J

OVIE

Dismissed.

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY
Buddy.

JOVIE
Jovie. See ya.

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

QUICK SERIES OF CUTS

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

A SECURITY GUARD WALKS DOWN AN AISLE

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

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

BUDDY
They have Elves in Taiwan?

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

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

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

EMILY
Are you sure?

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

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

MICHAEL
Can I eat in my room?

EMILY
No.

MICHAEL
Why not? Dad's eating in his den.
(smart ass)
I have a bunch of homework to go over...I'm way behind on a bunch of stuff.

EMILY
You're eating here.

MICHAEL
Fine. But I'm not going to talk.

EMILY
Yes you are. You're going to tell me
how your day was.
(beat)
How was your day?

Michael stares tight-lipped. This infuriates Emily.

EMILY
(suddenly)
HOW WAS YOUR DAY?!

MICHAEL
It was fine! Okay? Good.

INT. WALTER'S DEN - LATER

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

EMILY
What're you looking at?

Walter hides the book.

WALTER
Nothing. It's for work.

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

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

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

WALTER
Well he is thirteen years old.

EMILY
He's ten.
(exasperated)
I don't know what's going on with
you, but I've just about had it.

WALTER
Had it with what?

That was the wrong answer.

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

(a tiny ounce of charm)
The chicken thing was delicious.

EMILY

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

WALTER

Well it was good.

INT. GIMBELS - SANTA LAND - 7 AM

Buddy is finishing his decorating. We pull out wide: No Santa Land has ever looked more beautiful. The most expensive merchandise has been used as bricks and mortar. A huge glitter sign says "WELCOME SANTA! LOVE, BUDDY!!!"

Now, off in the distance, WE HEAR THE FAINT SOUND OF AN ANGEL SINGING.

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

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

REVEAL

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

Jovie is silent and quickly twists off the shower and opens the curtain, wearing only a towel.

JOVIE

AHHHHHHHH!!!

BUDDY

AHHHHHHHH!!!

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

EXT. GIMBELS - MORNING

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

PAN TO

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

A MAN SQUINTS

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

BUDDY
Ah! Holy fudge!

Buddy yawns and stretches ridiculously.

BUDDY
Good morning, everyone!
(looking off)

POV

Walter is walking along the sidewalk with his brief case.

BUDDY
Dad!!!

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

BUDDY
(muted)
DAAAD!

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

INT. LOBBY - LATER

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

SECURITY GUARD #1
Hey!

BUDDY
(yelling back; fun)
Hey!!
(beat)
Hi, Glenn. Hi Chris! I just want to give my dad this present. I think he's mad at me...but he won't be after THIS.

SECURITY GUARD #1
You better leave that with us.

SECURITY GUARD #2
Yeah, he's real busy.

BUDDY
Oh, okay. Well, please tell him it's from me, and that I love him so much and that he's the greatest Dad in the world and that I love him. Okay?

SECURITY GUARD #1

Okay.

INT. GIMBELS - SANTA LAND - DAY

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

REVEAL

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

ELF MANAGER
Who the hell took a dump in
housewares?

Jovie walks up to Buddy.

JOVIE
Hey. I want to talk to you.

Buddy is now terrified by her.

BUDDY
Oh, uh, um, okay, uh...
(she lets him squirm)
What do you want to talk about?

JOVIE
What the hell do you think?

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

JOVIE
Why were you in the woman's locker
room?

BUDDY
(sheepish)
I heard you singing.

JOVIE
Singing? Right. I'm sure it had
nothing to do with me being naked. I
should call the police.
(beat)
What were you doing here so early in
the morning?

BUDDY
(re: epic Santa Land)
Making this.

JOVIE
You made this?

BUDDY
Yes...why were you here?

JOVIE
They turned my water off.
(she studies him)
You were standing there with your
eyes closed. What is that, some kind
of thing you do?

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

BUDDY

You have the most beautiful voice in
the whole world.

Jovie looks at him, his innocence is contagious.

JOVIE

(sincere, compassionate)
You really were just listening to
me, weren't you?

BUDDY

I'm sorry.

The Elf Manager walks over.

MANAGER

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

BUDDY

SANTA?! Santa is HERE?!

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

BUDDY

(happier than ever)

SANTA!

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

BUDDY

Santa, it's me! Buddy!

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

BUDDY

Who the heck are you?

GIMBELS SANTA

Why, I'm Santa Claus.

BUDDY

Are not!

GIMBELS SANTA

Well, of course I am. Ho Ho Ho!

BUDDY

(furious)

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

GIMBELS SANTA

Why you sang, uh, Happy Birthday?

BUDDY

(to the kids)

He's right.

'Santa' struts past Buddy and takes his chair.

GIMBELS SANTA
(under his breath)
Why don't you cool it, zippy.
(to the kids)
Ho Ho Ho!

The voice is wrong, the smell is wrong.

BUDDY
You're lying! I know it!

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

BUDDY
(at the beard, horrified)
AAHHHH!!! Imposter! He's an
imposter!!! His beard is fake! Come
on, kids, get him!

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

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

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - GREENWAY PRESS - DAY

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

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

Deb enters and he scrambles to hide the nightie.

DEB
Hey the -- what's that?

WALTER
What's what?
(beat)
Intercom!

DEB
Right.

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

DEB (O.S.)
(from intercom)
Walter, the police are on line one.

WALTER
The police?
(grabbing phone)
Hello? My son? Michael? Is he okay?
(listening)
An Elf? He's not my -- you know
what? Keep him there. I'll be right
down.

2

Deb peeks in.

DEB
What's going on?

WALTER
Nothing. I need to go.
(lying)
I need to swing by my apartment real
quick...they're delivering a chair.

DEB
(smart ass)
A police chair?

WALTER
It's a regular chair. Okay?! Cancel
my appointments.

INT. JAIL - DAY

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

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

REVEAL

Another convict shares the cell with him. He stares at Buddy
with disgust.

But now, slowly, it's contagious. The CONVICT CAN'T HELP IT
AND HE STARTS TO CRY TOO.

Buddy hears the cell door clang open.

REVEAL

Walter stands at the open jail cell door.

BUDDY
Dad!!!

Buddy wipes his tears and rubs his face. Trying to look like
a good son.

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

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

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

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

BUDDY
I'm so happy! I knew you'd come! I
love that you came and I love you
Dad! Know how much I love you?
(spreading his arms wide)
This much. Except my arms would have
to be way longer, like pterodactyl
wings --

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

BUDDY
I'm Buddy. Your son.

WALTER
I already have a son!

BUDDY
Then who am I?

WALTER
Where did you get this picture?!

He holds up the picture he included in the gift.

BUDDY
Papa Elf gave it to me.

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

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

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

Walter senses an element of truth in here somewhere.

WALTER
(serious)
You really believe this, don't you?

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

WALTER
(conflicted)
Come with me.

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

INT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE - AN HOUR LATER

Buddy sits on the examining table as Walter watches.

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

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

WALTER
Don't eat those.

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

BUDDY
Am I sick?

WALTER
YES.

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

BUDDY
Why am I sitting on paper?

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

DOCTOR
So it's clean for each patient that comes in. Try to sit still. I'm going to perform something called a 'finger prick.'

BUDDY
(happy)
Finger prick!
(to the Doctor)
Can I wear your head lamp?

DOCTOR
No.

BUDDY
Why?

DOCTOR
Just sit still.

BUDDY
Why is there a skeleton on the wall?

DOCTOR
I don't know but there just is.

BUDDY
What's his name?

WALTER
He doesn't have a name!

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

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

WALTER
I'm sorry Ben. Buddy! Please!

BUDDY
(whispering)
He got mad at me.

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

mess.

BUDDY

After this, can we eat sugar plums together?

WALTER

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

BUDDY

That's Easter not -

The Doctor gives Buddy's finger a tiny prick.

BUDDY

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!

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

BUDDY

Boot straps! Snow flickers! Son of a cobbler!

INT. WAITING ROOM - LATER

Buddy holds his finger with a cotton ball for a moment. Then suddenly eats it.

Now he taps his finger and flips it around like it's dead, then turns to a LITTLE GIRL, 7, who is playing with her doll as her MOTHER fills out paperwork with the nurse.

BUDDY

My finger has a heartbeat.

GIRL

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

BUDDY

Buddy.

GIRL

I'm Carolyn.

BUDDY

And what do you want for Christmas?

CAROLYN

A Suzie-Talks-A-Lot.

BUDDY

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

CAROLYN

Thanks. Your costume is pretty.

BUDDY

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

GIRL

2
(totally unfazed)
Oh. I'm a human...raised by humans.

BUDDY
Cool.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walter is waiting for the results.

WALTER
Well?

DOCTOR
Well...
(beat)
It's a boy.

The blood drains out of Walter's face.

WALTER
It's impossible.
(feeling faint)
Is the test ever wrong?

DOCTOR
No.

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

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

WALTER
The man skips.

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

WALTER
His name's BUDDY.

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

WALTER
An Elf.

DOCTOR
Yes.

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

WALTER

2

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

DOCTOR

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

WALTER

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

DOCTOR

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

(off Walter's look)

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

EXT. EMILY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

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

EMILY

What are you doing here?

WALTER

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

EMILY

You thought you'd walk me home?

They begin to walk together.

WALTER

What, is that so weird?

EMILY

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

WALTER

Well it's a nice night.

EMILY

What's wrong?

WALTER

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

EMILY

Okay, okay, I'm sorry.
(taking his arm)
Thanks, this is really nice.

On Walter as he walks.

WALTER

Okay, something's a little wrong.

2

INT. Hobb's Residence - Later

They're arriving home.

EMILY

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

WALTER

Wonderful. That's one way to put it.

EMILY

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

WALTER

He thinks he's an Elf.

EMILY

I'm sorry, what?

WALTER

He thinks he's a Christmas Elf.

EMILY

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

Walter swings open the door to the apartment to reveal:

INT. Apartment - Continuous

BUDDY HAS BEEN BUSY. The place is a recycled winter
wonderland. Yards of old garland has been meticulously
strung throughout the apartment. Elaborate construction
paper Christmas murals cover the walls. His sense of
decorating is impeccable. Emily is floored.

MEANWHILE...in the kitchen, Buddy scoops globs of frosting
into his mouth at a furious pace.

WALTER

Buddy?

Buddy looks up, drooling.

WALTER

This is Emily.

EMILY

(muffled, mouth full)

Emuree!

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

BUDDY

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

Meanwhile, Michael, their son, has arrived.

MICHAEL

Why is mom hugging Robin Hood?

INT. Dining Room - An hour later

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

BUDDY

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

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

EMILY

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

BUDDY

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

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

EMILY

You like sugar, huh?

BUDDY

Is there sugar in syrup?

EMILY

Yes.

BUDDY

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

EMILY

So, will you be staying with us, then?

WALTER

Emily.

BUDDY

You mean I can stay?

WALTER

Emily!

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

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

WALTER
EMILY!?

EMILY
WHAT?!

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

EMILY
Um, sure. Excuse me, Buddy.

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

BUDDY
Wow, did you hear that?

Yes, Michael did...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Walter argues with Emily in hushed tones.

WALTER
Are you crazy? He can't stay here.

EMILY
Clearly he has some serious issues. We can't just kick him out in the snow.

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

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

WALTER
That's his problem.

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

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY
I love you.

MICHAEL

Eat me.

BUDDY

Eat you? OKAY!

(playing, like the jungle)

I'm a Lion! Roar! CHOMP!

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

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

BUDDY

Goodnight, Dad.

WALTER

Goodnight.

BUDDY

Tuck me in?

WALTER

What?!

BUDDY

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

WALTER

I'm not tucking you in!

BUDDY

I promise I'll go right to sleep.

WALTER

(reluctantly)

Fine...

BUDDY

TICKLE FIGHT!!!

Walter fights him off, pissed.

WALTER

No. Buddy. Stop!

BUDDY

Sorry.

WALTER

Just lay down and go to sleep, okay?

BUDDY

Do you want to hear a story?

WALTER

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

BUDDY

Understand.

(Walter flicks off light)

Dad?

(flicks light on)

WALTER

2
What?

BUDDY
I love you.

WALTER
Go to sleep.

BUDDY
Do you love me?

WALTER
Yeah sure. Now go to sleep.

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

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

BUDDY
(to himself; satisfied)
Significant

WALTER
Good night.

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

BUDDY
(in the dark)
Dad.
(long beat)
Dad?
(long beat)
DAD?
(long beat)
DAD?!
(longer beat)
DAD!!!!

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

WALTER
WHAT!!!

BUDDY
Hi.

Walter slams the door. It's dark again.

BUDDY
Dad?

INT. HOBBS' KITCHEN - MORNING

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

EMILY

2

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

BUDDY
Want some more spaghetti?

EMILY
Um, sure, why not.

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

EMILY
So how'd you sleep last night?

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

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

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

WALTER (O.S.)
Why is the TV on the ground?

REVEAL:

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

Walter walks into the kitchen, flabbergasted.

EMILY
Good morning, honey.
(she kisses her husband)
Buddy made us breakfast, isn't that
nice?

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

EMILY
He packed us lunches too.

REVEAL:

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

EMILY
Well, I gotta run. Thanks for
breakfast, Buddy.
(grabbing her bag)
And the lunch!

She kisses him on the cheek and leaves.

BUDDY
Bye Emily!

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

BUDDY
(to Walter)
So, how many scoops?

WALTER
I'm going to stick with coffee for
now.

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

MICHAEL
(to Walter, awkward)
I need my allowance.

WALTER
(awkward)
Did you do the recycling?

MICHAEL
Yeah, I did, okay?

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

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

WALTER
(lying)
We hugged earlier.

MICHAEL
(partner in crime)
Yeah, we hugged already. Bye.

BUDDY
Bye!

Walter and Buddy are now alone.

WALTER
Listen, Buddy, I wanted to talk to
you.

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

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

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

WALTER
Buddy, I have to go to work.
(beat)
And another thing, if you're going
to be staying here, you should think
about getting rid of the costume.

2

We've got neighbors and people
around here, you know?

BUDDY
(looking at himself)
I've worn this my whole life.

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

Buddy is unsure.

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

BUDDY
More than anything.

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

BUDDY
As soon as possible?

WALTER
As soon as possible.

BUDDY
(sighing)
Yes, papa.

Walter turns and faces camera, pouring coffee. Behind him,
Buddy TAKES HIS GREEN TIGHTS OFF and stands there NAKED from
the waist down. (The audience is spared the details).

From the rear, Emily re-enters the kitchen and sees Buddy
from behind.

EMILY
I almost forg --- AHHHHH!!!!!!

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

WALTER
AHHHHHHH!!!!

BUDDY
(as if it's a game)
AHHHHH!!!!

EXT. MANHATTAN - LATER

Walking to work, Walter answers his cell phone.

WALTER
(answering his cell)
Walter Hobbs.

BUDDY (O.S.)
(from phone)
It worked! It's you!

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

WALTER
How'd you get this number?

BUDDY
Emily left an emergency list.

WALTER
Is there an emergency?

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

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

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

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

WALTER
I'm hanging up now.

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

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

BUDDY
Good idea. You call me.

WALTER
Okay, I'm hanging up.

BUDDY
I have a present for you when you
get home!

WALTER
I'm hanging up.

BUDDY
I love you!

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE PRIVATE SCHOOL - LATER

Dozens of kids stream out of school.

Michael is in the middle of the crowd when he hears his name
from across the street.

BUDDY (O.S.)
MICHAEL! MICHAEL!

He looks over and sees Buddy cutting through traffic.

MICHAEL
(turns away in embarrassment)
Oh man.

BUDDY

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

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

BUDDY

Michael! Wait up!

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER

Michael is walking through the park, Buddy trails twelve feet behind, sort of hiding behind trees. But not really.

Michael finally turns and confronts him.

MICHAEL

LEAVE!

BUDDY

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

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

You really want me to leave

MICHAEL

Yes.

BUDDY

(sad)

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

Just then, a SNOWBALL WHACKS MICHAEL IN THE SHOULDER.

EDGE OF THE RAVINE

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

MICHAEL

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

Thump! Michael gets hit in the head.

BUDDY

Ow! PEANUT BRITTLE! SON OF A NUTCRACKER!

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

BUDDY

Dive!

MICHAEL

(genuinely worried)

There are too many of them!

BUDDY

2

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

Michael quickly sculpts two snowballs.

WE PAN BACK

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

BUDDY

Ready?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

WIDE SHOT

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

A series of targets explode with precision as this blur of
snowballs hits guts, butts, nuts and faces. A kid raises a
snowball and it immediately explodes out of his hand. This
is the one thing Buddy's actually better at than hockey.

Michael stands to launch one. Exposing himself.

BUDDY

Noooo!

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

BUDDY

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

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

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

SNOWBALL GUY

Ow!

(holding his chest)
Hey, I surrendered!

BUDDY

(to Michael)
What does surrendered mean?

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER

Walter does some paperwork, then hits the intercom.

WALTER

Can you bring me in a bottle of
water please?

DEB (O.S.)

(from the intercom)
Fulton Greenway is on his way in.

Fulton Greenway? Walter immediately loses blood in his face.

WALTER
Fulton Greenway? Why didn't you tell me?

DEB (O.S.)
He just showed up. What size water?

WALTER
When's he coming in?

DEB (O.S.)
Now.

WALTER
What do you mean now?

Walter buttons his suit and checks his reflection for nose hairs.

DEB (O.S.)
I mean now. What size?

FULTON GREENWAY (O.S.)
Hobbs!

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

WALTER
Fulton! What a great surprise!

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

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

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

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

FULTON GREENWAY
She's six.

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

FULTON GREENWAY

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

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

2

obviously gotten sloppy.

Greenway holds up the proofs, signed by Walter.

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

WALTER
(forcing a laugh)
What a disaster, huh? Twenty-five
years in publishing, never seen
anything like it. Well, I guess you
can't bat a thousand, right?

Fulton Greenway nods skeptically. Walter adjusts in his
seat.

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

(Walter's dying)
Have you seen the numbers from this
quarter?

WALTER
They should be coming in today.

FULTON GREENWAY
(holds up the numbers)
They're in!

WALTER
That good, huh?

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

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

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

WALTER
Before the end of this quarter?

FULTON GREENWAY
I'll be back in town on the twenty
fourth. At that time, I'd love to
hear, in great detail, exactly what
your plans are for this new book.

WALTER
But that's Christmas Eve.

FULTON GREENWAY

And?

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

INT. GIMBELS - LATER THAT DAY

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

MICHAEL
(looking at toy bugs)
Hey, look at this, it's a big
mosquito!

BUDDY
What's a mosquito?

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

BUDDY
That's a scary toy.

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

BUDDY
(horrified)
OH MY GOD.

EXT. GIMBELS - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY
I wish Dad were here.

MICHAEL
Why?

BUDDY
He's the greatest Dad in the world.

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

BUDDY
What do you mean?

MICHAEL
All he does is work.

BUDDY
Working is fun.

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

Well, he is on the naughty list.

AND NOW WE SPOT JOVIE

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

MICHAEL

You like her?

BUDDY

Like who?

MICHAEL

The girl you're staring at.

BUDDY

Um, yes.

MICHAEL

Why don't you ask her out?

BUDDY

Out to where?

MEANWHILE

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

BUDDY

(flipping out)

We should leave. I need to leave.

MICHAEL

Don't leave! Ask her out!

BUDDY

Out?

MICHAEL

On a date, you know, to eat food.

BUDDY

(Jovie's almost there)

Food.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

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

JOVIE

Well look who it is.

BUDDY

Hi Jovie. This is --

Michael has ditched out. Buddy is on his own.

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

You really should get out of here.

BUDDY

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

Jovie is embarrassed.

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

Weird, like, good?

JOVIE

(smiling)

I haven't decided.

BUDDY

So, do you want to eat food?

JOVIE

Do I want to eat food?

BUDDY

You know...

(winking)

The code...

JOVIE

(letting that slide)

I just took my lunch break.

BUDDY

(defeated)

Oh, right. I follow.

JOVIE

(then)

But I'm free Thursday night.

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

BUDDY

(celebrating; ridiculous)

YEEEESSSSSSSS!

INT. HOBBS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

2
Walter enters and sees Buddy and Michael as they hoist an enormous FOURTEEN FOOT TALL CHRISTMAS TREE into the corner. It scrapes the ceiling as they wedge it in place.

WALTER
What the hell is that?

MICHAEL
A Christmas tree!

WALTER
A Christmas tree?

MICHAEL
Buddy chopped it down in the park!

Buddy smiles at Walter, Walter does not smile back.

INT. WALTER AND EMILY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael and Emily are having a heated discussion.

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

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

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

Michael's happy for once.
(beat)

It's amazing what a little attention will do.

WALTER
What's that supposed to mean?

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

WALTER
Oh! So let's allow a deranged Elf-man to raise him. Great idea! Maybe we should pull Michael out of school so they can commit felonies full time!

EMILY
I think you're jealous.

WALTER
Jealous? Of Buddy? The man is wearing tights.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MEANWHILE

Buddy uses a drill to secure the trunk to the floor. ZZZZRRrrrr. He then stands at a distance. Like a high

jumper, holding a star for the top of the tree in hand.

POV

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

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

A ladder? What's fun about a ladder?
(concentrating)

Ready?

(taking off)

WATCH!!!!

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

BUDDY (O.S.)

I'm okay.

(then)

I found a quarter!

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

WALTER

What was that noise?

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

Take him to work with me?

EMILY

Yeah, I bet he'd like it.

WALTER

Absolutely never.

SMASH CUT TO:

2

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

The ELEVATOR DOOR DINGS open to reveal Walter & Buddy. Buddy sports a new suit. He looks ever bit the professional as he enters with his father.

CO-WORKER
Hey, Walter.

WALTER
Hey, Jack.

BUDDY
Hello, Jack!

Another co-worker, #2, nods hello.

WALTER
Hey, Sarah.

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

CO-WORKER #3
How's it going, Walter?

WALTER
Hello, Francisco.

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

WALTER
(whispering)
Could you at least lose that damn
hat?

BUDDY
I like the hat.
(off Walter's look)
I could try, but I really like it.

INT. HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

WALTER
Thanks, Deb.

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

DEB
Uh, thanks.

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

BUDDY
(to himself)
Fran-cis-co.

WALTER
We're cutting down on your sugar
intake.

BUDDY
Why is your name on the door?

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

BUDDY
Is that a joke, Dad?

WALTER
Yes.

BUDDY
This is your office, isn't it?

WALTER
Well how about that? He's
understanding sarcasm.

BUDDY
So what are we going to build?

WALTER
This really isn't that kind of work.

THE PHONE RINGS, Buddy beats Walter to it.

BUDDY
(super-fast into phone)
Buddy the Elf! What's your favorite
color?

Walter hangs up the phone.

WALTER
Please don't touch anything!
(beat)
Listen, Buddy, have you ever seen a
mail room before?

BUDDY
(excited)
A mail room? No.

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

BUDDY
(dreaming)
Shiny...

INT. MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

FLOOR MANAGER

You Buddy?

(Buddy nods)

Well come on out of the elevator then.

BUDDY

Okay.

Floor manager leads Buddy over to the main work area.

FLOOR MANAGER

Welcome to the pit.

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

FLOOR MANAGER

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

BUDDY

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

INT. CONVERENCE ROOM - DAY

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

WALTER

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

EUGENE

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

HUSKEY

You're going to love this.

MORRIS

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

WALTER

(pleasantly surprised)

Okay, great. Let's hear it.

HUSKEY

Picture this...

(long dramatic pause)

We bring in Miles Finch.

WALTER

The Miles Finch?

EUGENE

(excited)
The Golden Ghost.

HUSKEY
We bring him in.

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

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

EUGENE
Yeah.

HUSKEY
Miles Finch.

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

WALTER
I like it.

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - MAIL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

This is Buddy at his best. He stuffs and launches mail into
tubes with incredible speed and efficiency. No one's ever
seen anything like it.

Almost without noticing, Buddy begins singing to himself.

BUDDY
(singing)
On the first day of Christmas, my
true love gave to me...

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

TREY
(beat)
A partridge in a pear tree.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Walter and the writers are huddled around a speaker phone.

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

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

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

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

2

MILES FINCH (O.S.)
(intercom)
I'll give you five hours tomorrow,
not a minute more.

WALTER
(relieved)
Great.

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

WALTER
We can do that.

DEB (O.S.)
(over intercom; BEEP!)
Walter! There's a situation
downstairs.

MILES FINCH (O.S.)
I'm sorry, what? Hello?

WALTER
(in panic)
Deb, hang up! Miles stay on!

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

DEB (O.S.)
We have a problem in the mail room.

HUSKEY
What's going on?

WALTER
(pointing to Huskey)
Do not talk!
(into phone)
Deb, please hang up!

MILES FINCH (O.S.)
That's it, I'm gone!

WALTER
MILES! WAIT!

Dramatic pause. Is he gone?

MILES FINCH (O.S.)
I'll be there tomorrow.
(phew!)
71 degrees...

He clicks off.

DEB (O.S.)
Sir, Chuck in the mail room.

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

2

INT. MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

TREY
Eleven-pipers-piping...

CRAIG
Ten-lords-a-leaping...

LAZY-EYED CREEP
Nine-ladies-dancing...

GANG BANGER
Eight-maids-milking...

TREY
Six-geese-a-laying...

EVERYBODY
FIVE GOLDEN RINGS!!!

REVEAL

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

BUDDY
(as he squat-thrusts)
On the twelfth day of Christmas, my
true love...gave...to...

Buddy notices his dad and smiles. Walter does not.

EXT. JOVIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

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

BUDDY
(taking her in)
You look miraculous.

JOVIE
Miraculous? Thanks.
(they start walking)
So what do you feel like doing?

BUDDY
I have a few ideas.

JOVIE
Well, I'm up for anything.

BUDDY
Really?

JOVIE

2

Sure.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

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

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

JOVIE
(smiles)
What are you doing?

She takes a sip.

BUDDY
Well?

JOVIE
It tastes like a crappy cup of coffee.

BUDDY
Ha ha.

He removes the blindfold.

JOVIE
It is a crappy cup of coffee.

EXT. MID-TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER

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

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

EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Buddy pulls her by the arm.

BUDDY
Check out the size of this...

He shows her a pine tree decorated for Christmas.

BUDDY
Can you believe it?

JOVIE
(nonplussed)
Come with me.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER - LATER

Jovie leads him around the corner.

REVEAL:

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

BUDDY
Wow, that looks wondrous.

2
They share their first genuine smile.

EXT. ICE RINK - LATER

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

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

BUDDY
Sorry.

JOVIE
You missed.

BUDDY
I missed?

JOVIE
Yeah.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NEXT DAY

Walter and the writers sit in silence, waiting. Walter checks his watch. Still waiting.

HUSKEY
I sure hope that car's seventy one degrees.

EXT. MANHATTAN - CONTINUOUS

The door swings open with a purpose:

REVEAL

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

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walter and the writer's continue to wait. Nervous hand wringing.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We see only the shoes of the infamous Miles Finch march through the company, echoing throughout the halls.

We see some of the workers' reactions.

This is epic.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

More nervous waiting.

EUGENE

I should have brought my camera.

More silence...and then:

MILES FINCH (O.S.)
Alright. Let's do this.

REVEAL

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

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

MILES FINCH
Yeah, yeah. Great. Let's get the uh
--
(i.e. Cash)
Taken care of so we can get started.

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

Miles checks the money and tucks it into his vest pocket.

MILES FINCH
Okay, cool.
(right to the point)
So what have you guys got so far?

WALTER
(to Huskey)
Go ahead.

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

MILES FINCH
No tomatoes. Too vulnerable. Kids are already vulnerable.

WALTER
That's what we were kind of thinking.

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

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

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

2

(Walter is very happy)
There's one idea I'm especially
psyched about. It's one of those
ideas where you're just like YES!

WALTER
What is it?!

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

BUDDY (O.S.)
Dad!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WALTER
Buddy! Please. Just go in the
basement!

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

MILES FINCH

2

Hey, jack weed. I may be "little," but I get more action in a week than you've had your whole life. I've got houses in LA, Hawaii, Vail and Paris, with a seventy inch plasma screen in each one of them. So I suggest you wipe that friggin' smile off your face before I bite it off.

(leaning in)

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

BUDDY

(to his Dad)

Boy, he's an angry Elf.

Miles suddenly ATTACKS! Buddy tries to avoid him, but Miles is surprisingly strong, flipping Buddy over the table.

Now out of nowhere, Buddy winds up like Popeye and decks him across the face. Buddy looks at his own fist in horror.

BUDDY

(looking at his fist)

What have I done?

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

Miles stands, victorious and grabs his coat.

MILES FINCH

All of you can kiss my vertically challenged ass.

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

WALTER

Miles! Wait!

BUDDY

(to himself)

A South Pole Elf.

Buddy rubs his chin and stands to face his father.

BUDDY

You're really red.

WALTER

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

BUDDY

(scared)

Where do you want me to go?

WALTER

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

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

2

EXT. MANHATTAN - LATER

QUICK CUTS

Buddy walking through the city, devastated.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER

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

WALTER
(into phone)
I can't really talk right now.

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

INTERCUT with Emily.

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

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

EM
Oh. Do you wanna send Buddy home
early?

WALTER
(riddled with guilt)
Oh, um, we'll talk about it later. I
gotta go, okay?

Suddenly the three writers rush in. Walter hangs up.

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

WALTER
What is it?

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

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

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

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

EUGENE

I agree, a home run.

MORRIS

Monster.

WALTER

How much time do we have?

HUSKEY

Forty-five.

WALTER

Let's get some story boards ready.

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Buddy steps out of the closet...

REVEAL

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

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

WE HEAR BUDDY'S VOICE AS HE WRITES.

BUDDY (V.O.)

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

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

Buddy walks out into the night.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - LATER

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

MICHAEL

Buddy?

INT. GREENWAY PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

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

GREENWAY

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

This better be good.

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

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

GREENWAY
Let's hear it.

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

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Dad?!

Walter turns.

His son Michael is standing in the room.

WALTER
Michael?

MICHAEL
Buddy left!

WALTER
What?

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

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

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

MICHAEL
Finish your meeting?!
(beat)
How'd I know you were going to say that?

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

WALTER
Michael! Wait!

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

WALTER
(to the board)
Mr. Greenway, we have to reschedule this.

GREENWAY
We don't have time to reschedule! I want to hear the damn thing NOW!
(to Michael)
Son, this has to wait.

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

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

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

MICHAEL
Kiss my ass, too!!

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Walter and Michael walk down the hall, triumphantly,
together.

GREENWAY (O.S.)
(in the distance)
If you walk out, Hobbs, you can
never come back to Greenway!

EXT. THE 59TH STREET BRIDGE - NIGHT

Buddy's on the bridge, looking down. Contemplating the worst
of all possible conclusions. WAVES crash and churn far
below.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK WEST - CONTINUOUS

Walter and Michael are walking fast, searching, half-
jogging. Losing hope. Where's Buddy?

EXT. 59TH STREET BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Buddy closes his eyes tight, then looks up, a tear streams
down his cheek.

SUDDENLY SOMETHING CATCHES HIS EYE.

A distant point with a glowing trail of smoke. Buddy narrows
his eyes to see as the point grows as it approaches. It
slowly reveals itself to be SANTA'S SLEIGH!

Tangled with reindeer, fish-tailing, and CRASHING!

BUDDY
Santa?!

EXT. MANHATTAN - MEANWHILE

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

MICHAEL
Oh...My...God!

WALTER
(missing it; turning)
What was that?!

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

WALTER
What happened?
(running after him)
Michael, wait up!?

EXT. SANTA'S CRASH SIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Buddy, running, frantic, comes upon Santa's SLEIGH in the distance. The reindeer peacefully graze as Santa struggles with the smoking sleigh. The landing looks to have been rough as the sleigh has dug a deep fifty foot long trench in the snow and dirt.

Santa frantically attempts to repair the problem with his head hidden under a hood panel. Smoke rises.

BUDDY
Santa!

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

SANTA
Back off slick!!!

He then recognizes him.

SANTA
Buddy?? Is that you?

BUDDY
Are you okay?

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

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

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

BUDDY
Really?

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

BUDDY
I will. Papa taught me how.

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

Buddy runs off into the woods.

INT. JOVIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

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

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

REMOTE REPORTER
Something? Do you mean an airplane or a helicopter?

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

He's too embarrassed.

LATINO CHILD
It was Santa's Sleigh!

REMOTE REPORTER
(dismissive)
Aren't you a cutie.
(listening to earpiece)
This could be a big hoax. I'm now told we have some amateur footage of a strange man dressed as an Elf. Let's take a look.

ON THE SCREEN

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

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

JOVIE

(seeing Buddy)
Oh my God.

EXT. ENGINE SITE - CENTRAL PARK -

CONTINUOUS

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

WALTER
What the...

BUDDY (O.S.)
You found it!

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

MICHAEL
Buddy! You're here!

BUDDY
(in a hurry)
There's something I've got to tell
you guys!

WALTER
(ignoring; focused)
No. Me first. There's something I
want to tell you right now! I take
back everything I said. You may be a
little...how do you say...
chemically imbalanced. But you've
been right about a lot of things. I
promise you, I'm going to be making
some changes in my life. I don't
want you to leave... I need you.
You're my son and I love you.

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

SANTA (O.S.)
(from a foggy distance)
Buddy?! How are we looking?? We
gotta move!

WALTER
Who was that?

EXT. SANTA'S CRASH SITE - CONTINUOUS

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

TRUTH

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

MICHAEL
(can barely speak)
Cool...

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

2

TV COVERAGE - CONTINUOUS

REMOTE REPORTER

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

EXT. BELVEDERE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

TRACKING CLOSE UP OF HOOVES

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

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

REMOTE REPORTER (V.O.)

These forces are highly trained, but rarely see action. Some have accused them of being too "gung ho" when called into duty. And their crowd control tactics at the Simon and Garfunkel concert in '85 were much criticized.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

EXT. GREAT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

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

MICHAEL

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

SANTA

(re: sleigh; working)

Hold this for a sec.

WALTER

This is not happening.

Walter and Michael, stunned, hold the hood up.

MICHAEL

Buddy's really an Elf?

BUDDY

Actually, I'm adopted.

MICHAEL

I can't believe it.

SANTA

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

MICHAEL

I wanted a skateboard.

2
Santa pulls out a scroll. He points to his name in calligraphy on a THICK LEATHER-BOUND BOOK.

It's THE LIST.

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

In this moment, Walter and Michael both really believe.

ECU

We see the CLAUS-0-METER move up a little.

The sleigh SHUDDERS and RISES, then falls to the ground.

MICHAEL
What happened?

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

MICHAEL
They fly away! Quick! Before they catch you!

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

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

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

Michael spots the RANGERS on the crest in the distance.

MICHAEL
Look!

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

BUDDY
Santa needs your help.

MICHAEL
But, what can we do?

BUDDY

I got an idea.

He whispers a PLAN to Walter and Michael.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

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

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

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

SANTA

My List!

Buddy stops Santa from chasing. He takes command.

BUDDY

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

SANTA

But Mrs. Claus made them for me...

WALTER

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

Santa complies and Walter dons the over-sized ensemble.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRICADES - CONTINUOUS

REMOTE REPORTER spots Michael running out of the trees.

REMOTE REPORTER

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

(to Michael)

Did you see anything?

MICHAEL

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

REMOTE REPORTER

(blowing him off)

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

MICHAEL

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

2

He pulls out the LIST and reads:

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

SERIES OF CUTS TO:

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

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

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

EMILY
Michael!

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Michael reads the list into the camera.

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

SERIES OF CUTS TO:

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

CAROLYN
Thank you, Buddy!

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

WE CUT TO:

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

BIKER
Must be another Dirk Lawson...

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL
Dave Keckler wants some Pony High
Tops!

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

The female Remote Reporter attempts to step in.

REMOTE REPORTER
That's quite enough little fella.

MICHAEL
What's your name?

REMOTE REPORTER

(smiling)
I'm Charlotte Dennon.

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

Off the Reporter's look, we...

SMASH CUT TO:

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

SANTA
We got power!

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

BUDDY
I don't have the engine fixed yet!

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. NEW YORK ONE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The Anchorman is confused.

ANCHORMAN

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

MICHAEL
No!

REMOTE REPORTER
(stunned)
How did you know that?

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

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

CROWD (O.S.)
Let the kid read! What do I want?!

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

JOVIE

Where's Buddy?!

MICHAEL

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

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

JOVIE

(to herself)

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

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Walter, standing watch, sees the MOUNTED POLICE CHARGING.

WALTER

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

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

WALTER

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

They ride right past him and after the sleigh.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

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

SANTA

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

BUDDY

What?!

SANTA

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

JOVIE

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

2
Walter finally arrives. He joins his family, watching Jovie.

WALTER
(to Emily)
He wasn't lying.

EMILY
Merry Christmas.

They hug.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

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

A Jack in the Box rattles by Buddy, POPPING OPEN.

BUDDY
Ah!

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

BUDDY
I've almost got it!

SANTA

We need power, now!

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

BUDDY
(in triumph)
YES!! I DID IT!! I'M THE GREATEST
ADOPTED ELF IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD!

SANTA
Good job, Buddy!

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

JOVIE
He sees you when you're sleeping...

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

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

2

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

REMOTE REPORTER
(to the studio)
Dick, come back to remote 3. I think I've got something here.

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

CAMERAS TURN BACK ON.

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

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

BRIEF CUTS AROUND THE CITY

The Broadcast is being watched...

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

ELF MANAGER
(as his friends sing)
Do what you want, I ain't singing a damn thing.

EXT. THE MOVING SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

MICHAEL

Wait! You're NOT singing!

WALTER

Yes I am.

MICHAEL

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

WALTER

Michael! Please, I have a terrible voice.

MICHAEL

Dad!!!

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

WALTER

(terrible)

Santa Claus is coming to town!

EXT. THE MOVING SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

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

A dash light BLINKS "HO HO HO" as the gauge hits the red zone. Santa howls in approval. The SLEIGH flies up into the night air and over the barricade, reporters and on-lookers. The rangers slide to a stop, foiled at last.

As the shadow of the sleigh zips high over them, the whole crowd joins in, singing their hearts out. Jovie can't believe it. She sings even stronger.

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

SANTA

Ho, ho, ho. Merry Christmas!

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

FREEZE FRAME

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - CHRISTMAS DAY

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

INT. WALTER'S NEW COMPANY - DAY

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Walter started his own independent publishing company. His first book was written by a brand new critically acclaimed children's author...

INT. GIMBELS - DAY

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

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

INSERT

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - DAY

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

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

BUDDY

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

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - DAY

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

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

2
We're back in the bookstore from the very first scene. A
little kid grabs the book out of the window.

FADE TO BLACK.

Credits