

# Checking It Twice

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## CHECKING IT TWICE

FADE IN:

### SERIES OF SHOTS

Moving through the snowy urban landscape of Portland where two kinds of images meet in the atom collider of modern culture post Millennium.

A) Classic Christmas. Last minute shoppers struggling with packages, Christmas trees strapped to the tops of cars, evergreen wreaths placed in doorways, charity bell ringers, etc.

B) Modern Commercialism. All the attempts to cash in on the holiday with none of the authentic feeling. Basically, buy, buy, buy. Even the Internet signs on with, "Do your shopping the e-as-y way."

We're listening to the best new version of "SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN" that this film can afford by the hottest group that will sing it. And, as we're listening, we begin to hear a voice that has no business being in the audio mix. It's coming from:

### EXT./INT. TAXI CAB - DAY

The back-up vocals come from **RUSSELL DAWSON** who's currently flyin' in his taxi with no fare and, judging by his use of the car HORN, not a lot of time to waste.

Russell's cab looks lived in -- an electric toothbrush with its charger plugged into the cigarette lighter, the sports page, fast food junk, and Army dog tags dangling from the mirror. Two items of special interest: a photograph of a young girl taped to the dash, and a small box, wrapped for mailing, on the passenger seat.

Russell kills the radio, stashes the package under the seat and jams the cab to an abrupt stop in front of:

### EXT. COMMERCIAL BUILDING - DAY

An old brownstone. The engine BACKFIRES, startling passing shoppers. Russell hops out, grabs his jacket tight against the cold. He goes to a basement window, set at street level, and knocks. The window cracks opens, revealing **MORGAN**, a black man wearing a red Santa's cap.

MORGAN

Have you been a good little boy this year?

RUSSELL

Stuff a stocking in it, will you,  
Morgan? I'm late.

Morgan opens the window all the way and Russell starts to lower himself through.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Among the peeled paint and racks of used clothing, WE SEE nearly a dozen Santas struggling into red suits. All of them are full-time cabbies like Russell, picking up a little extra holiday work, and they run the gamut of age, race and ethnicity. Morgan skeptically eyes Russell's flailing legs before lending a hand.

MORGAN

Technically, Russell, we Santas climb down chimneys. You know, big brick suckers with fires at the bottom?

Russell hops to the floor, pats Morgan's belly, clearly one Santa who needs no extra padding.

RUSSELL

Like to see you get down one of 'em.

Russell grabs a Santa outfit off the rack and starts putting it on over his street clothes. Red flannel trousers, dangling black suspenders. Cuban **MANNY LOPEZ**, meanwhile, struggles with a velcro strap.

MANNY

Got any more of thees -- you know, velcra?

MORGAN

It's velcro, Lopez. And do I look like a tailor?

RUSSELL

You sure don't look like any Santa Claus I ever saw.

MORGAN

No Santa you ever saw would dare come to my neighborhood after dark.

Morgan's cell phone rings.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Yeah... Baby! Baby, have I told you lately how beautiful you are?

While Morgan sweet talks on the phone, **ROBERT BUDISH**, manager of the temporary service office that supplies these Santas, enters with a clipboard.

BUDISH

Okay, Santas. Bus is outside. Shift pickups around 9:15.

RUSSELL

Keep your bus. I'm takin' the reindeer.

That elicits CATCALLS from the group. Budish looks up from his clipboard.

BUDISH

Fifty bucks says you can't name 'em all, hotshot.

Budish peels off a crisp fifty dollar bill from a money clip. Russell looks like he's about to tell Budish where to put it, when Manny puts together a couple of twentys and a ten and holds them out.

MANNY

Cover that.

This triggers an explosion of SIDE-BETS. Finally, Russell sighs and produces a bill of his own. WHOOPS and HOLLERS to the accepted challenge.

MORGAN

(into phone)

Gotta go, we got important Santa business. Bring you your present tonight, baby.

Morgan slides his cell phone off, grabs the money from both men and holds it.

RUSSELL

Rudolf.

BUDISH

Not part of the original eight, but honorary.

RUSSELL

Dasher, Dancer, Prancer.

As Russell struggles, one of the guys imitate a sexy flounce, blows a kiss his way.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Vixen!

BUDISH  
Four down, four to go.

RUSSELL  
Cupid.

MORGAN  
That's a valentine, bro.

RUSSELL  
Yeah? He's moonlighting. Lemme  
see. Ajax -- no -- Comet.  
(working hard)  
Blitzer -- Blitzoid -- Blitzen!

BUDISH  
You got seven.

MANNY  
Siete, amigo. Uno mas.

The room's going crazy. Russell is genuinely stumped. Thinking, thinking, thinking. Budish starts to take the money from Morgan. Russell stops him.

RUSSELL  
I remember this from when I was a  
kid.  
(slowly; under his  
breath)  
Now Dasher, now Dancer, now Prancer  
and Vixen. On Comet, on Cupid, on  
something and Blitzen.  
(triumphantly)  
Madonna!

Budish smugly takes the cash from Morgan.

BUDISH  
You got about seven more than I  
thought you would.

RUSSELL  
Wait a minute...

Russell begins to name names. Each one more desperate...

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Ringo? Snoopy? Thumper? Sparky?  
Flopsy? Inky? Twinkie?

BUDISH  
Donder.

Russell sinks back onto the bench, defeated. Budish consults his list and gives a final send-off.

## BUDISH (CONT'D)

Remember, the malls are gonna be free fire zones. Hand-to-hand shopping, kamikaze kids, panicked parents, you name it. Don't forget your handi-wipes and extra beard glue. And Chloe's got free dinner for all hacks tonight. Okay, then. Let's hear it.

The working class Santas emit a negatively enthusiastic rendition of "Ho, ho, ho" and begin filing toward the door, tugging on beards, stuffing in pillows, picking up sacks stuffed with brightly wrapped empty boxes. Lots of pats on the back and consolations for Russell. STAY WITH Russell who moves to the pay phone, starts adding change, dialing. Morgan approaches.

## MORGAN

I only knew two reindeer if it makes you feel better.

## RUSSELL

Thanks. Say, you wanna grab some turkey and cranberries after we do the Santa thing?

## MORGAN

Like to, but I got a Vixen of my own -- and I ain't talkin' about no flyin' animal -- who needs to see me later.

## RUSSELL

May all your chimneys be wide, partner.

Morgan and Russell slap hands, and Morgan takes off. A beat, then someone picks up the phone at the other end. We hear:

## GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)

*Merry Christmas... Hello?... Anybody there?...*

Russell listens to the voice, unable to answer his own call. Agonized, he finally breaks the connection and slowly hangs up.

CUT TO:

**CHRISTMAS PRESENT**

Beautifully wrapped, top-of-the-line paper, perfect bow. A pair of hands reach into frame, pick up the box, and shake it.

SLOANE (V.O.)  
Doesn't shake. That means it's packed  
tight with those styrofoam thingees  
in its original box.

We are in:

**INT. KENT HOUSE - SLOANE'S ROOM - DAY**

Doing the shaking is **SLOANE KENT**, 13, (*not the voice in the last scene*), living large on her newly-acquired teenager status. Her room reflects the latest fave raves. Her accomplice is her seven-year-old brother, **CASEY KENT**. Sloane hefts the box, begins to knock on it like she's selecting a ripe melon.

CASEY  
Now what are you doing?

SLOANE  
Ponging. Real important.  
(sets present down)  
Definitely my Palm Pilot. Don't  
even need to open it.

Sloane is an experienced veteran of Christmas espionage and Casey is in awe of her prowess.

CASEY  
Wow.

SLOANE  
Let's see yours.

Casey hands her another neatly wrapped present. Sloane shakes it, then pongs. She sets the present down on the bed.

SLOANE (CONT'D)  
We're going to have to go in.  
Scissors.

Sloane sounds like a surgeon proffering a medical opinion. She holds out an expectant hand like one, too. Casey hands over a pair of scissors. Sloane sets to work expertly cutting the tape on the wrapping paper.

SLOANE (CONT'D)  
When you open this tomorrow morning,  
you act really surprised. They'll  
never suspect a thing.  
(beat)  
We're in.

Sloane slides the box out of the wrapping paper. Casey grabs it away from her. On the front of the box is a drawing of men's briefs.

CASEY

Underwear?

SLOANE

Complete fake-out. It's probably  
your plane ticket to Uncle Alan's.

Casey's expression turns to a frown. Sloane takes the box  
back and starts to open it.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

If he takes you to Magic Mountain,  
you gotta be 42 inches tall to ride  
Batman. Wear three pairs of socks  
and your boots.

Casey grabs the box back. Holds it tight against his chest.

CASEY

I asked Santa for the plane ticket,  
not Mom and Dad.

Spoken with an earnestness that shows Casey is still on the  
cusp of belief about things Santa.

SLOANE

So if Santa brings you one, too,  
you'll clean up on frequent flyer  
miles.

CASEY

(worried)

Look, he knows when you've been  
sleeping and he knows when you're  
awake, right? He's gonna know we're  
doing this.

SLOANE

No one will know.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Sloane and Casey freeze with  
fright. Before they can react, **MICHAEL KENT**, their dad,  
pokes his head inside, looks around suspiciously.

MICHAEL

What are you doing?

Casey looks at Sloane, stricken. Sloane rallies, flaring at  
her father.

SLOANE

Dad, we're trying to wrap your  
present, okay?!

Mortified, Michael quickly shuts the door. Casey throws his  
back against it.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Okay, okay. I didn't see anything.  
As soon as you're done, let's get  
going. Mall's going to be a zoo.

SLOANE

(shouts at door)  
Almost done. Go away.  
(whisper; to Casey)  
Mom wrapped these presents, not Dad.  
We'll sneak 'em back down tonight.

CASEY

(considers it)  
We should buy him some real Jockey  
shorts while we're out.

SLOANE

(proud)  
Good. You're catching on. *Always*  
cover your tracks.

Casey looks down, rubs his footprints out of the carpeting.  
Sloane sighs and rolls her eyes.

**INT. LLOYD CENTER MALL - SKATING RINK - DAY**

A long line of kids wait to get a crack at Santa (Russell) who now reigns supreme on his throne. It's located in the middle of an animated North Pole set where mechanical elves wrap packages and reindeer paw the ground, while skaters make the rounds in the rink.

PICK UP Michael and Casey who are in line to see Russell. Sloane stands to the side, not looking at either her father or brother as they speak.

MICHAEL

Sloane, it won't kill you to stand  
in line with us.

SLOANE

Somebody could see me.

MICHAEL

C'mon. Can't be that bad.

SLOANE

Standing in line to see Santa with  
my little brother and my father?  
Yeah, right...

MICHAEL

We'll act like we don't know you.  
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(to Casey)

Maybe you should ask Santa about a ticket to LA, huh?

SLOANE

Santa's not a travel agent.

CASEY

(defensive, worried)

Santa can do anything. If you've been good.

SLOANE

Have you ever been arrested? No. Then you've been good.

Casey considers this, then cups his hand to whisper in his sister's ear.

CASEY

Mark Thiebau and I crashed Dad's hard-drive one time when we downloaded that Punk'd screensaver.

SLOANE

He was clueless, trust me.  
(dramatically)  
But was Santa?

Casey looks panic stricken.

CASEY

I'm dead.

Michael, who wasn't listening to the computer conversation, tries to pick up Casey's spirits.

MICHAEL

Look, I'm sure that whatever it was, Santa might cut you some slack if you promise not to do it again.

The **PHOTO COORDINATOR**, definitely a little queer eye, dressed in an elf costume and carrying Santa's list, points to Sloane.

PHOTO COORDINATOR

You're next.

Sloane rolls her eyes and pushes Casey toward Santa.

### RUSSELL/SANTA

With a couple of teen-age bullies, **DOUG** and **ALEX**, who are also clearly too old for this stuff, giving him a hard time, pulling at his beard.

DOUG

El Fako.

RUSSELL

(grabbing it back)

I'm taking you off the list.

ALEX

Humbug City, dude. You never come by my place. No way you will tonight.

RUSSELL

Don't be so sure.

DOUG

What happened to the BB gun I asked for last year? Huh?

RUSSELL

(menacingly)

Santa's a pacifist. But that could change.

ALEX

Even if you spent two seconds at each house, you still couldn't deliver all the presents in one night.

The Photo Coordinator approaches with Casey in tow.

PHOTO COORDINATOR

That's enough time with Santa, gentlemen.

ALEX

(to Casey)

He's not Santa.

Doug darts out his hand to pull Russell's beard, and the two jump away, laughing at this great thrill. Casey studies this carefully. Russell turns away to re-arrange his beard, embarrassed, speaking angrily to the Photo Coordinator.

RUSSELL

If you can't keep that kind of action away, I'm out of here. Nobody's paying me enough.

PHOTO COORDINATOR

Well, aren't we needing a little egg nog?

Russell turns around to face Casey.

RUSSELL

Hi, there. What's your name?

CASEY

Casey.

RUSSELL

C'mere and tell Santa what you want  
for Christmas.

Casey climbs on his lap. Stares at Russell's face.

CASEY

(innocently)

Your beard's on crooked.

Unlike the teasing from the two brats, this is an honest  
observation. Russell sets Casey down. Shouts to the Photo  
Coordinator.

RUSSELL

Hey, I got another one here.

CASEY

You're not really Santa. Right?

Casey's lower lip is quivering. Russell sees the difference  
from his last customers.

RUSSELL

Don't go rollin' out the rainclouds  
on me, okay, kid? Think of me as  
his helper. I mean, the real  
article's not gonna hang at the mall  
for minimum wage, you know?

Casey's eyes widen, aghast at this too-honest yuletide  
blaspheme. He turns and races away from the North Pole,  
eyes tearing. Michael chases after him. Doug and Alex laugh.  
Sloane observes all this, stomps on Russell's foot.

SLOANE

Sad and pathetic.

Sloane marches off, completely grossed out by the entire  
experience.

**EXT. KENT HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON - ESTABLISHING**

A White Christmas in a typical American neighborhood. A  
steady snowfall continues.

**INT. KENT HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON**

A tray of steaming sugar cookies is pulled from the oven by  
**GRANDMA LUCY**, a 60s Flower Girl who's grown into an eccentric  
Flower Woman with long gray hair. Buzzing around her is her  
daughter, **NINA KENT**, forty, dressed in a red and green apron.

She's frosting, sprinkling and assembling finished cookies on plates.

NINA

Mom, you're in the house five minutes and you're cooking. You don't have to do that, you know. Go play with your grandchildren.

GRANDMA LUCY

If I don't cook, you'll use some of --  
(dismissive gesture)  
-- that pre-processed junk that adds fat bottom lines. And not just to corporations but people like you.

Grandma Lucy points to a pile of ready-to-bake materials: packaged dough, frosting in a can. Around the rest of the kitchen is evidence of another way: flour, sugar, measuring cups and spoons, etc.

NINA

It's quick.

GRANDMA LUCY

(points to microwave)  
You shouldn't need to be a computer programmer to eat.

NINA

It's easy, Mom. Casey's been microwaving since he was two.

GRANDMA LUCY

My grandmother taught my mother the real way of cooking and my mother taught me and I'm going to teach you. Sloane should be here, too.

NINA

Sloane? Bad for her image. Casey, maybe.

Unaffected, Grandma Lucy hands her a cookie. Nina tries to wave her off.

NINA (CONT'D)

My cholesterol ratio's totally wacked, Mom...

GRANDMA LUCY

(ignoring her)  
It's hot. Be careful.

Nina takes a bite, transported to another time by the smell and the taste. Grandma Lucy smiles.

Can't beat the real thing. The door to the kitchen swings open. It's Michael, Sloane and Casey, whose eyes are a bit puffy from crying. AD-LIBS of greeting, hugs and Merry Christmases exchanged. Michael grabs a cookie.

NINA

How'd it go? Was it great?

Michael nods to Casey, his call.

CASEY

We didn't get to see the real Santa.

NINA

Oh.

Confused, she looks to Michael for an explanation.

MICHAEL

Guy had an attitude. I had to file a complaint.

SLOANE

I filed mine on his foot.

Nina shakes her head, leans down to Casey.

NINA

Will you be okay?

Casey nods. Stiff upper lip time. Michael tries to change the subject.

MICHAEL

Wow, the real Santa's gonna love these cookies!

NINA

He will if you leave him some.

Grandma Lucy sets Sloane and Casey to work at the table.

GRANDMA LUCY

Casey, you do sprinkles and Sloane, you do the frosting.

SLOANE

Sorry, gram, but I don't touch food with over twenty percent fat.

Nina drills Sloane with a look, and she reluctantly complies.

NINA

Now we've got a real assembly line going.

MICHAEL  
Like Santa's toy line.

NINA  
So what's your job?

MICHAEL  
Quality control.

Michael munches another cookie. The assembly line grinds ahead, then:

CASEY  
It's just ... how does the real Santa  
get to all the houses in one night?

Michael and Nina look at each other. None of the parenting manuals have prepped them for this.

NINA  
Time warp. Right, Michael?

MICHAEL  
It has to do with wormholes in space,  
physics, things you'll study in high  
school.

Michael winces, but Casey nods.

CASEY  
Giant wormholes?

Grandma Lucy turns from the oven, announces matter-of-factly:

GRANDMA LUCY  
Casey, it's magic, that's all. Your  
mother asked the same question.  
Now, how are the cookies?

Satisfied with his answers, Casey takes a bite of a cookie.

CASEY  
Better than Mom's.  
(to Nina)  
Sorry.

Michael nods, takes a huge bite out of another cookie.

GRANDMA LUCY  
Of course they are. That's one-  
hundred percent real butter in them.

Michael puts the uneaten half cookie back on the plate, looks at the oven clock.

MICHAEL  
Gotta go. Ebenezer needs me.

SLOANE  
How many presents can we open tonight?

MICHAEL  
Nice try. Tomorrow. First thing.  
(beat)  
Providing the sun is up...

Michael kisses Sloane and Casey, turns to kiss Nina. She hands him a plate of cookies.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
You're trusting me with an entire plate?

NINA  
It's a night of miracles, isn't it?

**INT. KGW-TV NEWSROOM - ASSIGNMENT DESK - NIGHT**

Michael approaches reporter **PELTER**, assignment editor **HOLLINGER** and writer **GREENSTEIN**, gathered around POLICE SCANNERS and TELETYPE. Greenstein's reading a copy of the "National Insider," the headline of which screams, "Alien Medical Miracle!" Michael offers up his plate of cookies to AD- LIBS of greeting and thanks.

MICHAEL  
Anything shakin'?

GREENSTEIN  
Well, according to informed sources, the technology for liposuction was reverse engineered from the Roswell crash. How's about you?

MICHAEL  
Oh, status quo. Except that I almost got in a fist fight with Santa Claus today.

HOLLINGER  
Too bad. You could've used that for the opening tease.

PELTER  
Got any more with the green frosting?

GREENSTEIN  
It's food coloring, Pelter. Red, green, same frosting. Right, Michael?

MICHAEL

My mother-in-law's secret recipe.  
Sorry.

GREENSTEIN

Think she'd do an interview?

HOLLINGER

Oh, and some old geezer at the Masonic Lodge called. Says a bunch of vets stationed up at the North Pole during the fifties get together every Christmas Eve and swap war stories.

MICHAEL

We're probably that desperate.

GREENSTEIN

Personally, I think you should go with the ET fat suckage story.

MICHAEL

Pelter, we're gonna need some video of the fancy neighborhood Christmas lights. Try my street.

PELTER

Which one is that?

MICHAEL

Castle Hill. I swear I got neighbors using about half of Portland Electric's output. And the guy next door to me does this "thing" that pushes the envelope of lawn ornaments.

PELTER

We'll swing by in the van.

MICHAEL

I'll bet it looks great from the air. Take Ruegger up in the chopper.

PELTER

No way! Last time Roogs started hanging his legs out the chopper door.

MICHAEL

I need thirty seconds for credits.

PELTER

You want me to risk my life for a half minute dedicated to energy criminals?

Michael shrugs his shoulders at Pelter, smiles. Everyone else nods agreement. Pelter takes a few cookies for the road, muttering on the way out:

PELTER (CONT'D)

Red ones do not taste as good as green.

**INT. KENT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

A tall Douglas Fir with handmade ornaments, stockings hung by the chimney with care, cookies and milk on the coffee table, CHRISTMAS MUSIC on the stereo. Sloane reads to Nina, Casey and Grandma Lucy.

SLOANE

"T'was the night before Christmas  
when all through the house, not a  
creature was stirring, not even a  
mouse. The stockings were hung by  
the chimney with care --"

CASEY

Mom?

SLOANE

I'm reading!

NINA

What, Casey?

CASEY

Shouldn't we have the fuzzy red  
stockings with the white stuff around  
the top like you get in the store?

GRANDMA LUCY

It should be illegal to sell such  
things.

NINA

Your grandmother made these, Casey.

Casey's still not convinced.

SLOANE

Casey, these hold a lot more stuff.

That does the trick.

CASEY

Cool.

(to Sloane)

Can I read some of it?

SLOANE

No way.

Nina's attention, however, is focused on the tree.

NINA

I thought we had more presents under here. Does this look right?

Sloane stops Nina with an immediate about-face.

SLOANE

Mom, Casey wants to read, okay? He deserves a little attention, don't you think?

Not waiting for an answer, Sloane pushes the book into Casey's hands. He begins reading.

CASEY

"The moon on the bre...."

SLOANE

Breast of a new fallen snow.

Casey makes a face.

CASEY

They're not supposed to use that word, are they?

NINA

It's a different kind of "B" word. Okay for tonight.

Casey still confused, plows ahead.

### A FULL MOON

It's a magical winter evening with a light snow drifting gently across the sky.

CASEY (V.O.)

"Gave the luster of midday to objects below..."

And then, SILHOUETTED against the moon, an obscure image of a flying object, not particularly aerodynamic. We hear the sound of CHIMES.

CASEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"When what to my wondering eyes should appear but a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer --"

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. KENT HOUSE - CASEY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

An eerie shadow falls across the door. It is then gently pushed open, so as not to make a sound. An intruder is inside.

The room reveals the passions of karate, X-Box, rock collecting and Christmas. The kid's got his own take, though, as seen by the Frodo hanging from an improvised gallows.

Casey has his covers pulled up comfortably around him, sleeping peacefully, sugar plums obviously dancing. Abruptly, his eyes pop open and he sits upright in bed, jerking away the covers. Casey is fully clothed and the intruder is Sloane. She makes a thumbs up sign.

**NINA'S ROOM**

Nina furiously climbs on her elliptical trainer at the steepest possible angle, wearing headphones, listening to self-improvement CDs.

TAPE VOICE (V.O.)

Success is not measured in the miles  
walked, but in the thousands of steps  
taken every day on the journey. Be  
the person you see yourself being.

**GUEST ROOM**

Where Grandma Lucy appears to be taking Nina's success guru's advice as she tries on various silk tie-dye outfits. She's also wearing headphones, finding her own muse in the Jimi Hendrix version of "ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER." The Jerry Springer Show plays silently on TV. The super reads: "Mommy Kissed More Than Santa Claus."

HENDRIX (V.O.)

*There must be some way out of here,  
said the joker to the thief...*

**STAIRWELL**

Carrying the two presents we saw earlier, Sloane and Casey sneak downstairs. Where before the tree was aglow with colored lights and Christmas cheer, it is now dark and quiet. Illuminated by the beam of a flashlight, they approach the tree. On a TV tray in front, rest the cookies and milk. The beam stops there.

CASEY

(disappointed)  
Still there.

SLOANE

What do you expect with soy milk?

CASEY

We should squirt some chocolate in it.

SLOANE

Let's just put these presents back before mom finishes running up her hill on the treadmill.

CASEY

What if Santa comes and we're not asleep, but it looks like we're stealing presents and Mom left plain old stupid gaggy milk!?

Exasperated, Sloane grabs the milk and heads for the kitchen.

SLOANE

I'll take care of it. Put the presents back.

Sloane exits for the kitchen with the glass. Casey places the presents on the coffee table, examines the tree for proper re-placement. As he does, the sound of CHIMES. Casey freezes, looking around the room. Then, the sound of TINKLING BELLS. Casey backs away from the tree, crouching behind the sofa.

A LOUD PLOP is followed by shadowy movement inside the fireplace. Casey's eyes are wide open. It's not Santa or Mom or Dad. A small figure, Casey's size, steps from the fireplace. It's an:

**ELF!!!!!!**

Yes, an elf! Beardless, pointed ears, red and green elfin suit, curled shoes with bells on the toes. He dusts himself with one hand, a leather scroll clasped in the other.

The Elf inspects the hung stockings and tree decorations, moving uncertainly as if he's not too sure of himself. He unrolls the scroll and runs an elfin finger down the paper. As it passes a name, that name is highlighted magically, casting a soft glow.

ELF

Hunter, Amy. Iwasaki, Andrew. Kent,  
Casey. Hmmm. Nasty hard drive crash.  
Not too nice now, is it?

Casey's face is a mask of fear. They know. The Elf makes a check on the scroll.

ELF (CONT'D)

Still nice. Could be a little nicer  
next year. Sister Sloane. Hmmmm.  
Present tampering.

Abruptly, the scroll SNAPS closed on the Elf's fumbling fingers. He pulls free, glances up the chimney, then notices the cookies. The Elf takes a bite of one cookie, likes what he tastes.

ELF (CONT'D)

Real butter.

He pries the scroll open, checks it twice. He sets the cookie on the plate, looks for a drink. Frowns.

ELF (CONT'D)

No milk.

Casey's eyes, wider still, watch the Elf produce a tape measure and gauge the opening to the chimney. He stashes the tape and sprinkles dust from a hip pouch into the fireplace. He starts away but returns to throw a little more dust.

Sloane comes through the kitchen door with a glass of chocolate milk. Casey aggressively pulls her behind the sofa and clamps a hand over her mouth. Casey points in the direction of the Christmas tree, and now it's Sloane's turn to widen her eyes.

**EXT./INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT**

The graphics on the outside proclaim KGW-TV NEWS. Inside, reporter Pelter and videographer **ROOGS** cruise above the neighborhood, magically illuminated by the outdoor Christmas lighting. Roogs sees the world through a camera eyepiece, shooting through an open window. A **PILOT** negotiates a banking turn.

ROOGS

Take me through one more pass but  
lower.

PILOT

You want to scare everybody?

ROOGS

No. I want a shot that looks at  
least as good as what I can get off  
an Internet spycam. Can we take  
this door off?

PELTER

The door stays on, Roogs!

ROOGS

Don't stroke out, man.  
(to pilot)  
Just make it lower, okay?

The pilot shrugs and adjusts his throttle, dropping the helicopter lower. As he does, WE SEE a tiny image of something on a housetop, highlighted against the white snow on the roof. Pelter sees it too.

PELTER

Down there on the right. Some kind  
of ornament on the roof. You see  
it?

ROOGS

Bingo. Let me zoom in a bit.

**CAMERA POV - THE ROOFTOP**

Now there's nothing obscure about this image, seen through the black and white eyepiece. It's a full-on, real life sleigh harnessed to eight reindeer and there's a man with a flowing beard standing by them!

ROOGS (V.O.)

You have to have money to burn to  
put a decoration like this puppy on  
your roof. Get me lower.

**INT. KENT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

The Elf notices the presents on the coffee table. Elfin fingers probe the re-wrapped paper, checking the tape and paper folds. Sloane and Casey strain to see but don't dare leave their hiding place.

ELF

Oh, my. Here it is.

The SOUND of ROTOR BLADES whop-whopping in the night spins the Elf toward the window.

ELF (CONT'D)

"Away to the window I flew like a  
flash, tore open the shutters and --  
"

The Elf tries to "tear open the shutters" but they're horizontal blinds. He shrugs and divides an opening with his hands. His eyes widen with fright. Casey sneaks up behind him to get a better look himself. What they see is:

**WINDOW POV - THE HELICOPTER**

Hovering in the moonlight above the house. Hardly a miniature sleigh and tiny reindeer. Roogs is literally hanging out the open door of the flying machine.

**INT. KENT HOUSE - NINA'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Nina, intent on her elliptical trainer and her self-help tapes is oblivious to the ROTOR-SOUND pounding outside her closed window.

**GUEST ROOM**

Grandma Lucy is gone, but all her clothing options are still tossed on the bed, sad rejects.

**EXT./INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT**

A terrified Pelter hangs on to Roogs' belt, trying to keep him from falling out. The noise of the ROTORS is deafening.

ROOGS

(yelling)

It's some kind of life-sized Santa decoration. Reindeer and everything. Just hold it right here. Yeah. Perfect.

PELTER

Unbelievable! It's moving!

ROOGS

It's floating off the roof! Are you seeing this??!!

**CAMERA POV - THE SLEIGH**

As described. In flight. Somewhat unclear, but definitely looks like it's reindeer powered.

**BACK TO HELICOPTER**

Pelter screams to the pilot.

PELTER

Hard left. We gotta get closer!

(to Roogs)

C'mon, Roogs. You gotta really lean out, man. We need this shot!

Pelter, no longer complaining about Roogs' daredevil nature, now pushes his partner a little further outside, still holding onto his belt.

Roogs holds the camera with one hand, and the copter with the other.

ROOGS

I don't care how they did it, man.  
This tape is worth a million bucks!

PELTER

We'll get Emmys, network jobs.

ROOGS

Check the tape!

Pelter, excited, lets go of Roogs' belt. Roogs teeters precariously, falls forward out of the copter. Roogs manages to grab hold of a runner, hanging on for dear life, dropping the camera in the process.

### THE CAMERA

Plunging through the night air. It hits the stretched wires of a power line. Sparks fly, the equipment fries and smokes, and the tension gives it a bounce in another direction.

Now the camera plunges toward a hot tub, sending the occupants scrambling out of the way. The equipment enters the swirling water and sinks out of sight.

### INT. KENT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Elf still has his face smushed against the window. Casey has the next best seat in the house. And Sloane hasn't been able to get a look in edgewise.

### ELF AND CASEY'S POV - THE SLEIGH

As it shifts to light speed in an instant. The reindeer blaze a trail across the sky that disappears into a point of light.

### THE ELF

Backs away from the window and in doing so, bumps into Casey. They both jump.

ELF

Eeeh!

CASEY

Aahh!

Sloane covers the mouths of the screaming parties. Casey's eyes are bugging out. The Elf's eyes are wide as saucers themselves. Sloane points upstairs; says quietly:

SLOANE

Our mom is upstairs.

Slowly, Sloane removes her hand from Casey's mouth. He blinks but says nothing. Sloane turns to the Elf. Places a finger to her lips, shushing everyone, then slowly releases the Elf who takes off SQUEALING. Casey and Sloane move to cut him off using the tree as a blockade. As the Elf ducks behind the tree, the Christmas lights blaze to life.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

How did he do that?

CASEY

He's a, I don't know, like a Yugi Moto or something.

SLOANE

Not everything in the world can be explained by Yu-Gi-Oh.

ELF

You better be good, I'm telling you why.

SLOANE

You better be quiet! I already told you why.

Sloane lunges and misses. Three tiny hops launch the Elf toward the sofa where Casey snags him in mid-air, causing the scroll to go unrolling across the floor. Struggling, they teeter on the top edge of the sofa, collapsing onto the carpet. In the scuffle, Casey pins the Elf belly-down on the floor.

CASEY

Look.

On the back of the Elf's jacket, WE SEE:

**INSERT - JACKET**

Where the black stenciled label plainly reads:

"PROPERTY OF ELVES."

**BACK TO SCENE**

Casey smiles triumphantly at Sloane, who has moved into a position to help keep the Elf pinned.

CASEY

His name is Elvis.

Casey proudly displays this example of his detective skills for his sister by pointing at the jacket.

SLOANE

Casey, that says "Elves," not Elvis.  
It says "Property of Elves."

CASEY

He's a real life elf?

SLOANE

Give me a break, Casey.

(to elf)

My dad works on the SWAT team and  
he's got a big gun and he's upstairs  
so don't try anything weird. Now,  
who are you really?

Sloane and Casey pull the Elf up (hereafter, Elvis) and as they do:

ELVIS

Well, recently there's been a movement  
to call us "Diminutively Challenged"  
or even "Executive Assistants" but,  
technically, yes, your brother is  
right.

Elvis speaks nervously, a little shy, a little scared. Sloane studies him as his eyes dart about the room.

SLOANE

Do you have a real name?

ELVIS

I do. I was never really partial to  
it but seeing as how Mrs. Claus liked  
it I went along. But now that I  
think about it --

(points to Casey)

-- I like the name he likes for me.

SLOANE

Elvis?

Casey beams, touche.

ELVIS

Do you think Mrs. Claus will mind?

SLOANE

You are one weird kid.

(to Casey)

When did you two plan this?

CASEY

We didn't. He's just ... just ...  
neat!

ELVIS

Not so neat as you might think, Casey. I'm afraid what we saw out your window is a matter of great concern. Or is that grave concern?

SLOANE

What was out the window?

CASEY

Santa Claus and his sleigh and the reindeer flying away.

SLOANE

Like I'm sure.

CASEY

Where were they going?

ELVIS

Well, of course, I have no idea, or rather he has no idea. You see...  
he has the toys but I have the list.

A slender elfin finger snakes out, points at the scroll and beckons, "Come here." Abruptly, the scroll rewinds and snaps back like a tape measure to Elvis, startling him as much as Casey and Sloane.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

According to the list, which I've checked more than twice, mind you, the average estimated time for Santa to visit each house, using magic, naturally, means we have until 12:43 NPT to get the list to Santa.

SLOANE

NPT?

ELVIS

North Pole Time. Let's see that would be 9:43 tonight in London, and, hmmm, here in Portland we have until 2:43.

CASEY

Wow! I've never stayed up that late.  
(then)  
Or what happens?

ELVIS

With the toys and no list, Santa won't know where to go. I have the list but not a toy to my name.

(MORE)

ELVIS (CONT'D)  
(bottom line)  
No presents delivered, no Christmas.

SLOANE  
Who put you up to this?

ELVIS  
(proudly)  
Personally hired by Mister Claus  
himself. It's my first year as Head  
Elf in Charge of the List.  
(sighs)  
Probably my last. First I forgot to  
pack toys for an entire city block  
of kids in London, then the mix-up  
in air space over Washington and now  
this.

Casey puts his arm around Elvis to console him.

CASEY  
Santa'll be back for you. We got  
major munchies till he gets here.

ELVIS  
Not standard EOP.  
(shrugs)  
Elf Operating Procedure.

SLOANE  
You guys have a manual?

ELVIS  
Not so much a manual as this...

Elvis reaches inside his pocket and produces an envelope  
that appears to be of an elegant parchment quality.

#### **INSERT - THE ENVELOPE**

On it, in handwriting, it clearly states: "IN CASE OF  
EMERGENCY..."

Elvis' little elfin fingers rip the envelope open. On a  
single sheet of matching parchment paper, it reads:

*"When you find Christmas, you'll find Santa."*

#### **BACK TO SCENE**

Casey is trying to see over Elvis' shoulder and, not wanting  
to admit it, so is Sloane.

ELVIS

(reading)

"When you find Christmas, you'll  
find Santa."

(to Sloane, Casey)

Well, there you have it.

CASEY

It's Christmas Eve! Christmas is  
everywhere!

SLOANE

Even if I believed you for a milli-  
second -- which I don't -- you have  
no idea where to look. Especially  
if Christmas is everywhere.

CASEY

So you just want to give up? You  
don't even want to try?

SLOANE

Right. Give up and not try. That's  
it.

Elvis looks really worried.

ELVIS

Oh, if only Rupert were here.

SLOANE

(sarcastic)

Who's he? Father Time?

ELVIS

(completely serious)

Quite a famous Elf. Legendary, in  
point of fact --

Sloane makes a time-out sign.

SLOANE

But who is he?

ELVIS

He was me last year. Or rather, I  
was him this year. He flew with  
Santa for one-hundred-sixty-two  
Christmases and never so much as  
forgot a candy cane.

CASEY

Santa must've had a reason to pick  
you!

ELVIS

The constant threat of computer crash was just too much for Rupert. Nervous breakdown. He's better now, but he's been diagnosed as technophobic.

SLOANE

(not)  
Great.

CASEY

Where would Santa have gone after our house? Who's the next house on the list?

Elvis wrestles the scroll open. His face is reflected in a glow as an individual name is highlighted.

ELVIS

He is on his third Millennium doing this. Might remember something from last year.

(beat)  
Thank you, Casey!

Suddenly, Elvis takes off, straight out the front door. Casey runs out after him. Sloane stops in the doorway, wind and snow blowing in, trying to yell and whisper at the same time.

SLOANE

Casey! Get back here!

Sloane grabs snow hats and winter jackets off the rack and heads into the snow.

**EXT. KENT HOUSE - NIGHT**

Elvis hurries down the sidewalk, followed by Casey, followed by Sloane.

SLOANE

Back in the house now, Casey! Where do you think you're going?

CASEY

I don't know.  
(to Elvis)  
Where are we going?

ELVIS

The Murphy's. 634 Greenwood Street.

CASEY

Elvis needs someone to take him.  
Me.

SLOANE

Forget it, Casey. Dad'd kill me if  
I let you go by yourself.

CASEY

So you come with me. And if you  
don't, everyone at Ashbrook High  
School is going to know you pretend  
kiss your pillow.

SLOANE

You wouldn't.

CASEY

One e-mail spam would do it.

ELVIS

Sorry. I can't stay.

Elvis takes off. Sloane decides to bargain with her brother.

SLOANE

I'll go to Greenwood. But that's  
it, Santa or not, we go home.

Casey nods, "deal." He runs to catch up to Elvis.

ELVIS

You'll love his red suit. Always  
wears a red suit. Not the same suit,  
he has lots of suits, but they're  
all red.

SLOANE

The man definitely needs to get out  
more than once a year.

#### **EXT. CROSSROAD'S DINER - NIGHT**

Russell's cab BACKFIRES to a stop. It's one of several taxis  
parked out front. This is the downtown area, where several  
hubs of transportation intersect -- taxi dispatch, train  
station, bus station.

#### **INT. CROSSROAD'S DINER - NIGHT**

A sign proudly proclaims, "We Never Close." The inside has  
been tackily decorated with bright Christmas lights. A TV  
set in the corner is tuned to a holiday show. The sound is  
down, however, and the noise we hear is really the squawk of  
a TAXI RADIO DISPATCH.

Russell enters and is greeted by **CHLOE**, the waitress who always has a smile for her favorite cabbie.

CHLOE

Hey, Russell, thought you were  
Clausin' it tonight.

RUSSELL

(sits at counter)  
I kind of got in a beef with some of  
the kids.

CHLOE

Got news for you, hon. Santa's not  
supposed to get in beefs with kids  
on Christmas Eve.

RUSSELL

Some of them'd just as soon kick  
Santa's ass and steal his sleigh.  
(shakes head)  
It's not like trick-or-treating,  
they don't get anything. I don't  
know why they bother if they don't  
believe in Santa.

CHLOE

Nobody who can surf the net really  
believes in Santa Claus these days,  
Russell. And, yet, the funny thing  
is, presents still get exchanged,  
mistletoe is hung, tiny tots are  
still aglow.

RUSSELL

Aglow? You mean sitting too close  
to their two thousand dollar  
computers?

CHLOE

You'll need pie. Probably pumpkin.  
They sapped your reserves.

RUSSELL

The only magic in Christmas these  
days is how fast your money  
disappears.

CHLOE

(pouring coffee)  
Still givin' away dinner at shift  
change this year. You should come  
by.

RUSSELL

Everybody else is makin' a buck off  
of Christmas but you.

CHLOE

Guess that makes me a sucker. For  
all you guys.

RUSSELL

They got cabs. A lot of 'em  
practically live in 'em anyway.

CHLOE

That's just it. Some of 'em don't  
have --  
(too late)  
-- anyplace to go.

Chloe winces, realizing Russell has no place either. She  
puts a hand on his shoulder.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I'll get you some of that pie.

Chloe takes off. Russell sips his coffee.

**EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT**

From here, an excellent view of the city lights. A small  
group of kids are using this as a launch site for serious  
sledding. PICK UP Sloane and Casey, pulling Elvis on a sled.

CASEY

You can see everything from here.

ELVIS

If you find Christmas, you'll find  
Santa. So simple and yet so complex.  
So like Santa.

SLOANE

So not happening.

A few of the colored Christmas lights seem to dim, and wink  
off. Elvis winces.

CASEY

Why did they go out?

ELVIS

Christmas is dying, Casey.

Casey sees the defeated look on Elvis's face. He grabs him  
by the shoulders, determined to buck him up.

CASEY

Christmas is not dying. We are going to find Santa. Because I am not going to bed until I meet him.

Casey practically has tears in his eyes. It's hard to watch a kid his age being brave for you, even if you're an elf. Elvis bucks up.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Out of curiosity, what if you don't find him?

ELVIS

I could be re-assigned. Boiling eggs, coloring them, hiding them here and there. Shredding that fake green grass for the baskets. It's not a pretty thought.

CASEY

You'd be working on Easter!?

ELVIS

Possibly, and nothing against the bunny, but she's no Santa.

CASEY

No way. The Easter Bunny! They wouldn't make you do that.

ELVIS

Only if next year there was ... no ... Christmas. Belief is a tricky thing... if we let the light go out this year, it might never come back on...

DOUG (O.S.)

Hey, it's the cry-baby from the mall.

It's Doug and Alex, the two bullies from the mall, pulling their own sleds up the hill after a run.

ALEX

Who's the dwarf?

CASEY

He's not a dwarf. He's an executive assistant.

(to Elvis)

Right?

Sloane shushes him, faces down the bullies.

SLOANE

What he means is go eat some yellow snow and leave us alone.

DOUG

Oh, you're so tough, I'm shakin'.

ALEX

It's Christmas and they haven't given us our presents.

(taking Casey's wool hat)

I'll take this.

Now Alex swipes Elvis' pointed hat, revealing Elvis' pointed ears.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Whoa. Check these ears out.

DOUG

What've you got here? A Klingon?

ALEX

Nah. Vulcan.

Doug and Alex laugh like they've just said the funniest thing in the entire world.

CASEY

You guys are so stupid.

Doug reflexively pushes Casey.

SLOANE

Hey, nobody pushes my brother around but me!

Sloane puts herself between Casey and Doug. Elvis pokes his head around her back, shakes his head.

ELVIS

Doug, it certainly looks like you didn't learn your lesson from last year.

DOUG

How do you know my name?

ELVIS

Rupert warned me about you.  
(to Sloane)  
Perhaps we should move on.

ALEX  
(imitating Elvis'  
voice)  
Perhaps we should move on.  
(regular voice)  
Let's give this "elf" a Tyson. Bite  
a little off the top.

SLOANE  
Bite me alright.

Alex grabs at Elvis. Casey grabs at Alex.

CASEY  
No! He's mine!

ELVIS  
Don't actually belong to --

DOUG  
Sit on it!

Elvis, shocked, slowly does as instructed, sitting on the sled.

ELVIS  
-- anyone.

In the back and forth, Alex pushes Casey onto the sled on top of Elvis. Sloane retaliates by pushing Doug over his sled.

SLOANE  
Back off!

Sloane takes a running start, pulls her sled into the street, jumps on and she's off down the hill with Elvis and Casey.

ALEX  
Get them!

And Doug and Alex are on their own sleds in close pursuit.

Elvis' sled flies over a hump in the steep, icy road. As the Bullies catch up, sled-to-sled combat ensues as they bump against Sloane, Casey and Elvis, sending them skittering sideways down the hill past various snow forts and snow men.

Sloane steers toward a blind crest in the hill. Doug and Alex close in on either side. All three sleds top the crest simultaneously to find a snow ramp, flanked on either side by mammoth snowmen. Doug and Alex crash headlong into the flanking snowmen in an explosion of powder and mittens and hats.

Sloane, Casey and Elvis, meanwhile, slide up the ramp and are launched into space. But their thrill of victory gives way to panic as they fly over another embankment, revealing:

### INTERSECTION

Dark, narrow and icy. The foreboding is magnified by the fact that it dead ends at a barbed wire fence. The sound of CAROLING is mixed with the sound of SCREAMING.

### BACK TO SCENE

Sloane, Casey and Elvis provide the screaming, hanging on for dear life as this ultimate thrill ride takes them through the intersection, wildly out of control. They hurtle by a group of Christmas CAROLERS, outside a house, providing the singing of "SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN."

CAROLERS

"You better not pout, you better not  
cry, you better be good, I'm telling  
you why --

(louder)

-- Santa Claus is coming to town."

Our trio is about to be sliced and diced for Christmas Eve. At the last possible second, however, as the song crescendos on the refrain:

### THE SLED GENTLY ARCS UPWARD OFF THE GROUND!

It rises just enough to clear the fence by mere inches, then thumps back to the ground. It continues on, plowing into a snow drift. They disappear into a cloud of billowing snow.

Together they tumble into a Caribbean Christmas scene: artificial palm trees hung with multi-colored lights and a wind surfer hitched to eight pink flamingos. The flamingos boast Santa suits and sunglasses.

After a moment, Sloane and Casey begin to dig out of the snow drift, breathless, frosted and hearts racing, nose-to-nose with the flamingos. The sled's runners are twisted badly. Elvis floats above the snow.

CASEY

He can fly! Now do you believe he's  
an elf?

SLOANE

(warily)

Reindeer are supposed to fly, not  
elves.

ELVIS

Santa says it's just another example  
of the media only telling part of  
the story.

Casey tugs at Elvis, still five feet off the snow.

CASEY

My dad works for TV. We could tell  
him.

SLOANE

No way.

(to Elvis)

I don't care how the trick works,  
but just stop it, okay?

ELVIS

I can't. Rupert could, of course.  
Up or down, any time he wants.

SLOANE

Yeah, well, the plan is we're not  
supposed to be attracting attention.

ELVIS

Whenever I hear Santa's favorite  
song, I just sort of ...

Elvis slowly raises his hand in a gesture of levitation,  
rising as he does, lifting Casey off the snowpack.

CASEY

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town" is  
Santa's favorite song?

Sloane grabs Casey and helps pull Elvis down like a helium  
balloon on a string. When she lets go, he rises again, until  
she pulls him down again and the process repeats itself.

ELVIS

It is a wonderfully spirited song.  
Fits Mister Claus's personality like  
a glove. Although not all gloves do  
fit, when you think about it.

SLOANE

Don't tell me you elves watch Court  
TV, too.

The carolers switch to "OH, COME ALL, YE FAITHFUL" and Elvis  
crashes to the ground. Sloane shakes her head in disbelief.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

I've run away from home with an elf who makes a bunch of sickos on sleds chase us while we're tracking Santa Claus and we almost get killed. Did I miss anything?

CASEY

Yeah. Elvis pulled a really radical flying elf trick.

Elvis wiggles his toes, a little frosty in the thin slippers.

ELVIS

But, alas, we still have not found Santa --

CASEY

-- because we haven't found Christmas ...

Sloane looks into the distance, sees Doug and Alex trooping after them.

SLOANE

Trouble keeps finding us.

CASEY

Look...

Casey looks into the distance. Sloane looks where he's looking.

#### **SLOANE'S POV - LLOYD CENTER MALL**

Outdoor Christmas lights, sparkling like some kind of glorious modern-day Cathedral, illuminate the mall sprawl. A huge red neon Santa blinks off and on, waving from the mall entrance.

SLOANE

No, you don't. It was bad being seen with you and Dad, but now I'm with a mutant. No way. Uh-uh.

#### **INT. KENT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

In her sweats, Nina emerges from the kitchen with a bottle of fancy water. She stops short when she sees the nibbled cookies on Santa's plate. Then she notices the two presents still sitting on the coffee table. The lights on the tree are even back on. As Nina moves up the stairs, she sees a couple of tie-dye rejects leading up to Grandma Lucy's room.

NINA  
When is she gonna grow up?

**INT. KGW-TV NEWSROOM - NIGHT**

Michael sits at his desk, surrounded by scanners, radios, TV's and teletypes, listening to an excited Pelter and Roogs. Roogs is soaking wet, wrapped in a blanket, and his teeth are chattering.

MICHAEL  
Hey, hey. If you're both going to  
scream at once, who can hear you?

They quiet down. Michael looks them up and down.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
What? You guys go for a swim?

PELTER  
That's what we're trying to tell you  
about.

MICHAEL  
Try again. Start with what's so  
amazing that you couldn't tell me  
over the radio?

PELTER  
We saw him.

ROOGS  
From the chopper.

MICHAEL  
Him who?

Pelter and Roogs trade anxious looks. Pelter takes a deep breath.

PELTER  
Santa.

MICHAEL  
(back to paperwork)  
I told you guys I wanted outdoor  
visuals. I got Abrahamsom doing the  
Santa Claus kicker.

ROOGS  
The real thing.

MICHAEL  
Old Saint Nick direct from the North  
Pole, huh?

ROOGS

I had him big as life flying off in  
a sleigh with reindeer and everything.

MICHAEL

Rudolf, too?

ROOGS

I couldn't tell.

MICHAEL

Okay, guys, what's the joke? I got  
some work to do here.

PELTER

It's no joke. Pretty near your house,  
too.

MICHAEL

So show me the tape. We got a show  
to put together.

Pelter holds up:

### A VIDEOCASSETTE

The precious evidence has a black char across it with water  
drip-dripping out of it.

GREENSTEIN (O.S.)

Hey, Michael. It's your wife on  
five-seven.

### BACK TO SCENE

Pelter and Roogs look like they're about to be nauseous.  
Michael turns away from them.

MICHAEL

You'll have to finish the gag later,  
guys.

Michael punches up a phone extension and the two defeated  
guys slink off.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Hi, Nina. You get the kids to sleep?  
(straightening up)  
I'll be right there.

Michael hangs up, grabs his jacket and heads out.

**EXT. LLOYD CENTER MALL - NIGHT**

Sloane and Casey run like commandos across the parking lot then flatten, backs against the wall of the building. They glow red, off and on, from the blinking, neon Santa. Elvis appears, mimicking their commando style, flattens himself next to Casey. WE SEE the abandoned North Pole set, through the glass doors. Elvis moves closer.

SLOANE  
What's he doing?

CASEY  
Window shopping?

The neon Santa blinks off for a moment and we lose sight of Elvis. There's the sound of CHIMES and when the sign blinks back on, they see the mall door swinging shut, Elvis disappearing inside. Sloane catches the door just before it closes. She looks to Casey.

SLOANE  
If anyone ever hears a word about  
this, you won't live to see second  
grade.

Casey swallows hard, and they disappear inside.

**INT. LLOYD CENTER MALL - NIGHT**

Malls at night time are not the friendly "Come Buy From Me" places that they are during daylight hours. As Sloane and Casey creep into cavernous darkness, we play the abandoned eeriness for all it's worth. Elvis pads ahead of them, a tiny silhouette in the darkness.

ELVIS  
My, my, my. So big. Almost as big  
as Santa's toy factory.

CASEY  
Can you take me sometime?

ELVIS  
Highly irregular. We'd have to ask  
Santa, and we will. Of course, we'll  
have to find him first.

SLOANE  
We are not going to find Christmas  
or Santa here.

Sloane looks around the gloomy interior with her flashlight beam. She turns the light on Elvis, his elfin ears protruding now that he's lost his cap.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

But as long as we're here, I think  
Elvis could use a disguise.

CASEY

Why? I think he looks cool.

SLOANE

Trust me. Serious makeover mandatory.

As Elvis moves, the bells on his shoes jingle.

CASEY

There's nobody to pay.

SLOANE

What a tragedy. Let's go.

CASEY

We're going to steal on Christmas  
Eve?

Both Casey and Elvis look aghast at the possibility.

SLOANE

No. We're just gonna do a little "e-  
commerce." As in, elf...

CASEY

Maybe we should get that underwear  
for Dad, too.

The store has an iron gate separating the group from the  
inside. The CHIMES start again and the door slides open and  
they enter. Casey picks up a pair of red and green Nikes.

ELVIS

Nice use of color.

Sloane puts Elvis on a bench and unties his Elfin slippers.

SLOANE

Let's make this quick. I think he's  
about a size seven.

Casey rummages among the boxes. Sloane gets Elvis' pointed  
slipper off only to discover a small problem -- his feet are  
pointed, too!

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Better make that an eight. Wide.

Casey finds the shoes and begins lacing them, discarding  
Elvis' slippers. Elvis stands up, admiring his new Nikes  
then jumps into the air and does a little pirouette.

**MONTAGE - BIRTH OF AN ICON!**

Tired of the same old Christmas legends? The familiarity of Christmas Past? The mimickry of Christmas Present? Then stay tuned for a mall make-over that places Elvis, our elf, uniquely into CHRISTMAS FUTURE!

A) Elvis emerges from a dressing room in oversized blue jeans, and a wild neon green-and-red shirt underneath his elf jacket. Sloane approaches with a pair of scissors and begins to hack at the jacket sleeves.

B) Casey helps Elvis on with a bright fanny pack. Elvis stashes his scroll and magic dust inside.

C) Elvis' face reflects in a mirror as an assortment of sunglasses are tried on. One wild look after another in quick cuts, ultimately settling on reflector wrap-around Oakley bicycle glasses. Elvis turns from the mirror to see Sloane in a pair of ear cuffs.

D) Casey and Elvis look at a Swatch-Watch collection. Settle for a Santa-inspired version.

E) Elfin fingers slide into a sequined fingerless leather glove. He does a spin on his heel, contemplates his move. Pulls the glove off and throws it back into the pile selecting instead a pair of bright day-glo ski gloves.

F) Sloane lathers a generous mound of spiking gel in her hands and runs it through Elvis' hair.

G) A Long Rider coat comes off the rack. Elvis tries it on. Sloane stuffs in some shoulder pads, holds up a string of miniature Christmas lights.

H) Elvis is handed a Walkman and headphones.

The transition is complete. He is now and forever a part of Christmas tradition and history. Part MTV and CMT. He is ELVIS --

**THE STEALTH ELF!!!!**

From the Air Whatever's on his feet to the spiked hair on his head, Elvis is unrecognizable. Even to himself. He is style and substance, a re-combination of symbols into something unique and durable for this new Millennium. Elvis looks at himself in a full-length mirror and his mouth drops.

ELVIS

Oh.

CASEY

(in awe)

Major Total Christmas!

ELVIS

I'm not sure Santa's going to go for this.

SLOANE

You can always transfer to Halloween. For now --

Sloane switches on the Walkman, blasting Elvis with another one of our Christmas standards made new again by the hot act giving it a second life.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

-- try to act like a normal kid.

Elvis, starting to get with it, smiles wide. He stands quaking from his sneakers up, like a volcano about to blow, his grin ear-to-ear.

ELVIS

These do put so much spring in your step, you almost have to --

And, with that, he rockets off down the mall, disappearing into blackness.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

-- run.

Sloane and Casey follow and we're in motion. It turns into:

### TOY STORE

Big Christmas displays, chock full of the latest gimmicks and the most classic perennials. As Elvis leads Sloane and Casey inside, lights flicker on, animated displays operate, toy trains run and, in general, the store comes to abundant life. Now, two kids and a elf, do what kids do best -- play with toys. Including:

A) Casey and Elvis battle with nerf bats while wearing Starship virtual reality headsets.

B) Elvis takes a cut at a ball from a pitching machine. Swings and misses so hard, it throws him around in a twisted heap on the floor.

C) Sloane and Casey play chicken with each other on battery powered scooters as Elvis hides his eyes.

D) Elvis shows Casey how to do "Around the World" with a high-tech yo-yo.

G) Delight is on Casey's face, complete and utter amazement on Sloane's. Casey holds up his hand to give Elvis a high-five, causing Elvis to duck. This last shot is seen on a:

**MONITOR SCREEN**

Shots from cameras around the mall switch every five seconds. The SECURITY GUARD at the desk is sound asleep. His eyes flutter open. The first image he sees is our Stealth Elf learning to high-five Casey. The Guard sits bolt upright.

**TOY STORE**

Fairly exploding with activity, fun and games, including a toy helicopter, racing around with a mind of its own. The Guard approaches, flashlight aimed and calls out loudly:

SECURITY GUARD  
Whoever's in there, don't move.

On command, that's exactly what happens. Everything that was moving stops -- suddenly -- and the lights flicker down and die. The helicopter settles onto the counter. The store is as it was, quiet and dark. The security guard is, understandably, a little nervous about this turn of events.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)  
Just come out where I can see you.

The guard approaches warily, his flashlight capturing toys in mid-play poses.

Sloane backs away, nudging Casey who leans into Elvis who falls back against the jukebox. The SOUND of mechanical RATTLING followed by a PLOP and then "JINGLE BELLS" bursts forth from the speakers.

The Guard whirls toward the music, his flashlight finds them.

GUARD  
Hold it!

Instead, they run, a magnificent trail of toys and light springing to life in their wake. The Guard pursues them through a gauntlet of BUZZING, racing toys, out the store and into the:

**MALL**

Sloane pulls Casey toward the door. The Guard is gaining on them. Elvis seems to have escaped. The Guard lunges for Casey, falls. Gets up and begins chasing again.

Suddenly, the Guard is racing in the other direction! The toy helicopter THUNDERS toward him. The Guard is bobbing and weaving, trying to get away, but the helicopter remains right on his heels and zeros in for the kill.

The Guard flops through a hedge into a mall fountain full of tropical fish.

Casey and Sloane find Elvis waiting for them.

SLOANE

How did you ...? Never mind.

Sloane grabs Elvis by the hand and pulls both he and her brother toward the door.

In the fountain, WE SEE air bubbles coming to the surface. Then, tentatively, the Guard, pokes his head out, looks around. A fish on his head flops back into the fountain as the Guard unholsters his dripping walkie talkie.

SECURITY GUARD

Base, this is Lloyd Center unit.  
Lost intruders while in pursuit --

The Helicopter SCREAMS back down at him. The Guard ducks.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

Under air attack, repeat, air attack!  
Request immediate police back-up!

### INT. DETECTIVE DIVISION - NIGHT

Detective **FRED RINCON** greets Michael and Nina. As he does, he jams another stick of chewing gum in his mouth.

RINCON

I know this would be a strain any time, and it's worse tonight. I've got kids myself.  
(offers pack)  
Care for a stick?

MICHAEL

Uh, no. About our kids?

Rincon opens his file, takes a look.

RINCON

Yeah. They familiar with the Lloyd Center Mall?

NINA

They'd sleep there if they could.

RINCON

(considers it)  
They would?

MICHAEL

Sleep there? No. Not really.

Rincon sets some photos on the desk for Michael and Nina to look at. The first is a CU video image of Elvis from the toy store's security cameras.

RINCON

Do you recognize this child? Is he a friend or playmate of your children?

NINA

Uh-uh. Sloane and Casey wouldn't associate with someone who dresses like that.

RINCON

A Security Guard chased three kids from Hanson's Toys earlier tonight.

MICHAEL

You think they were involved in a burglary?

RINCON

A number of clothing items were taken.

NINA

Sloane knows she can use the credit card.

MICHAEL

Casey got an A in Citizenship.

Rincon produces another photo. This is the CU video image of Casey and Elvis high fiving.

RINCON

This is your son, isn't it?

MICHAEL

(in shock)

Yes.

RINCON

We've issued these photos to our patrols and the media. We could be talking about runaways. Any problems at home?

NINA

No. I mean, Michael wouldn't let them open presents until tomorrow but...

RINCON

Anyone there if the kids return?

MAMA

Yeah. Nina's mom --

NINA

Uh-uh. Snuck out to see her radical boyfriend.

(to Rincon)

She's still kind of a hippie, you know.

RINCON

We'll just have an officer watch the house.

Michael looks aghast at this possibility. Rincon fishes behind a desk for something.

RINCON (CONT'D)

One more thing --

He holds up Elvis' soggy, elfin slippers left behind at the mall shoe store.

RINCON (CONT'D)

-- have you seen these slippers before?

The bells on the toes RATTLE musically. Dazed, Michael and Nina shake their heads in negation.

**EXT. PORTLAND STREETS - NIGHT**

Sloane, Casey and the new-look Elvis trudge through the snow. The spring in their step replaced by a sense of impending defeat. A Christmas light in the background flutters out.

SLOANE

There we go again.

ELVIS

(resigned)

The Tooth Fairy treats her people fair, but the budget's been cut. A couple quarters hardly seems fair to kids nowadays.

SLOANE

Fair? Santa must go around snooping in windows to figure out naughty from nice.

CASEY

I think parents or teachers must be in on it somehow.

(to Elvis)

Right?

ELVIS

(in his own world)

Or I could end up on Mother's Day.  
Wrapping chocolate for the rest of  
my life.

Up ahead is a cab stalled under a street light. The engine hood is up and a man leans over the engine, muttering. Sloane considers the situation.

SLOANE

How much money do we have?

Casey shrugs. Nothing. Elvis unzips his fanny pack and pulls out an odd assortment of nuts and bolts, a tape measure, dust bag and a rubber mallet.

CASEY

Where do you think we should go?

SLOANE

Home.

Casey looks incredulous.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

A, if we keep running around in the cold, we'll get pneumonia. B, Dad'll have a coronary. And C, we'll be grounded until next Christmas.

(to the cab driver)

How much to 249 East Lincoln?

The following conversation plays with the man's face buried in the engine block.

MAN'S VOICE

Keep your money. Alternator's shot.

SLOANE

This is an emergency.

MAN'S VOICE

You're telling me. I got rent due on New Year's. Hand me the 5/16th wrench, will you?

Elvis' small fingers hand off the wrench. Shocked at the sight of the tiny hand, the man stands up quickly, bumping his head on the raised hood. WE SEE our cabbie is none other than Russell! Casey recognizes him instantly.

CASEY

I know who you are.

RUSSELL

Yeah? Well, who are you?  
 (slowly)  
 Oh yeah, the mall. Sorry, kid.

CASEY

(to Elvis)  
 He's a pretend mall Santa, but he  
 doesn't really like kids.

RUSSELL

(too quickly)  
 I do like kids.  
 (to Elvis)  
He just doesn't believe in Santa.

CASEY

I do believe in him!

Russell does a double-take now that he gets a good look at  
 Elvis in his new get-up.

RUSSELL

Your parents are givin' you too much  
 allowance, kid.  
 (back to car)  
 Anyway, I got an engine to --

The engine RUMBLES to life.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

-- fix.

Russell spins around in time to see Elvis slide off the bumper  
 of his cab, a fistful of wires in his hand which he hands to  
 Russell.

ELVIS

The problem with a  
 lot of these machines  
 is they have too many  
 wires in them. It's  
 like the man in red  
 always says, "A good  
 toy is a simple toy."  
 Of course, there is  
 the joy of an X-Box  
 to consider...

RUSSELL

What is he talking about?

SLOANE

I think he's waiting for  
 you to say thank you for  
 fixing the car.

Russell looks from the cab to the kids to Elvis. Elvis grins  
 out from under his wrap around shades, wipes his greasy elf  
 fingers on his jeans.

RUSSELL

So, anyway...thanks.

ELVIS  
Don't mention it.

**EXT./INT. RUSSELL'S CAB - NIGHT**

Sloane, Casey and Elvis share the back seat with Russell's rumpled Santa suit and bulging toy sack. As Russell steers the cab along the icy streets, he can see Elvis smiling in the rear view mirror, fascinated by the numbers rolling up on the cab's meter.

RUSSELL  
Kinda late for you kids to be out,  
isn't it?

SLOANE  
Just drive. We're not technically  
supposed to talk to strangers.

RUSSELL  
*Technically*, we're not strangers.  
Remember? I met your old man. He  
seemed nice enough for a guy who was  
in a rage.  
(re: Elvis)  
Besides, your friend, the mechanic,  
he's the one who looks like a  
stranger. How'd he fix my cab?

CASEY  
His name's Elvis. He's an elf!

Sloane socks her brother a good one on the arm.

SLOANE  
He's from ... Europe. Some place in  
Europe. Ice, no, Ireland. That's  
right. Ireland.

RUSSELL  
So that would make him a leprechaun.

ELVIS  
St. Patrick's Day. I could do that,  
I guess. But all the green, and  
those shamrocks...

CASEY  
Forget it. You're a Christmas elf!  
(to Russell)  
Check out the ears.

RUSSELL  
I got a cabbie friend with buck teeth.  
Doesn't make him a beaver.

Elvis inspects the sack full of toys. Shakes one of the boxes only to discover it's a sack full of empty boxes and only the ones on top are wrapped.

ELVIS

These presents are empty.

RUSSELL

'Course they are. Santa's got the real ones, right?

As the cab cruises past a store display, the COLORED LIGHTS WINK OUT. Elvis winces.

ELVIS

(to Russell)

Do you have any ideas where we could find Christmas?

Russell checks the mirror again. Choking back another smart-ass answer. Then:

RUSSELL

I'm the last guy you should ask.  
(points)

Try them. They look like they're in the loop.

### **ELVIS' POV - CHRISTMAS TREE**

Thirty feet tall, beautifully lit, towering above the town square. A crowd of people are gathering around it. A bus marked, "VIENNA BOYS' CHOIR," is parked just off the square.

Sixty plus members of the Vienna Boys' Choir, dressed in blue and gold choral robes, file toward a stage in front of the Christmas tree.

### **BACK IN THE CAB**

Elvis starts to go crazy. So do the cab's windshield wipers and radio. Casey looks to Elvis for the answer.

ELVIS

I feel something. I most definitely feel something.

The interior lights begin blinking, the horn BLOWS, the radio BLARES, anything and everything electrical goes haywire. Russell sticks his head out the window, looks toward the sky.

SLOANE

Do you see Santa?

RUSSELL  
I'm lookin' for a UFO.

Russell pokes his head back inside. Now the cab's meter begins spinning wildly. Completely on its own, the cab lurches to a stop. Russell leans back over the front seat.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
That does it. I'm out of the Santa business.

SLOANE  
We're leaving.

RUSSELL  
This isn't Lincoln Street.

CASEY  
Why should you care? We're not even paying you.

Elvis scrambles out, followed by Sloane and Casey.

SLOANE  
If you're short on good deeds this year, you could wait for us here.

RUSSELL  
How long?

SLOANE  
You're right. You should go. Feliz Navidad.

Elvis is leaving them behind. Sloane and Casey take off. Russell calls out after them.

RUSSELL  
Hey! Shouldn't you kids be home watching re-runs of old Christmas movies?

SLOANE  
(turning back)  
Like you're an expert on kids?

Russell watches them go. Looks down at the picture of the young girl, nearly Sloane's age, taped to his dash. He closes his eyes.

**EXT. PIONEER SQUARE - NIGHT**

As Sloane and Casey approach, Elvis listens to the Vienna Boys' Choir, now at full voice, singing "AVA MARIA."

ELVIS

The Vienna Boys' Choir, very nice.  
Not enough time to tell you what all  
sixty-three are getting for Christmas  
but young Arnold in the third row  
was particularly nice to his Aunt  
Katrina.

SLOANE

That's great, Elvis. Somebody else  
who won't get a present tonight  
without Santa.

Casey smiles, inappropriately.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

This is not funny, Casey.

CASEY

I know, but at least now you believe.

SLOANE

And if you tell any of my friends, I  
will burn all your foil Yu-Gi-Oh  
cards.

ELVIS

Belief is very powerful. Santa says  
that to believe is to live forever.

SLOANE

I'm still working on being a teenager.

Mixed with the soaring voices, WE HEAR a more guttural sound.  
Elvis perks up his ears.

ELVIS

Reindeer.

Sure enough, within their line of sight, they find eight  
live reindeer with harnesses lined with colored lights and  
silver bells, attached to a sleigh with a huge toy sack on  
the back seat. Elvis hugs the nearest reindeer.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

I was so worried that I might never  
see you again. I just about bungled  
Christmas for kids around the world,  
but I've met two of the most  
extraordinary friends while I was  
looking for you and Santa.

The reindeer licks all over Elvis' face, but he doesn't mind  
the slobber at all. Casey taps his watch, like a  
schoolteacher.

CASEY

We're kinda in a gigantic rush so maybe you should tell 'em the story after you get going.

SLOANE

Hey, Elvis, before you get airborne or whatever, how come Santa cheaps out so much on his sleigh?

Now, Elvis takes a good long look at the sleigh.

ELVIS

It does look a little ratty.

(beat)

And this is not Santa's sleigh.

Elvis looks straight in the face of the slobbering reindeer.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

This is not Santa's reindeer.

SLOANE

So gross!

CASEY

You think when we find Santa, he's gonna have a sense of humor about this mix-up?

SLOANE

You've seen his list. All it takes is one little mistake, and the only presents you'll get are one of Grandma Lucy's dumb hand-knit ear-muffs.

CASEY

I might as well be a grown-up then.

SLOANE

You'll be lucky to make it. You and me are dead meat.

ELVIS

(horrified)

Dead meat?!

CASEY

History.

SLOANE

Sunk, mud, worm food, deep sneakers, six feet under.

As Casey explains, a STRING OF LIGHTS from the tree begins to SPUTTER OUT and disappear.

CASEY

That's not supposed to happen, is it?

ELVIS

Christmas is fading from memory right before our eyes. What shall we do?

ALEX (O.S.)

If I were you, Ear Head, I'd start prayin' for a miracle.

They stiffen with fear when they see:

### THE BULLIES

Doug and Alex are back. Bigger, badder and with a couple of other Bad Boys hanging with them.

ELVIS

Who sent them?

SLOANE

Right. Like it's a conspiracy to kill Christmas.

(beat)

Look.

She points at the stage where sixty-three young voices are raised in melodious unison. But she drags Elvis and Casey in the opposite direction, thus starting:

### A CHASE

In and out of the Christmas crowd. Sloane, Casey, Elvis and four bullies. Like a snowed in football game.

Cutting left. Cutting right.

Separating and coming together. But, the bullies are better at this than two kids and an elf and, before long, Sloane, Casey and Elvis find themselves cornered and surrounded.

DOUG

You totaled our sleds.

The Bullies close in, backing them tight against the bus.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Somebody's gonna pay for 'em.

Alex steps close to Elvis, takes his wrap-around shades.

ALEX

Hey, Ear Head. Get all your cool  
new clothes from mommy and daddy?

Doug turns to one of the other boys, hand extended. One of the Bullies hands an ice-hard snowball over. Doug advances on Elvis.

DOUG

I'm gonna make me a snow-cone out of  
the Dwarf from the North!

ALEX

Yeah, right. Better ice down the  
Troll from the Pole!

Doug winds for the pitch, only his arm doesn't move. It's:

**RUSSELL**

With a firm grasp on Doug's upraised hand. He plucks the ice ball from it. Faces Alex, Doug and friends. Russell looks more like Jason or Freddy than Santa.

RUSSELL

You boys ever hear of Special Forces?

The Bullies shake their heads nervously, "no."

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Yeah. Army likes it that way.  
Anyway, me and my friends blew off a  
lot of steam that way, you know?  
Like you boys, I expect. Want me to  
show you some of the "games" we used  
to play? You'd like 'em... if you  
don't mind a little pain...

The Bullies freak, shaking their heads. This guy sounds certifiable, and this is the second time today they've pissed him off.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Then if I were you I'd be gettin' my  
butts on home about now.

The Bullies waste no time in taking Russell's advice. He calls after them.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Take some time to work on your New  
Year's resolutions.  
(to kids)  
Anybody up for some hot chocolate?

Sloane, Casey and Elvis nod.

ELVIS

You didn't leave us after all.

RUSSELL

The thought of sticks and coal...

(shrugs)

Just couldn't handle that. C'mon.

### INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

A couple of cops, **OFFICER ASHER** and **OFFICER BENEDICT**, drink coffee, munch fruit cake.

OFFICER ASHER

Every year my crazy wife's sister sends us this god-awful fruit cake.

OFFICER BENEDICT

(mouth full)

What? It's good.

OFFICER ASHER

You and me're gonna get in a real situation someday and all I'm gonna be able to think is that my life is in the hands of a guy who actually likes fruit cake.

Russell and the kids can be seen moving past his cab. He reaches in, puts on the "Out of Service" light, then locks it and continues on. Officer Asher picks up a couple of photo copies of Sloane, Casey and Elvis. Studies them, looks out the window:

OFFICER ASHER (CONT'D)

Hey, Peter. Take your face out of that and check this out.

### INT. CROSSROADS DINER - NIGHT

Russell, Elvis and Casey are at one of the red vinyl booths. Sloane is on a pay phone in the corner. In contrast to the last time we were inside, the Christmas LIGHTS HAVE DIMMED and several strands are out altogether. Sloane sees this, bites her lip nervously, waiting.

PHONE VOICE

The mobile phone customer you're calling is either unavailable or has roamed out of the service area. Please try your call again later.

### THE BOOTH

Russell, Casey and Elvis wait, trying to warm up.

Elvis, now wearing Russell's Santa hat, appears to be building a little snow scene out of a sugar shaker, crackers, silverware and a glass of water.

CASEY

You really handled those rejectos back there.

RUSSELL

You just gotta look a bully in the eye and tell 'em you're not afraid --

CASEY

But I am.

RUSSELL

Yeah, well, so are they. So whether they're a dictator hidin' in a bunker or some kids looking for trouble, it's the same deal.

SLOANE

So what'd you do in... Special Forces?

RUSSELL

Actually, I was a shipping clerk.

CASEY

But you sounded so mean.

RUSSELL

(smiles)

I was a mean shipping clerk. You had to be. Everybody wanted what you had for the black market.

CASEY

What's a black market?

RUSSELL

That's where people sell things they're not supposed to have at prices they're not supposed to charge to people who aren't supposed to buy.

CASEY

(nods knowingly)

Brandon Gerber.

(off their reactions)

He sells his Ding-Dongs at lunch time for a whole dollar.

RUSSELL

See? He'd have cleaned up in the Army. Heck, you must've been a baby back when I was in the service...

CASEY

I wasn't born until 1996.  
(to Elvis)  
How about you?

ELVIS

1812. I remember clearly because the William Tell Overture, also known as the 1812 Overture, had been written that very year. Which explains the 1812 but how William Tell got involved is a mystery. He had nothing to do with the tune. He was simply a chap who shot an apple off his son's head with an arrow --

RUSSELL

Hey, stuff a stocking in it, okay?  
(looks up)  
Call your folks?

It's Sloane. She nods and takes a seat.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Comin' to pick you up?

SLOANE

They, uh, said you should give us a ride.

Russell looks skeptical. Expression turns to laughter when he sees Elvis, with a stocking in his mouth.

ELVIS

(muffled)  
I assume you meant to put this in my mouth.

Russell pulls the stocking out of Elvis' mouth.

RUSSELL

It's an expression. It just means you're runnin' off a little bit.

ELVIS

It did seem like an odd custom.

Chloe approaches with four hot cocoas.

CHLOE

Four hot ones.  
(to Russell)  
You gonna introduce me? This is Michelle, right?

RUSSELL

No. You got Sloane, Casey and...  
Elvis.

CHLOE

Oh.

Russell looks pained and embarrassed. Sloane speaks up.

SLOANE

I'm friends with Michelle, though.  
Russell's just giving us a ride, you  
know?

CHLOE

Well, nice to meet you.  
(order O.C.)  
Gotta run. Merry Christmas, kids.

Chloe sets the cocoas down, takes off.

SLOANE

So when were you going to tell us  
about your daughter?

RUSSELL

Didn't we just meet?

ELVIS

Michelle Anne Dawson. 984 Ashland,  
Los Angeles, California. Fed the  
dog jelly doughnuts, wants a Baby-G  
watch and thinks it was her dad who  
called and hung up.

RUSSELL

How does he know all that?

CASEY

He knows.

ELVIS

I check the list. Twice, actually.

SLOANE

How come your kid is in Los Angeles  
and you're here?

RUSSELL

I really don't want to talk about  
it.

SLOANE

Elvis probably knows.

Elvis doesn't look up. Continues to stare at his improvised snow scene, developing on the table.

ELVIS

Hmmm, well, I do know that in affairs of the heart, even elves should know when to keep still.

RUSSELL

(pointedly)  
Smart elf.

SLOANE

C'mon. Tell us.

RUSSELL

(sighs)  
Look, some judge made up a bunch of rules about when I got to see my own daughter. I got in a fight with my ex-wife and didn't follow them. Kept a lot of lawyers working. And that's the whole story.

CASEY

Uh-oh.

He's looking at the television set. When the others turn around, they see Pelter anchoring a "KGW-TV Newsbreak" with one of the least flattering photos ever taken of Sloane and Casey in a Digital Video Effect over his shoulder.

CASEY (CONT'D)

That's Dad's station.

SLOANE

Please, please, let my friends be asleep.

Now the DVE behind Pelter features the video still frame from the mall security system of Elvis in the toy store.

ELVIS

Oh, dear. Santa hates this kind of publicity.

RUSSELL

(quietly, to Sloane)  
You're runaways?

SLOANE

Not exactly.

And now an artist's sketch that looks something like Russell.

RUSSELL  
I'm in deep sewage here.

He stands up, grabs a ten from his wallet and throws it on the counter.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
You're going home NOW.

Russell looks out the window.

### RUSSELL'S POV - SQUAD CARS

Three of them. Parked across the street. With another one on the way, lights silently flashing. A POLICE RADIO squawks to life.

RADIO (V.O.)  
Updating the five-eleven APB, Lloyd Center break-in, Kent kidnapping. Suspect is Russell Dawson, 37, 1328 White Crest, number 232, Portland. One prior in California. Kidnapping. Minor daughter. July, '03.

### EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

It's snowing heavily as Russell, Casey, Sloane and Elvis burst into an alley lined with brick buildings and dumpsters. A solitary van billows exhaust into the cold night air. Emblazoned on the side of the van is "Mama's Catering." **TYRA ("TY-BO") BOLAND** -- an entrepreneurial African-American woman -- enters the driver's side and closes the door. Christmas RAP MUSIC spills from the stereo. Russell hammers on the window. Ty-Bo unrolls it.

RUSSELL  
Look, I don't know exactly how to say this, but I need you to give me and these kids a lift.

TY-BO  
Where to?

RUSSELL  
At this point, anywhere's good.

TY-BO  
(rolling up window)  
Sorry. Gotta make a delivery.

Sloane sticks her hand inside, preventing Ty-Bo from rolling the window up all the way. She speaks with a conviction we haven't seen before.

SLOANE

Look. We don't have a lot of time here.

(indicates Russell)

The cops think he kidnapped me and my brother, but he's just a guy trying to help us save Christmas.

(points at Ty-Bo)

You save Christmas, you'll be a hero. You drive away now, you gotta live with that forever.

Ty-Bo looks at Sloane, shrugs. Casey takes a try.

CASEY

Hey, listen...

(micking Russell)

-- this is an elf. We have to get him back to Santa or Christmas goes in the toilet. Okay?

Ty-Bo looks at Elvis, not exactly anyone's idea of a Christmas elf with his rad make-over.

TY-BO

Get outta town! Am I on some kinda "reality-show" thing? 'Cause I got plenty of talent.

Russell calls from the rear of the van.

RUSSELL

Forget it, guys. This van's not going anywhere with that flat tire.

TY-BO

Flat tire?

Ty-Bo climbs out of the van.

TY-BO (CONT'D)

Mama is going to kill me if I'm late.

Russell pushes the kids in the van as Ty-Bo checks the rear tires.

TY-BO (CONT'D)

Hey, these tires aren't flat.

Too late. Russell scrambles in, shifts into gear as:

### THE COPS

Emerge from the diner into the alley and start running toward the van, pulling away with Ty-Bo running alongside.

**EXT./INT. CATERING TRUCK - NIGHT**

Ty-Bo bangs on the window as she runs alongside the van. As they move along, various foodstuffs and assorted serving utensils start shifting and Sloane and Casey try to keep them from falling.

TY-BO  
Changed my mind. You guys need a ride somewhere, I'm your woman.

Russell nods his approval to Sloane. She unlocks the door and slides into the back so Ty-Bo can come aboard. And, once in, she's not nearly so agreeable.

TY-BO (CONT'D)  
This is grand theft auto, you moron. No wonder the cops are chasing you! You ruin these eats, you're paying for them.

Ty-Bo takes a look back at Elvis.

CASEY  
What about him?

TY-BO  
What about him?

CASEY  
He's an elf.

TY-BO  
He's a kid.

CASEY  
I'm a kid.  
(removing Elvis' hat)  
He's an elf!

TY-BO  
Whoa. He is an elf.

ELVIS  
I'm sure Santa will re-imburse you for any damage to your food.

Russell looks up to see a squad car, flashers on, headed straight toward them.

RUSSELL  
Hold that thought. Company.  
(to everybody)  
Get a hand on things. This may be extreme.

TY-BO

Watch the pasta and garlic bread  
back there. Only thing worse than  
cops on your tail is Mama on your  
tail. Name's Tyra Boland. Friends  
call me Ty-Bo.

RUSSELL

Russell. Then you got a Sloane and  
a Casey and the guy with the ears is  
Elvis.

TY-BO

Santa got any black elves? --

The squad car fishtails across their lane in an attempt to  
block their path, but the icy street is too much and the  
cruiser swings onto the sidewalk. Russell smiles.

RUSSELL

Driving in the snow is an art. Not  
everybody should try it.

Russell turns back to the road and the smile leaves his face.

#### RUSSELL'S POV - UP AHEAD

Coming directly at them must be a half dozen police cruisers,  
lights flashing, surging across the snow covered streets.

#### BACK TO SCENE

Russell looks like a man who's about to meet his maker.  
Sloane points toward the alley.

SLOANE

There!

Russell swerves, the patrol cars follow down a narrow icy  
alley.

TY-BO

Did I mention that this rig does not  
have snow tires, studs, or even  
radials?

Ahead, the alley dead ends into a construction lot. Immense  
cranes and earth movers rise above a mesh fence.

TY-BO (CONT'D)

Only job I ever had that paid over  
minimum wage and was still legal and  
now it's gone.

(MORE)

TY-BO (CONT'D)

If I don't die now, Mama's not only gonna kill me herself, she's gonna fire me and throw me out of the house, too.

Ty-Bo drops her head into her hands.

CASEY

Uh, Miss Ty-Bo?

TY-BO

What, kid? I'm dyin' here. Can't you leave me in peace?

The van bears down on the fence. Sloane turns to Elvis.

SLOANE

Can you make this thing fly like the sled?

Elvis sees the "gravity" of the situation, closes his eyes and begins singing:

ELVIS

*You better not pout,  
you better not cry.  
You better be good,  
I'm telling you why.*

TY-BO

What is he doing?

CASEY

Singing.

Too late. The van crashes through the barricade and roars onto the construction site. The lot has been excavated and a grid of steel I-beams has been constructed with the top level of girders about flush with street level.

TY-BO

Why? We're all gonna die!

CASEY

Everybody sing, too!

Ty-Bo looks to the others and, in that split second of fear, they somehow decide to go for it.

SLOANE/CASEY/TY-BO/RUSSELL/ELVIS

(singing full volume)

*Santa Claus is coming to town!*

Instead of dropping into the pit, the TIRES OF THE VAN MIRACULOUSLY FIT ONTO TWO OF THE STEEL GIRDERS that now act as tracks. The wheels of the squad cars don't match the girders and they skid off, balancing precariously on the edge of the site. Russell continues to skim the van along the steel grid.

RUSSELL

If the boss could see me now...

Directly in front of them, the steel grid drops away, and it's nothing but air below. Elvis closes his eyes and concentrates. Then, magically, the van gently glides off the end of the girders, sailing over the excavation pit.

**EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS**

The van thumps onto the street, Russell keeps it on the road. Nobody can speak. A round of heavy breathing, amazement, and finally:

RUSSELL

I hope you all enjoyed that. I don't do that for just anybody.

CASEY

Elvis! You flew us!

SLOANE

That's impossible.

TY-BO

Let me tell you, kid, this van was not so aerodynamic before Elvis sat in.

Ty-Bo, a woman who has now seen everything, turns to Russell.

TY-BO (CONT'D)

Okay, how'd you really do that?

RUSSELL

(focused on the road)

Tomorrow morning, after I've slept this off, I'll think about what just happened. Right now, I'm just seein' the road. You got a problem with that?

Ty-Bo shakes her head. No problem.

TY-BO

Wait'lll Mama hears about this one.

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - BALLROOM - NIGHT**

A banner hanging from the far wall reads, "COLD WARRIORS CHRISTMAS BALL." From the looks of it, the club consists of older vets and their wives and has a sixties theme of psychedelia and flower-power. In the center of the room is a towering cake in the shape of a Christmas tree, surrounded by presents.

Next to it, an empty throne, with "Santa" stenciled on it.

From the stage, a rock-and-roll band belts out the 60s standard, Three Dog Night's "MAMA TOLD ME NOT TO COME." Incredibly, Grandma Lucy is out on the dance floor, dressed in a tie-died tee-shirt and jeans dancing with an older man with long white hair tied into a pony tail.

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Serving attendants, dressed as Santa's helpers, exchange empty trays for fresh Hors d'Oeuvres and champagne. Outside, we now hear the muffled strains from the band. Ty-Bo leads Russell, Sloane and Casey inside, all of them carrying an armful of food and service equipment. **MAMA** swats Ty-Bo with a kitchen utensil.

MAMA

You're late.

TY-BO

(ducking)

Had to take a little detour.

MAMA

Your friends think they're on the payroll? Because their hands aren't going into my pocket even if it is a Night of Miracles.

RUSSELL

Just helping a friend, ma'am. And now we're leaving.

MAMA

You all have yourselves a Merry Christmas.

Mama drags Ty-Bo away.

MAMA (CONT'D)

We gonna serve these old hippies some food or are we just gonna let 'em smell it?

As they go, Sloane looks worried.

SLOANE

Anybody seen Elvis?

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A not-so-real elf, **GOODTIMES**, juggles silk scarves and Christmas tree ornaments. Elvis watches with delight, until Goodtimes fumbles one ornament.

Just before crashing, it swoops back up into the pattern. The juggling ORNAMENTS ARE NOW DEFYING GRAVITY, floating and doing double loops. Freaked, Goodtimes maintains the impression that he is in control of the act. Elvis moves his hands as though he were the one doing the juggling, which in fact, he is. Sloane and Casey converge on Elvis.

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - EXIT - CONTINUOUS**

Russell peeks outside. Quickly closes the door. Ty-Bo approaches, carrying a serving tray, wearing a tuxedo shirt and a bow-tie. She grabs Russell by the arm.

TY-BO

Guess who else is coming to dinner?

RUSSELL

Cops, yeah. I gotta orbit.

TY-BO

What about me? I own the getaway truck.

RUSSELL

We forced you. You had no choice.

TY-BO

"You see, officer, they said they had an elf so what could I do?"

RUSSELL

(urgent)

Listen. Do you believe in this Christmas and Santa and elf stuff?

TY-BO

Beats me. Why? You down with it?

RUSSELL

I'm leanin' that way, Ty-Bo, but I'm also a big believer in signs and omens. And those flashing lights are a pretty clear sign to me that this game is up.

TY-BO

Window in the men's room takes you into the alley. I'd go with you but people might talk. Good luck.

Ty-Bo gives Russell a light kiss on the cheek.

RUSSELL

Take care of the kids. Tell 'em I didn't have a choice.

And Russell disappears into the crowd. The man in the ponytail kisses Grandma Lucy as the song ends, follows after Russell.

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Russell enters, letting in the sounds of Nancy Sinatra's theme song, "THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKING." He turns over a garbage can, tries to stand on it and get some leverage on the window. Caught in the act by our man in the pony tail, wearing a military uniform with a peace sign sewn on its shoulder, **COLONEL ROBERT LUCKIE**. Russell ignores him; continues his escape. Colonel Luckie sizes up the situation, then offers:

COLONEL LUCKIE

Can't solve a problem by running away from it, young man...

RUSSELL

That shows how much you know about my problem, *old* man.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Used to talk like that myself. My generation didn't trust anybody over thirty. So now I'm just another old fart with arthritis and erectile dysfunction. So what? I'm just glad I made it to another party.

(extends hand)

Colonel Robert Luckie.

Russell's not really looking for a handshake. His full concentration is on opening the window.

RUSSELL

Well, I could stand a little luck right about now.

COLONEL LUCKIE

You Army?

That gets Russell's attention.

RUSSELL

Desert Storm. Reserves.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Good for you. Lot of guys my age ran to Canada rather than serve. Not me. I enlisted.

RUSSELL

Vietnam?

COLONEL LUCKIE

No, no, no. That's why I enlisted.  
Kept me out of there.

RUSSELL

Yeah? Where'd they put you? And no  
long war stories, I'm in a hurry  
here.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Sent a bunch of us up to the pole in  
Alaska. Part of the Distant Early  
Warning system, to watch for enemy  
aircraft, in case the Communists  
decided to take advantage. That was  
the mission.

RUSSELL

You got a crowbar or something?

COLONEL LUCKIE

Called ourselves the "Cold Warriors."  
We've been getting together every  
Christmas Eve since.

RUSSELL

I'll take a hammer.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Me and the boys had what they call a  
"life-changing experience" now.  
This was Christmas Eve, '66. Never  
saw any real "action" but this one  
still brought us together real close.

Russell almost has the window opened now.

RUSSELL

Well, I'd love to stay and chat --

Whether by strategy or sheer old age, Colonel Luckie ignores  
Russell and continues his story.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Had the dawn watch. Saw something  
coming low across the horizon.  
Thought it might have been a bomber,  
but it was too quiet. Could have  
been a jet but it was too low and  
slow. I sounded the siren and we  
all got up and took a peek.

The window is seconds away from opening.

RUSSELL

If this story has an ending you better  
get to it, because I can't wait  
around.

Colonel Luckie looks about the washroom, for eavesdroppers.  
Takes a deep breath, then:

COLONEL LUCKIE

*We saw a sleigh, pulled through the  
air by reindeer, driven by a man in  
a red suit.*

Russell looks hard at Colonel Luckie. The man is dead-on  
serious.

RUSSELL

White beard?

COLONEL LUCKIE

The works.

RUSSELL

You guys smoking anything?

COLONEL LUCKIE

Nope. Just high on life. Anyway,  
we reported it and they threw us all  
out of the service. Said we were  
crazy.

RUSSELL

Amen to that brother. And I've seen  
crazier things tonight.

COLONEL LUCKIE

What kind of things have you seen?  
I didn't catch your name.

Russell hops down off his precarious perch of a sink and an  
overturned garbage can. This time he offers his own hand.

RUSSELL

Sergeant Russell Dawson. Requesting  
permission to speak freely, sir.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Granted.

RUSSELL

There's an elf on your dance floor.  
If we don't get him back to Santa  
tonight, you can kiss Christmas  
goodbye.

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The band kicks it up with "I'M A BELIEVER" when Elvis grabs Grandma Lucy and drags her onto the dance floor. As he enters the room with Colonel Luckie, Russell points to Elvis.

RUSSELL

Over there. He's kind of in camouflage.

The Colonel squints, pulls out a pair of glasses to get a better look. They're wire-frame Lennon glasses.

COLONEL LUCKIE

I'll be damned.

RUSSELL

What?

COLONEL LUCKIE

That little elf is dancing the Watusi with my girlfriend.

RUSSELL

He's very friendly.

One of the SOLDIERS approaches.

SOLDIER

Colonel, sir, I don't know exactly why, but there seem to be a lot of police gathering outside.

Russell and Colonel Luckie trade glances that acknowledge they are in the middle of something extraordinary.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Organize the men, Anderson.

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Members of the SWAT team enter, scattering the costumed kitchen staff before them.

**INT. MASONIC LODGE - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Elvis twirls his way out of Grandma Lucy's arms, disappearing into the crowd. The band continues to play, like the orchestra on the Titanic, switching into Norman Greenbaum's "SPIRIT IN THE SKY." Colonel Luckie, conferring with the Soldiers, gestures toward Elvis.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Men, it's been a long time since we've been called to service, but the protection of that elf over there, that will be our finest hour.

Followed by the headlong arrival of the SWAT team, preceded by the panicked kitchen staff.

COLONEL LUCKIE (CONT'D)

I wouldn't ask my men to do anything I wouldn't do myself. I'll begin the defense.

Colonel Luckie steps to the caterer's table and hefts a cream pie. Seconds later, it splatters across the faceplate of the lead SWAT member.

COLONEL LUCKIE (CONT'D)

Begin flanking maneuvers.

A team of old soldiers, looking like Charlie Company, topple the Christmas tree onto the SWAT team. The battle has been joined and more old soldiers in dress military uniforms begin throwing pastries at Darth Vader look-alikes.

During this, Sloane and Casey move to get Elvis only to do a double-take at the sight of Grandma Lucy.

GRANDMA LUCY

What are you kids doing here?

CASEY

What are you doing here?

GRANDMA LUCY

(busted)

I'm seeing someone.

CASEY

We're hiding an elf.

SLOANE

Elvis, Grandma. Grandma, Elvis. We gotta go. Tell Mom and Dad we're fine. Their cell phone's out of the service area, as usual.

(over her shoulder)

Tie-dye's already gone out of style twice.

The SWAT team forms a phalanx and marches on the soldiers who rain down culinary missiles on them. Mama turns to Ty-Bo.

MAMA

Girl, I have never seen a party where  
my food was such a big hit.

TY-BO

Mama, I got some friends who need my  
help. You'll have to clean up without  
me.

Colonel Luckie salutes Russell who, lump in his throat at  
all of this, salutes back.

COLONEL LUCKIE

You know that speech about running  
away?

(off Russell's nod)

I take it back. Go.

Ty-Bo joins Russell, Casey, Sloane and Elvis as they make  
for the door. As they leave, Elvis is the last out. Stopped  
by Colonel Luckie's salute.

COLONEL LUCKIE (CONT'D)

Colonel Robert --

ELVIS

-- Luckie. You're quite famous  
actually.

(salutes)

Well done, Colonel.

And Elvis is gone. Colonel Luckie beams until a lemon  
meringue pie wipes the smile off his face.

#### EXT. MASONIC LODGE - CONTINUOUS

It's bedlam, even outside. More cops and fleeing partyers.  
Casey turns to wait for his friend.

CASEY

Elvis!

Russell scoops up Casey in a single motion. Elvis comes  
running through the gauntlet and Russell bends to scoop him  
up, too. A **SWAT OFFICER** appears out of nowhere. He raises  
his night stick above his head, prepared to bring it down on  
Russell.

SWAT OFFICER

Drop the kid.

#### SLOW MOTION

The night stick coming down.

Elvis waving his arm. The sound of CHIMES.

Russell seeing the night stick too late.

The night stick transforms into a large candy cane, shattering harmlessly across the back of Russell's head.

### **SMASH TO REAL TIME**

Another SWAT officer locks onto Elvis.

Casey and Elvis reach desperately for each other but the distance is growing as Russell retreats.

Ty-Bo's delivery truck screeches to a halt in front of them.

TY-BO

We gotta boost right now!!

Russell hesitates, then carries Casey screaming into the van. Sloane enters on her own power.

CASEY

You left him! We have to go back.

RUSSELL

(firmly)

We can't.

Devastated, angry and scared, Casey pounds his fists on Russell's body, as the truck speeds away.

### **INT. BALLROOM - LATER**

The decorations and floor are strewn with cake and pie debris. Even Grandma Lucy, tie-dye covered in meringue, is getting her rights read to her. Pelter, holding a microphone, stands before Roogs and his videocamera.

PELTER

You could call it, "Wreck the Halls."  
It was here that the melee first began. What triggered the confrontation, though, we're only now starting to piece together ...

Pelter continues to drone on in the background. Rincon stuffs more gum in his mouth as two policemen lead a squirming Elvis to him.

RINCON

Where are the Kent kids?

ELVIS

(sad)

I can't really say, I have a habit of losing people this evening. Perhaps you can put out one of those SOS's, or is that PBS's?

RINCON

Try BS. What's your name and where are your parents?

ELVIS

You can call me Elvis, but it would really be better if we forgot my parents as I have a very obscure genealogy. Let's concentrate on finding Santa Claus.

Rincon sighs, indicates the two cops should come closer for a confab.

RINCON

He's a juvenile. Take him to the county home but try to talk to him on the way. You hear anything, I want to know right away.

Elvis is led away. Pelter approaches Rincon.

PELTER

Any comment on why thirty five senior citizens attacked your SWAT team with cream pies?

RINCON

Nothing you can put on the air.

PELTER

(to camera)

Obviously, for the police, still a "Silent Night." Scott Pelter, Action News. Back to you in the studio.

#### **EXT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - NIGHT**

A large, older building, with one of those large, wonderful skylights that would cost a fortune these days. Parked out front, a squad car. And, around the corner, out of view, the catering van.

#### **INT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - NIGHT**

Elvis is escorted inside by the two cops. At the entrance, a security **GUARD** watches one of the Star Trek movies or series on a portable TV.

One cop approaches him, while the other hangs back with Elvis.

COP

Mini-me over there's a John Doe,  
undetermined age, undetermined origin,  
undetermined address.

(confidentially)

Personally, I think the kid's a little  
bit strange.

Elvis looks at the Vulcan on the TV, and feels his own ears.

GUARD

Kid won't tell you anything?

COP

Says he was born on Christmas Eve in  
1812.

GUARD

Then he's not a juvenile. Better  
take him somewhere else.

COP

Funny.

(hands him some papers)

You want to sign me off? Rincon is  
gonna be over soon to complete the  
interrogation. Kid's involved in  
the Kent kidnapping case somehow.

The guard signs the papers and hands them back to the cop.

COP (CONT'D)

Stealing kids on Christmas Eve.  
Burns my chops to hear about it.

(beat)

How 'bout these kids? They okay on  
Christmas?

GUARD

These kids don't believe in  
themselves. Sure as hell aren't  
gonna believe in Santa.

COP

(pockets paper)

Yeah, I guess. Well, Merry Christmas.

GUARD

You, too.

As the cops leave, the guard gets up and approaches Elvis.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Okay, son, let me show you your new home.

Another COP enters. He's got Doug and Alex by the back of their collars.

COP #2

Must be my lucky night.

Elvis looks crazed. These guys live in his "new home?"

**EXT./INT. CHILD CARE FACILITY / CATERING VAN - NIGHT**

Parked outside, Ty-Bo watches through binoculars. Russell and Sloane slump in their seats, defeated. Casey has his head stuck out the window.

SLOANE

Okay, I have to admit, it took me a little while, but I kind of liked the little guy --

RUSSELL

It's nobody's fault. We all tried our best.

SLOANE

We're not giving up. We're talking about Christmas here!

RUSSELL

Let me put it this way. We got more chance of winning lotto than we do of finding Christmas tonight.

SLOANE

Quitter.

Casey pokes his head back inside.

CASEY

I have a plan.

**EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT**

Ty-Bo drives the van, lights off. Coasting to a stop by Russell's abandoned taxi. Russell and Casey jump out, giving the high sign to Sloane and Ty-Bo as they drive off.

**EXT. PIONEER SQUARE - NIGHT**

Sloane and Ty-Bo hop out of the van, running toward the bus parking area, just as the Vienna Boys' Choir wraps up the concert to thunderous APPLAUSE.

Without warning, the LIGHTS IN THE TREE BEGIN TO FAIL. A chain of darkness travels around the tree. Gasps from the audience.

**INT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - NIGHT**

Russell and Casey enter. Only it's really Russell Claus, because he's wearing his get-up from the mall, and has the sack of empty packages over his shoulder. The guard eyes the two of them skeptically.

GUARD

Kinda late for you isn't it, Santa?

RUSSELL

(forced joviality)

Late? Goodness, no. Santa delivers presents all night long. Big night.

GUARD

I'm afraid it's after hours for our "guests" here.

RUSSELL

(indicating the toysack)

I won't disturb those dancing sugarplums, but I wanted to leave these here for the morning.

GUARD

They didn't notify me you were coming, or anything.

Russell pulls the beard down, and brings back the mean Vet act for an encore.

RUSSELL

Look, pal, I got a sack of toys that my boss says I'm supposed to leave here. You don't pay nothin', it's charity, okay? You want to start callin' around the world, wakin' people up to get clearance for a bunch of toys on Christmas, you need to get a life.

GUARD

Who's the kid?

RUSSELL

He's with me. Santa's right hand man.

GUARD

Who are you with?

RUSSELL

I'm with Portland Red Cabs. We do this every Christmas. Cabbies don't make a lot but they got big hearts. You got a problem with that?

The guard studies Russell and Casey for an interminable moment, then:

GUARD

They got a little tree set up in there. Not much, but you can probably just leave them there. I'll tell the administrator in the morning. And thanks.

RUSSELL

Don't mention it.

Russell and Casey pass into the entrance hallway, where they pause for a moment beneath the vaulted skylight to look up. It's a good forty feet off the floor. Russell looks down to Casey and winks as they head down the hallway, footsteps echoing on the floor.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Now for the tricky part.

**EXT. PIONEER SQUARE - NIGHT**

Show over, crowd leaving, choir filing onto their bus. As the Vienna Boys climb the steps inside, the **BUS DRIVER** stands by the door. Ty-Bo approaches, wearing her tux and bow-tie and carrying a clipboard.

TY-BO

You responsible for this vehicle?

BUS DRIVER

Yeah, I'm responsible. Who's asking?

TY-BO

City of Portland Safety Inspector. You got minor foreigners in your care, and two dangerously low back tires. You trying to create some kind of international incident or something?

BUS DRIVER

It drove great on the way over.

TY-BO

My point exactly. A couple of hours can make a big difference.

The bus driver hesitates. All the choir is inside now.

BUS DRIVER

I gotta get them kids back to the hotel.

TY-BO

You gonna fix the problem or am I gonna have to write you up on this?

BUS DRIVER

Okay, okay. Keep your shirt on.

TY-BO

You keep your shirt on, man. It's because of people like you that I gotta work on Christmas Eve, tryin' to keep people safe. Now I gotta check the turn signals. Where's the damn keys?

After such a stellar performance, the bus driver reluctantly hands them over.

TY-BO (CONT'D)

Go check those tires now!

The bus driver heads for the rear of the bus. Ty-Bo hops aboard, and Sloane emerges from the shadows to join her.

TY-BO (CONT'D)

This messed up tire gag works every time, doesn't it?

Sloane nods. So far.

**EXT./INT. BUS - NIGHT**

Ty-Bo slides into the bus driver's seat and levers the door closed. She turns the key and the engine RUMBLES to life. The bus is in motion. Ty-Bo checks the rear-view mirror and sees the bus driver running after them.

TY-BO

Safety precaution. Always adjust the rear-view mirror.

Sloane smiles at Ty-Bo, then turns around in her seat. Lots and lots of pre-pubescent boys stare back at her. She smiles a wan little smile, takes a deep breath and rises to her feet.

SLOANE

(with building passion)

My name is Sloane Kent, and I figure since you have enough Christmas spirit to come all the way here and spend Christmas in our city, that you're the perfect people to help me. You see, a friend is in big trouble and if we don't help him, Christmas may not happen. This is supposed to be a night of magic for all children. Can you imagine kids waking up with no presents, no toys under the tree? Will you help?

Stone silence from the group.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

What'dya say?

Blank smiles.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Anybody speakee English?

More nervous smiles. Sloane slumps forward in her seat, speaks to Ty-Bo.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

We gotta start thinking really out of the box now.

### INT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - NIGHT

Russell and Casey move down the darkened corridor, opening doors, looking for signs of Elvis. What they see are a lot of kids bunking in small rooms together. They come across a small table with a scraggly, tiny, artificial evergreen, dotted with a couple of broken ornaments and an inoperable string of lights.

RUSSELL

Wish I had some real presents in this bag.

CASEY

Santa'll take care of it, after we get Elvis back to him.

Another few feet, another door, until:

### THE ROOM

On a cot, peeking out from the covers, is a slender, definitely pointed ear. Russell brightens.

RUSSELL

Got him.

Russell eases the covers back. It's only a stuffed animal tucked beneath a sleeping child's arm. Russell covers the kid back up. But Casey sees something on the last cot. Elvis, tiny and shivering in the darkness. Casey pulls at the blanket.

CASEY

Elvis. It's me.

Elvis slowly peeks from beneath the covers then hugs Casey with glee. Russell approaches, holds up a finger to shush them.

### THE HALLWAY

Together, they sneak past the impoverished Christmas tree. Elvis reaches out a finger to fix one of the broken lights. Immediately, the tree comes blazing to life. It sure looks like it grew a foot, too, and got real at the same time. Casey beams at his friend.

CASEY

You are one cool elf.

Elvis smiles, admiring his handiwork.

VOICE (O.S.)

Santa?

It's a little girl, **KEESHA** -- African-American -- rubbing sleep from her eyes.

RUSSELL

Go back to sleep, little girl.

KEESHA

Did you bring me a present?

RUSSELL

I'm gonna have to make another trip.

(to Elvis)

Make a note of that, will ya?

The overhead lights flash on. Standing at the light switch is a little boy in county home pajamas. Other children sleepily wander into the hallway. Their eyes full of wonder for the first time in a long time. Santa Claus, in the person of Russell, has finally come to the county home. He turns to Elvis and Casey.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

We got us a situation here.

The kids press forward to Santa/Russell, shyly touching the bag of empty boxes slung over his shoulder. Little Keesha tugs at his sleeve.

KEESHA

I wrote to you at the North Pole  
like we were supposed to and told  
you I wanted a doll.

RUSSELL

(heart breaking)  
I'm real sorry about that.

GIRL #2

Me, too.

RUSSELL

We've had some problems in production  
and distribution, that kind of thing.  
Lotta lay-offs, hard to get good  
help. Anyhow, we're gettin' it fixed.

BOY #1

What about the presents in your sack?  
Can't we have one of them?

The other children, their fragile spirits raised by this man in the Santa suit, await Russell's answer with nothing short of reverence in their eyes. Hard-hearted cab driver, Russell Dawson, has tears in his eyes. But there's nobody to help him. The kids press in. Russell struggles for words.

RUSSELL

Look, kids, this may be a little  
hard to hear but --

GUARD

Well, well, Santa, looks like you've  
drawn quite a crowd.

RUSSELL

(still hopeful)  
And way past their bedtime. Let's  
get 'em back to sleep, huh?

GUARD

Well, we usually enforce sleep hours,  
but I guess on Christmas we can bend  
the rules a bit. Why don't you go  
ahead and give them their presents?

The guard is sincere, apparently allowing Russell to make the grand Christmas gesture in person.

VARIOUS KIDS

Yeah. Alright. Santa's got presents.  
For me? Oh, wow.

Trapped, Russell feels Elvis tugging at his coat hem. Our little elf is smiling up at him.

RUSSELL

Gotta tell you, partner, this isn't  
gonna be funny.

But Elvis makes a "go ahead" gesture. Russell reaches into his bag, unable to bear the pain of looking. And what he pulls out is a minor miracle:

**A BEAUTIFUL DOLL!**

One of the new classics from the American Girl collection. This one's "Addy", a pretty little girl circa 1864, also African-American. Immediately grabbed up by Keesha.

KEESHA

It's Addy!

Keesha holds the doll up to her face, beaming with delight. The other children's excitement explodes.

VARIOUS KIDS

I told you he was real. Did you  
bring my game? I want a doll, too.  
I've been good.

Russell's eyes twinkle as he pulls more toys from the bag -- everything from a Garcia Beanie Baby to a classic toy truck -- all to the wonder and sheer delight of the children. As he does, he smiles to Elvis:

RUSSELL

Bless your pointed little ears.

Elvis taps the tips of his ears. As the kids thin out, WE SEE Doug and Alex, dressed in the ragged pajama uniforms of the county home. The improbability of what they are seeing fighting their cynicism. Doug's hand rests on the shoulder of a small boy, wide-eyed in front of him.

DOUG

(quietly)  
Have you, maybe, got anything in  
there for my brother?

Russell reaches into the bag and pulls out a neon-colored Gameboy. Doug's brother takes the present from Russell and scoots off to the smaller kids. Doug and Alex turn away. Elvis catches Doug by the sleeve.

ELVIS

I'm sure they wouldn't approve of  
you two --  
(nods to corner)  
-- not picking up your toys.

Two gleaming sleds lean against the wall. Doug and Alex race to them.

DOUG/ALEX

Man, outstanding. Look, the runners  
that aren't cheap!

Then they remember themselves, chilling back into frosty dudes.

DOUG

Must be a catch, man.

ALEX

No way. I'm keeping mine.

RUSSELL

Yours to keep with only one condition,  
boys.

DOUG

I knew it.

RUSSELL

This is kind of an advance on next  
year. I'm going to forget last year's  
year of naughty, if you'll give me a  
year of nice this year. Okay?

Doug and Alex look at each other. Is this for real? They look at the sleds. No contest.

DOUG/ALEX

Cool. Deal.

Rincon and two cops burst through the swinging doors.

RINCON

Hold it right there, Santa!

Russell, Casey and Elvis beat feet. The cops give chase. Meanwhile:

**EXT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - NIGHT**

Assembling upon the grounds are the sixty-three members of the Vienna Boys' Choir. Sloane and Ty-Bo stand before them, helping with positioning.

**INT. CHILD CARE FACILITY - ENTRANCE FOYER - NIGHT**

Russell, Casey and Elvis arrive dead center under the skylight. So do Rincon and the cops.

RINCON

Nobody has to get hurt. There's a lot of kids here.

VARIOUS KIDS

Leave Santa alone. Get lost, you guys!

As they say this, the kids begin to lock arms and array themselves as a protective shield around Russell, Casey and Elvis.

RINCON

(to his men)

Go easy. We'll talk him out.

(to Russell)

C'mon, mister.

RUSSELL

I can explain everything.

RINCON

I get the Kent kid, and that other kid, you can take all the time in the world.

RUSSELL

After I explain.

(hand on Elvis)

This is one of Santa's elves and we have to get him back to Santa by 2:43.

RINCON

(to cop)

I got reporters talkin' about Santas,

I got Santas talkin' about elves.

What's goin' on tonight?

(to Russell)

Thought you were Santa. But keep talkin'.

Russell continues a rambling monologue about elves and scrolls and magic time. As he does, Casey urgently whispers to Elvis.

CASEY

You have to do this one yourself.

ELVIS

I can't.

CASEY

Do you believe in Christmas?

ELVIS

Of course. I'm Santa's elf.

(correcting)

Was Santa's elf. Maybe I can get in on Thanksgiving as a cranberry picker.

RUSSELL

Hey, Elvis, just stuff a stocking in it and try.

Delivered with an intensity that Elvis has not experienced. Casey looks at Elvis, his last hope. Elvis closes his eyes and begins concentrating. Nothing.

ELVIS

If only I was Rupert.

CASEY

Rupert's not here!

#### **EXT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - NIGHT**

Sloane and Ty-Bo raise batons, facing sixty-three Austrian children who begin to sing an energetic version of "SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN." With sufficient volume to send small animals scurrying for cover. Enough to generate powerful levitation if only it can be heard.

#### **INT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - ENTRANCE FOYER - NIGHT**

Where the overriding sound is silence. The thick walls are impervious to even sixty-three voices. Doug and Alex, ironically, watch the choir through a window. They see moving mouths, but hear nothing. Elvis is still trying to levitate sans choir.

CASEY

Santa picked you because you're a great elf. You can do this, Elvis.

Elvis squeezes Casey's hand.

ELVIS

Be the elf?

CASEY

Yeah. Exactly. Just like the tapes my mom listens to. Be the elf!

ELVIS

You're right. I can do this. I can do this.

Russell, still stalling, turns to Elvis.

RUSSELL

It would be best if you could do it  
now.

Elvis nods tightly. More concentration. He begins to raise off the ground. As Elvis levitates higher, he suddenly is snapped back, like a balloon held by its string. His ties to Earth are Russell and Casey, each holding onto one hand.

CASEY

Let go, Elvis.

RUSSELL

Are you nuts?

CASEY

He's gotta go without us.  
(pointedly)  
Christmas.

Russell sighs, nods agreement. Looks up to Elvis.

RUSSELL

Get the elf out of here, will you?

But Elvis holds on tighter, eyes clinched, looking in his elfin soul for a little more magic.

Rincon motions the gaping cops forward.

Casey sees Doug and Alex staring out the window and beyond, on the lawn, the assembled choir.

CASEY

The window!  
(off blank stares)  
Open it!

Doug lifts his sled up and prepares to smash the window.

Alex lays a hand on his shoulder and simply unlocks the latch and raises the window.

A sound-blast of Austrian accented "SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN" rolls in and together the trio begins to levitate toward the skylight.

The children's eyes go wide in amazement. The cops jaws go slack. As they reach the top, Russell opens the skylight hatch, and the trio smiles and waves at the delighted kids below.

**EXT. COUNTY CHILD CARE FACILITY - NIGHT**

Casey and Russell and Elvis emerge through the roof. The kids in the home are leaning out the windows, flapping pillows and going crazy.

CASEY

I thought you did a great job as Santa.

RUSSELL

Worst part of playing Santa is not actually being Santa.

The choir reaches end of the song, and the singing abruptly ends, with our trio suspended high above the ground. Russell closes his eyes. Casey holds his breath.

They begin to PLUMMET TOWARD THE GROUND. Russell and Casey are freaked. Then, at the last possible milli-second, they begin to float gently just above the ground. As they lower down, Elvis, newly confident, winks.

CASEY

Alright, Elvis!

They land near Russell's cab. Sloane and Ty-Bo approach.

RUSSELL

We gotta cook on part two of this plan.

The SOUND OF POLICE sirens rises above the celebration.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Immediately.

The gang piles into Russell's cab. Ty-Bo hangs back.

TY-BO

You guys go ahead.

CASEY

Please.

RUSSELL

Now or never, partner.

TY-BO

Some day I'm gonna have little Ty-Bo's running around. And I want to make sure they got a Santa to believe in. Now go!

Ty-Bo runs to the bus, and guns the engine. Russell gives her a salute, and races the cab down the road.

The first of the police cars are about to follow when Ty-Bo lurches the bus in front of them. The squad cars slide to stops inches short of the bus. A cop leans out of the first car.

COP

Move that bus!

Ty-Bo turns off the engine, and smiles.

TY-BO

Engine died.

(innocently)

You in a hurry?

**EXT/INT. RUSSELL'S CAB - NIGHT**

Russell drives wild, a man with a mission. Everyone else braces during the maneuvers.

RUSSELL

Phase Two in which Santa gets his  
Elf.

Russell keys his radio mike.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Hello, Christmas Shock Troops. This  
is Russell Claus. The plan is on.  
And the guarantee is this: either  
you have the best Christmas you've  
ever had this year or I promise to  
take one of your shifts next year  
and give you all the fares. Okay,  
guys, thanks a lot, Merry Christmas  
and let's roll!

He smiles at his passengers. Everyone's breath is starting to quicken.

**EXT. CROSSROADS DINER - NIGHT**

Looks like a convention of taxi drivers have arrived. Cabs, cabs and more cabs.

**INT. CROSSROADS DINER - NIGHT**

The joint is jumping with about several dozen cab drivers inside. All of the Santas we saw in the opening scene are among them. With a final *pfift*, the last string of Christmas lights shorts out. Chloe has been listening to Russell's message on the SQUAWK BOX.

CHLOE

The elf has landed. Roll 'em.

**EXT. WASHINGTON PARK / OVERLOOK - NIGHT**

A huge urban park, blanketed under white snow. Below, you can see that about three dozen cabs have pulled up side-by-side in a clearing area. Russell parks his cab, and everyone gets out. Russell stands by the door, talking into a megaphone.

RUSSELL

Okay. We need number 22 and 23 to drive about fifteen yards forward. Number 7, back up about ten yards. Alright, looking good. 32 and 35 need to move a little closer together. Kiss bumpers if you can, guys, and Merry Christmas!

The cab's squawk box is a cacophony of AD-LIBBED agreement.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Okay, then. Light it up!

**RUSSELL'S POV - THE CLEARING**

As all the headlights on the taxicabs are turned on, it abruptly erupts into a massive lighting effect, recognized from above as a gigantic Christmas star! The only lighting effect, in fact, that's working right about now.

RUSSELL

(into megaphone)

If the Wise Men had you guys, they'd have been gotten there early, probably Thanksgiving.

**THE GROUP**

Marvels at the magnificent Christmas decoration they have spontaneously organized.

CASEY

I bet you can see this all the way to the North Pole.

SLOANE

It's up to Santa now.

RUSSELL

I sure hope he shows, or I'm gonna be driving a lot of shifts for free.

CASEY

They ought to do this just to help find Santa.

RUSSELL

I'm not sure they believe in Santa, Casey. We have to show them.

(to Elvis)

How you doin' there, Elvis?

ELVIS

I'm wondering if this is how Rupert felt on his first Christmas Eve. Of course, he wouldn't have felt just like this because he would still have been with Santa Claus.

SLOANE

Let me guess. This time next year you'll be working Groundhog's Day.

Elvis looks sad. A distinct possibility.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Joke, Elvis. Just a joke.

(beat)

Not very funny, I guess.

RUSSELL

A few hours ago I never would've said this. But I believe the man in red's coming as much as I believe what's going on down there.

### THE CLEARING

What's "going on" down here is one hell of a Christmas party. Three dozen cabs and drivers. A lot of the Santa's from the clearinghouse after shift. Ty-Bo and Mama and their truck of desserts. Even Colonel Luckie and a few of his Explorers.

Ty-Bo has one gigantic portable stereo system set up playing a newly recorded version of "JINGLE BELL ROCK."

### LOOKOUT

Sloane approaches Russell, carrying the wrapped package from Russell's dashboard.

SLOANE

This for Michelle?

RUSSELL

Was.

Sloane holds out the present. Russell takes the package, stashes it in his coat pocket.

SLOANE

It's not going to get there for  
Christmas.

RUSSELL

Maybe I don't want it to get there  
for Christmas anymore.

SLOANE

I bet she does.

RUSSELL

(losing it)

Look, Sloane, I don't need you to  
run my life.

Sloane turns away, hurt. Russell softens.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to yell at you. There's  
just some things you don't understand.

SLOANE

What I don't understand is how you  
can forget about your own daughter.

RUSSELL

I told you about the judge.

SLOANE

He didn't tell you that you could  
never see her again, did he?

RUSSELL

He said it has to be cleared with  
him and my wife.

SLOANE

So? You could still see her.

RUSSELL

She doesn't need me messing up her  
life again.

In the distant sky, a tiny flickering light appears, twinkling  
toward them.

ELVIS

Look!

CASEY

It's coming this way.

RUSSELL

Come on, man in red. Way to be.

SLOANE

Can you see any reindeer?

Closer. Elvis closes his eyes. Closer. Elvis crosses his fingers. Closer. Elvis whispers his chant.

ELVIS

I hope it's Santa. I wish it's Santa.  
I hope it's Santa. I wish it's Santa.

But as it drops closer, it becomes apparent that this is no miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer but, rather:

### THE KGW-TV NEWS CHOPPER

Pelter, Roogs and pilot are at it again. Roogs hangs out the open door, videotaping. He shouts into the chopper:

ROOGS

Something real funny is going on  
around this town.

### RUSSELL, ELVIS, SLOANE AND CASEY

Watching the news helicopter circle lower and lower. If elves can become catatonic, Elvis has become catatonic.

RUSSELL

It's the news.

CASEY

(disappointed)  
We're almost out of time.

SLOANE

Casey, they'll take their pictures  
and they'll get out of here. We can  
still wait for Santa. This is no  
reason to leave.

RUSSELL

That is.

### RUSSELL'S POV - THE HORIZON

Another onslaught of police cruisers, spinning through the snow on their way up the mountainside.

### BACK TO SCENE

Elvis can't be moved. Russell picks him up and puts him in the back seat of the cab. Doors closed, he takes off.

**EXT. KENT HOUSE - NIGHT**

Russell's cab rolls to a stop, and everyone silently exits. The formerly brightly lit neighborhood is now devoid of Christmas lights.

Down a few houses, a plain sedan is parked at the curb.

**INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT**

Michael and Nina sit alone, bleary eyed and miserable, holding each other for comfort. Detective Rincon approaches.

RINCON

We just received a call from the stake-out at your home. Your kids are back.

NINA

Oh, thank God.  
(to Michael)  
Let's go.

RINCON

With the suspected perp and the escaped juvenile.

NINA

Oh, no.  
(to Michael)  
Mom could be back by now, too...

RUSSELL

No, ma'am, she's not. She was arrested at a civil disturbance earlier this evening. She's been released on her own recognizance.

MICHAEL

Arrested?

RINCON

As I understand it, it was a sixties protest kind of thing.

(back to business)

In any case, we're rolling all available units to your home now. You can come with me.

Michael and Nina rise. Their faces are masks of apprehension and fear.

**INT. KENT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Casey, Elvis and Russell sit silently, their coats on the stairwell. Casey takes Elvis' hand.

CASEY

Don't be sad. Maybe my Dad can get you a job at the TV station. You could do the weather or something.

Sloane emerges from the kitchen with a tray of hot chocolates. Everyone takes a cup.

SLOANE

Well, Merry Christmas to everyone, anyway, even if it is the last one.

Sloane grabs a present from under the tree and places it on Elvis' lap.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Open it.

ELVIS

Me?

SLOANE

Sure. It wouldn't be Christmas without presents, would it?

(catches herself)

I'm sorry.

(sincerely)

I want you have this because it's still Christmas, alright?

Elvis opens up the wrapping paper, and reveals the box to a brand-new Palm Pilot. He is deeply touched.

ELVIS

Oh, my. Oh, my.

(beat)

What is it?

SLOANE

It's a Palm Pilot. It'll make keeping your list easier next year. Carry it with you, link to Santa, download the North Pole mainframe, that kind of thing.

ELVIS

Even if there is no Christmas next year, I will always treasure this.

SLOANE

Hey, more holidays could use a list.

A tear slips from Elvis' eye and rolls down his cheek.

ELVIS

I may have lost Santa and the  
presents, but I do have this to give  
...

Magically, the long coat and vest worn by Elvis disappear in a SHOWER OF SPARKS. Underneath is his elfin jacket with the inscription, "Property of Elves." The sleeves have been hacked off with scissors. More sparks and sputters, then it, too, disappears, only to reappear on Casey.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

Last of the magic.

It's a perfect fit. Casey's eyes dance. Elvis puts his Long Coat back on.

CASEY

Elvis, you are such an elf!

RUSSELL

Hey, I'm gonna get in the act, too.

Russell pulls Michelle's gift from his jacket pocket. He hands it to Sloane.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas, Sloane.

SLOANE

I can't take Michelle's present.  
Unless ...

Sloane elbows Casey. Indicates his big wrapped present that he'd refused to open earlier. Casey hands it to Russell.

RUSSELL

I sure as heck can't take this from  
you Casey.

CASEY

Sure you can. You turned out to be  
a whole lot cooler than you started.  
Please.

Russell accepts the present, unwraps it. Sure enough, it is:

RUSSELL

An airplane ticket?

CASEY

To Los Angeles.

SLOANE

So you can give Michelle her present  
in person.

Russell stashes the ticket away, tears glisten in his eyes.  
Again, he holds out Michelle's present.

RUSSELL

If I go, you gotta take this. Once  
I tell Michelle about tonight and  
you guys, she'd want you to have it.

Sloane accepts, then unwraps the present. The tissue paper  
pulls back to reveal a leather bound diary.

SLOANE

It's so fabulous! Thanks, Russell.

Sloane leans forward and gives Russell a kiss on the cheek.

RUSSELL

You start by writing down what  
happened, okay?

It's an emotional moment. And, then, a wind whirls down the  
chimney, stirring the boughs of the Christmas tree and causing  
an ornament on the tree to CHIME.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Do you hear what I hear?

Christmas lights on the tree begin to FLICKER BACK ON.

ELVIS

Do you see what I see?

Emerging from the chimney is:

### **SANTA CLAUS!**

No synthetics in his fabrics, more than a few extra pounds  
from Mrs. Claus' cookies and an honest-to-goodness grandfather  
type. He stands and dusts himself off.

### **THE GANG**

Truly mesmerized. Speechless. Santa seems equally mesmerized  
by the sight of Elvis. His traditional little elf turned  
trendsetter.

SANTA

Mortimer?

Russell, Casey and Sloane mouth "Mortimer?" Elvis slinks  
behind Casey.

ELVIS

They call me Elvis.

SANTA

Elvis?

ELVIS

Do rather fancy it, if you don't mind. It has a certain charm and history.

SANTA

And it should play great in Vegas.  
(winks)  
Elvis, it is.

RUSSELL

I don't mean to interrupt, but how did you find us here?

SANTA

Ho, ho, ho. I didn't find you. You found me.

CASEY

But we looked all over. At Pioneer Square --

SLOANE

-- we even went to the mall --

RUSSELL

-- and we put out a landing strip for you.

SANTA

But you see, Christmas was right here.

(shrugs)

You gave away the things you wanted most.

Russell, Elvis, Sloane and Casey all trade glances.

ELVIS

When you find Christmas --

EVERYONE

-- you'll find Santa.

Santa nods. That's what he means alright.

CASEY

Oh, wow, this is so awesome.

RUSSELL

You know, you have a great job.  
When I gave out those presents to  
the kids at the county home, I felt  
like the real thing.

(re: ratty Santa suit)

Of course, I didn't look it.

SANTA

It's not the suit that makes the  
Santa, Russell. It's the person  
inside. Let you in on a little trade  
secret.

(confidentially)

Velcro.

RUSSELL

(thunderstruck)

Velcro?

SANTA

You eat as much as I do in one night,  
and try doing without it.

CASEY

You eat all the cookies?

SANTA

Don't you go telling Mrs. Claus.

(beat)

Now, does anyone have the time?

SLOANE

It's 2:40.

SANTA

Then Elvis and I must get started or  
some good boys and girls will go  
wanting this year. And we can't  
have that, can we?

RUSSELL

(still in shock)

Velcro?

SLOANE

It's really great to actually meet  
you. I know this might sound funny  
but I didn't actually, you know,  
believe...

ELVIS

Goodbye all my friends. I'll think  
about this night for the next two  
hundred years.

(MORE)

ELVIS (CONT'D)

(to Santa)

That is, if I still have the job.

SANTA

Rupert lost the list his first year.  
Don't get *all shook up* about it,  
Elvis.

Santa gives Elvis a friendly little wink. Elvis beams, turns to the others.

ELVIS

You have the spirit of elves within  
you. Tell Ty-Bo I mean her, too.

And this leads to one final, teary hug with all parties concerned.

CASEY

Will I see you again?

ELVIS

You're on my list.

Casey looks at him tentatively for a moment. After all they've been through? Elvis smiles widely and, now, for the first time, he initiates a high-five with Casey.

Elvis steps to Santa's side by the chimney. Santa places a finger to the side of his nose causing both he and Elvis to disappear. But not before shrinking to mere specks of light in a shimmering of magic dust and the sound of CHIMES. The last thing we hear is:

SANTA (V.O.)

Merry Christmas to all.

SLOANE

So that's how they do that.

Over their departure, approaching SIRENS. Russell grabs his coat, turns to Casey.

RUSSELL

I'll send you somethin' from La-La  
Land, partner.

Russell heads to the back of the house and he's gone.

**EXT. KENT HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT**

Russell hustles out the back door into the backyard just as two squad cars enter from one end of the alley. Russell clutches the airplane ticket in his hand and runs.

Russell's huffing along, losing ground when the SOUND of SLEIGH BELLS causes him to look up. Just off his shoulder cruises Santa's sleigh and eight not-so tiny reindeer. Elvis sits in the passenger seat.

SANTA  
Need a lift, Russell?

RUSSELL  
Oh, man, do I.

Russell is now running alongside. The police cars are gaining on them.

SANTA  
Where to?

RUSSELL  
Out of here.

SANTA  
Elvis tells me you might need a lift  
a little further.

Russell's tinted by the flashing emergency POLICE lights.

RUSSELL  
(quickly)  
Los Angeles. I got a little girl to  
wish Merry Christmas to. You going  
that way?

A red sleeved arm and black leather glove are extended toward Russell. Russell takes Santa's hand and is boosted into the sleigh. As Russell takes a seat, Santa takes the plane ticket from him.

SANTA  
You'll not be needing this, and I  
know someone who does.

As the ticket falls, Elvis sprinkles a little magic dust, and there, again, is the sound of CHIMES.

A snap of the reins send the reindeer off down the alley and up into the sky, climbing above the flashing lights of the police vehicles.

#### **EXT. KENT HOUSE - NIGHT**

Police have a line established to keep the perimeter, although so far the only two being held back are Grandma Lucy and Colonel Luckie. The KGW helicopter hovers overhead with Roogs hanging out. Michael and Nina burst from a squad car and rush for the house.

NINA

Are they...?

GRANDMA LUCY

No. Not yet.

(beat)

I know what you're thinking, but I'm your mother and I'm allowed to see whoever I want to see. This is Colonel Robert Luckie. Bob met the man who's with the children inside and he says they're quite safe with him.

MICHAEL

(eyeing Luckie's pony-tail)

And how would you know that?

The argument is stopped in its tracks by the sight of Santa and his sleigh rising above the neighborhood. The cops gape in amazement. Michael and Nina hug each other in the presence of something wondrous this cold Christmas morning. Colonel Luckie pulls Grandma Lucy close to him.

COLONEL LUCKIE

Far out, Lucile. Far freaking out.

One by one the lights in the neighborhood suddenly come to life -- burning brighter than ever before -- and the neighborhood is ablaze with Christmas.

MICHAEL

Nina?!

NINA

I know, Michael, I know...

Sloane and Casey come racing out onto the front yard. They see a last trace of Santa and Elvis. Shocked to see Michael and Nina out front, looking into the sky.

SLOANE

We're sorry, we --

CASEY

It was -- there was -- I mean he was --

Michael shushes his excited youngsters, motions for them to join them. The plane ticket, carried on a blast of cold air, sails magically from the air in front of Casey to grab. The sound of faint SLEIGH BELLS.

### THE SLEIGH

Flying effortlessly across the sky. Santa, Elvis and Russell.

RUSSELL

Gotta tell you, Santa, there were a coupla times I thought Christmas was a goner. I mean, we're chasin' all over Portland lookin' for you, I mean everywhere --

ELVIS

Russell?

RUSSELL

Just a sec, Elvis. Anyway, Santa, nothin' personal, but you cut it about as close as you can cut it and --

ELVIS

Russell?

RUSSELL

(exasperated)

Yeah, Elvis, what is it?

ELVIS

Stuff a stocking in it.

Elvis giggles, Santa chuckles and Russell lets out a full-bodied laugh.

SANTA

I think Russell might have a little more to say.

(to Russell)

Maybe you'd like to say the words.

RUSSELL

The words?

SANTA

You know the names, don't you?

Santa winks at him. Russell gets it, draws a deep breath, then:

RUSSELL

Now Dasher, now Dancer, now Prancer and Vixen. On Comet, on Cupid, on --

(hesitates)

-- Donder and Blitzen!

Santa cracks the reins and the sleigh becomes a whoosh of light, diminishing into the twinkling stars.

SANTA (V.O.)

Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!

This truly has been an evening of miracles, and we:

FADE OUT:

**THE END**