

DECEMBER REVOLUTION

by

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FADE IN:

INT. GARAGE - WRIGHT HOUSEHOLD - ALASKA - DAY

A CLASSIC SLED in disrepair. CLOSE on dings, dents, bent runners, and rotten seat slats.

DR. RADRESCU (V.O.)

To fix a sled is no small project. You'll require a wrench, a screwdriver, lubricating oil, and preferably a ski sharpener. If the wood has dried out, make sure to have some beeswax on hand. If the runners are untrue, you'll need a vise. To do the job properly will take three to four hours. Be sure to -

SCRUNCH. That's the sound of CALVIN WRIGHT, 10, and his trusty roll of DUCT TAPE.

CUT TO:

THE SLED. Taped up like a mummy.

On Calvin: satisfied and bundled up for sledding.

Up comes the GARAGE DOOR, where outside we see the -

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Not much snow. Calvin sticks out a mitten. A single snowflake melts on contact.

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: DECEMBER 1ST

I/E. MAIL TRUCK - LATER

DAD, a mail carrier, drives. Calvin rides in the passenger seat with his sled. Snowless countryside rolls past.

DAD

Little early for Mangler's Hill.

On Calvin: determined.

EXT. MANGLER'S HILL - LATER

As the mail truck drives away, Calvin takes a look down the hill.

Steep. Rocky. Minimal snow cover.

Calvin sits on his sled. Deep breath. The runners tip - and he's off.

THE SLED. Picking up speed.

CALVIN
WHOOOOOOOOO!

Faster. FASTER. His ski hat blows off in the wind.

Calvin's POV: a ROCK. He's headed right for it, when -

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

CRACK. BANG. CLANG. THUNK.

INT. GARAGE - LATER

WORK BENCH. The BROKEN REMAINS of Calvin's SLED lie in a heap.

Calvin turns over a piece of splintered sled wood. He finds a small PLAQUE. It reads -

CHRISTENSEN SLEIGHWERKS - OSLO, NORWAY

And lists a phone number.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin's on the landline phone.

CALVIN
Engelsk? Engelsk?

MOM, reading nearby, raises an eyebrow.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
(to Mom)
Norway.
(back to the phone)
Hi, yes, I'm looking for parts for model
932 dash 42.
(a beat)
Snakker du engelsk?
(a beat)
Engelsk?

Muted NORWEGIAN SPEECH continues on the PHONE. Calvin's expression grows more and more dismayed. Finally, he HANGS UP.

CALVIN
(to Mom)
Was I good this year?

Mom has to consider it.

MOM
Better than last year.

INT. CALVIN'S ROOM - LATER

Calvin, on the floor, hand-writes a note. It begins -
'DEAR SANTA'

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Family dinner: Mom, Dad, Calvin, and Calvin's 13-year-old brother, MIKE.

Calvin slides a folded note - marked 'SANTA' - to Dad.

DAD
Can I have a look?

THE NOTE. A list of NORWEGIAN SLED PARTS. In Norwegian.

DAD (CONT'D)
It might be easier for Santa to get you a whole new sled.

MIKE
Unless Santa speaks Norwegian.

CALVIN
Santa speaks Norwegian.

MIKE
Oh yeah?

CALVIN
Of course. Kids write to him from all over the world.

MIKE
Does he speak Swahili?

CALVIN
Yep.

MIKE

Sanskrit?

CALVIN

Yep.

MIKE

So you're telling me Santa speaks every known language on Earth?

CALVIN

That's right.

MIKE

What about kids who can't spell?

CALVIN

What's your point, Mike?

DAD

Mike doesn't buy the whole North Pole thing. But he's just being a crabapple. I take letters to the North Pole every year. I ever tell you guys about the time I saw Santa?

CALVIN

Nope!

MIKE

Here we go.

DAD

The wind was howling like a wolf. It took three hours to de-ice the plane. And I won't even mention how many times I threw up from the turbulence. But when you've got a sack of letters for Santa, you gotta go the extra mile.

CALVIN

Tell the part about Santa.

DAD

By some miracle, I made it through the storm. But the landing strip at the North Pole was snowed over. This meant I had to drop the sack from the plane.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - FLASHBACK

WHUMP. A sack lands in deep snow. BG: a small plane.

DAD (V.O.)
 What I didn't count on was the wind.

The LETTERS TO SANTA start to blow away.

INT. COCKPIT - MAIL PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Dad looks out the window in horror.

DAD (V.O.)
 I looked out the window in horror. I knew
 each letter that blew away meant another
 kid who wouldn't get their Christmas
 wish.

INT. KITCHEN - THE PRESENT

DAD
 (to Calvin)
 I didn't know what to do. Turn around?
 Too risky. Jump out of the plane? No
 parachute. But then -

EXT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - FLASHBACK

DAD (V.O.)
 BANG! The door to Santa's workshop flung
 open -

A RED SUITED MAN emerges, but before we see him -

INT. KITCHEN - THE PRESENT

DAD
 And who do you think came bolting out to
 get those letters?

CALVIN
 Santa.

DAD
 That's right. And he chased down every
 last one.

On Calvin - beaming.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mom and Dad sit on opposite ends of a couch.

MOM
 Next year is what we said last year.

DAD
But I just told the story.

MOM
(calling O.S.)
Calvin?

Calvin rounds the corner. He's licking a candy cane.

CALVIN
Yeah?

MOM
Calvin, I want you to listen carefully.
There's no Santa Claus. No North Pole.
None of it. It's make-believe.

CALVIN'S POV - as he looks slowly from Dad, anxious, to Mom, resolute.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

SMASH! Calvin throws an ornament at the wall. WHAP!
Calvin throws a candy cane at the wall. THUNK! Calvin
throws a yule log at the wall.

Mike, puzzled, watches from the doorway. Dad pushes past.

Calvin is winding up to throw a nutcracker when Dad grabs his hand.

DAD
Calvin, stop! Stop. He's real.

CALVIN
And the North Pole?

DAD
Also real.

CALVIN
Then why did Mom -

DAD
Mom's got a weird sense of humor.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mom, Dad, Mike, and Calvin are POSING TOGETHER in
MATCHING CHRISTMAS OUTFITS.

MOM

Grounded. No allowance. No egg nog. No funny faces in the picture.

CALVIN

You've got a weird sense of humor.

MOM

This isn't funny, Calvin. What you did was not nice.

DAD

Guys?

PUSH IN ON an INSTANT CAMERA, opposite. A timer counts down.

CALVIN

Well, it's not very nice to Santa when you DON'T BELIEVE IN HIM!

MOM

That doesn't mean you get to SMASH ALL OUR CHRISTMAS STUFF!

FLASH!

THE PHOTO DEVELOPS. Dad is blinking. Mike is smirking. Mom and Calvin look ready to tear each other apart.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Bedtime routines. Dad's putting on a moisturizing face mask. Mom is trimming her bangs.

MOM

When I was his age I was protesting an oil pipeline, chaining myself to trees, I saved that osprey -

DAD

So he's into Christmas. Is that so bad?

MOM

No. I like Christmas. Really, I do. I just get concerned Calvin doesn't see the bigger picture.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Calvin is loading the dishwasher with really dirty plates. Mike stands around not helping.

CALVIN

Proof?

MIKE
Proof. Photographic evidence. Or Santa's hat or something.

CALVIN
What's the wager?

MIKE
Well, considering your allowance is suspended indefinitely -

CALVIN
Right. All that stuff I smashed.

Mike plucks a CANDY CANE from a nearby bowl.

MIKE (CONT'D)
I'll bet you one candy cane.

CU: the glistening candy cane.

CALVIN
Deal.

FADE OUT.

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - THE NORTH POLE - CONTINUOUS

Light from a ROARING FIRE falls across a chamber of dudely relaxation. A tiki bar in the corner. A tropical tune in the air.

SANTA, a potbellied hippie in his 60s, stands on a ladder. He's fussing with the STAR at the top of his CHRISTMAS TREE.

SANTA
Perfect.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: the tree below, a HOPELESS MESS. MILTON, an elf, struggles to free himself from a TANGLE OF CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

MRS. CLAUS (O.S.)
Hard at work?

In the doorway stands MRS. CLAUS, 60s, but younger looking - yoga has been kind to her. She's holding a SUITCASE.

Santa gets down from the ladder. In the BG, Milton tries to get himself untangled.

SANTA
Wow. Leaving already?

Mrs. Claus winces as - CRASH - the Christmas tree falls to the ground.

MILTON (O.S.)
I'm okay!

MRS. CLAUS
Maybe I shouldn't go.

SANTA
No, no. I just thought today was, um - what day is it?

MRS. CLAUS
You need to put the reindeer on a diet. Blitzen couldn't get in the air if you dropped him. And there's also -

SANTA
Claudia. Chill. I got this.

MRS. CLAUS
Do you?

She turns to Milton, still entangled in Christmas lights.

MRS. CLAUS
(to Milton)
How's morale?

MILTON
Morale-culous!

Mrs. Claus grimaces at the pun - and looks back to Santa.

SANTA
I'll miss you.

MRS. CLAUS
I know.

Mrs. Claus gives Santa a peck on the cheek. We stay on Santa, disappointed at the short goodbye.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - LATER

WINDOW. Santa gazes out at Mrs. Claus's sleigh, taking off into the snowy air. Milton, nearby, pours egg nog into a tiki mug.

MILTON
She needs this.

SANTA

I know. It's just - have you ever had doubts?

Milton puts the tiki mug in Santa's hand.

MILTON

Sure. I mean, people grow apart. Some marriages weren't meant to last.

SANTA

No, I mean, doubts about my - abilities.

MILTON

Are you kidding? You're Santa!

SANTA

That's true.

MILTON

Kids love you!

SANTA

Probably.

Milton strokes his chin, then -

MILTON

What you need is cookies. I think we still have a plate from that kid who won the Junior Bake-Off Challenge last year.

Milton dashes off in the direction of the fridge. As he does, Santa takes another look at the Christmas tree disaster -

SANTA

(to himself)

Eh. Could be worse.

INT. CAFETERIA - THE NORTH POLE - CONTINUOUS

ELVES - pointy hats, pointy shoes, and tool belts - line up for dinner.

A TRAY. On the plate is a CANDY-FLAVORED CANE - grey, lumpy, minimal stripes.

LONNIE

Candy-flavored?

LONNIE, a green-haired elf, looks up from her tray to ELF COOK.

ELF COOK

If you ask me, it's more of a boiled celery flavor.

LONNIE
Where are the real candy canes?

ELF COOK
Budget cuts, I guess. Nobody tells me anything.

Lonnie regards the line behind her.

LONNIE
Anybody else tired of this?

MURMURS of assent from the line of ELVES, including -

COAL ELF
I'm just tired.

Lonnie notices the weary, soot-covered COAL ELF.

LONNIE
Here.

She gives Coal Elf her candy-flavored cane.

INT. FACTORY - LATER

Empty and shabby. Machines are held together with duct tape and bandaids. TRACK toward -

A SEWING TABLE. Lonnie takes a look over her shoulder, then takes off her POINTY HAT -

And gets to work.

In a series of CUs, Lonnie CUTS AND STITCHES her pointy hat into a BERET. Finally, she applies a small homemade PATCH.

The patch reads: E.L.F. - ELFIN LIBERATION FRONT

CUT TO:

Standing strong in her new beret, Lonnie takes a long look back from the doorway.

LONNIE
(to herself)
Now or never.

She turns off the lights. BLACKOUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HANGAR - ALASKA - DAYS LATER

A MAIL PLANE stands alone in the cavernous space. Industrial bulbs flicker on as Dad's MAIL TRUCK drives in.

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: DECEMBER 9TH

INT. CARGO BAY - MAIL PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Dad loads sacks of mail. HOLD - on a sack marked 'NORTH POLE.'

EXT. MAIL PLANE - AIRBORNE - LATER

Snowy mountains and valleys down below.

INT. COCKPIT - MAIL PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Dad and COPILOT, at the controls, communicate via headset.

DAD
I mean, is ten too old?

COPILOT
I say let him enjoy the magic while he can. My kids never believed.

DAD
Really?

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

On the mail sack marked 'NORTH POLE.' It's - jumping?

Calvin pops his head out of the sack, just in time to hear -

DAD
Alright, I'm going back there. Bring us low.

COPILOT
Roger that.

CINCH. Calvin's gone.

Dad enters the cargo bay. He grabs the 'NORTH POLE' sack - Calvin inside - and hauls it over to the door.

Dad OPENS THE DOOR.

A rush of wind blows in. They're only feet above the snowy ground.

INT. SACK - CONTINUOUS

DARKNESS. BUMPS. Before Calvin knows it -

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

Dad THROWS THE SACK FROM THE MOVING PLANE.

EXT. SNOWY EXPANSE - CONTINUOUS

WHUMP. The sack lands in deep snow.

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

As the plane rises and banks away, Dad gazes down at the sack of letters in the snow - and sighs.

INT. COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

Dad puts his headset back on.

COPILOT

All good?

DAD

(glumly)
Ten-four.

EXT. SNOWY EXPANSE - CONTINUOUS

Calvin wriggles out of the mail sack. He puts Mom's INSTANT CAMERA to his eye. But when he looks around -

Piles of snow. No workshop. No elves. No Santa.

Calvin looks down at his feet and finds - a rusty hubcap?

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: Calvin's not on the North Pole -

He's in a LANDFILL.

CALVIN

HEY! WAIT!

But the plane has already disappeared in the clouds.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LANDFILL - LATER - NIGHT

Calvin sits at small campfire beside a rusted Pontiac. While snacking on a candy cane, he reads a LETTER TO SANTA.

LETTER WRITER (V.O.)

In conclusion, I have been very good this year. I was not involved with those kids who put a hex on the bus driver. I was only accused because I sit near them.

Calvin gazes into the campfire. He's about to toss the letter to Santa in there, when -

HAROOOO. An UNEARTHLY BELLOW.

Calvin, scared, hides in the MAIL SACK.

MORE BELLOWING.

Nearby, FLASHLIGHT BEAMS cut through the piles of garbage. We hear footsteps crunching in the snow.

GILDEROY (O.S.)

Here?

BOCK (O.S.)

Yeah, by the Pontiac.

A flashlight beam lands on the sack of letters.

GILDEROY (O.S.)

Found it.

Two ELVES round the corner: GILDEROY, a pipsqueak, and BOCK, a shaggy-haired doof.

They grab the mail sack - Calvin inside - and drag it away.

I/E. SLEIGH - MOMENTS LATER

Gilderoy on the reins, Bock as copilot.

GILDEROY

You'd think the mail-human would figure out where the North Pole is by now.

BOCK

I know, right?

Behind them, Calvin pokes his head out of the sack - and sees the sleigh RISE INTO THE AIR.

INT. MAIL ROOM - THE NORTH POLE - LATER

THUNK. Gilderoy and Bock drop the sack on a hard floor.

CALVIN (O.S.)

Ow.

Gilderoy turns to Bock.

GILDEROY

Rats again. Got a pointy thing?

Bock draws a LETTER OPENER from his tool belt and hands it to Gilderoy.

THE SACK. Gilderoy is ready to stab when Calvin POPS OUT.

A stunned beat. Elves regard human. Human regards elves.

GILDEROY

(to Bock)

Get the flamethrower.

Bock rushes out of the room.

CALVIN

No, wait! I'm nice.

GILDEROY

You're extremely not allowed to be here.

Bock has returned with an elf-sized flamethrower.

BOCK

Sorry, little human.

Bock AIMS THE FLAMETHROWER -

CALVIN

Wait!

Calvin shields his face with a handful of LETTERS TO SANTA.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

You toast me, these kids don't get a Christmas.

Bock lowers the flamethrower.

BOCK

(to Gilderoy)

What do I do?

Gilderoy grabs a FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

GILDEROY
 (to Bock)
 You toast, I'll put out the letters.

Bock nods - and PULLS THE TRIGGER.

CLOSE on a JET OF FLAME.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: the flame is puny compared to Calvin.
 Calvin BLOWS IT OUT like a birthday candle.

Gilderoy looks to Bock: 'uh-oh.'

BOCK
 (to Calvin)
 Please don't pulverize me.

CALVIN
 Nobody's pulverizing anyone. I told you,
 I'm nice. Where am I?

BOCK
 Mail Room. North Pole.

GILDEROY
 Don't tell him that!

Calvin gets out the camera and lines up a shot. But -

GILDEROY
 Nope.

Gilderoy snatches the camera and SPIKES it to the ground.

CALVIN
 Hey! That's my mom's!

Bock stomps on the camera.

GILDEROY
 What part of 'extremely not allowed to be
 here' did you not understand?

CALVIN
 Okay, okay. I'm sorry.

Calvin stoops to pick up the pieces of the broken camera.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 Since when did elves get so grumpy?

GILDEROY
 Know what? You're right. It's our busy
 season and we're all feeling a little
 high-strung.

BOCK
We haven't been eating properly.

GILDEROY
(to Bock)
Shush!
(to Calvin)
Look, human child, we're sorry. We
promise to get you back to your mom and,
um, fix her camera, too.

BOCK
(whispering to Gilderoy)
We can't fix a camera like that.

GILDEROY
(also whispering)
I know.

LONNIE (O.S.)
Who are you talking to?

As Lonnie rounds the corner, Gilderoy and Bock stuff
Calvin back in the sack.

LONNIE (CONT'D)
Was that a human child?

GILDEROY
An ape.

BOCK
A pet ape. For little Jamie Rogers from
Missoula, Montana, who's been a very good
boy this year.

LONNIE
Get him over to Santa's Little Pet Shop.
I've got big news.
(hushed)
Walkout. Tomorrow.

GILDEROY
But we got stuff to do. The mail room is
gonna be slammed.

LONNIE
The busier, the better. Let's make it
hurt.

Gilderoy and Bock look confused.

LONNIE (CONT'D)
First we strike. Then we get what we
want. That's how it works.

BOCK

Oh.

GILDEROY

Right. I knew that.

LONNIE

See you in the square.

Lonnie walks off.

GILDEROY

(to Bock)

Do you know anyone in costumes?

INT. COSTUMES DEPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin looks in the mirror while Gilderoy applies the finishing touches to a PROSTHETIC ELF EAR.

GILDEROY

If anyone asks, just say you're a shelver. All the tall ones are shelvers.

CALVIN

But why?

GILDEROY

Because they have to reach things.

CALVIN

No, why do I have to dress up like an elf?

GILDEROY

Human child, this is the most top-secret toy production facility on earth. We can't just let kids walk around here.

CALVIN

Why not?

GILDEROY

Because it's secret!

CALVIN

But why?

A beat.

GILDEROY

Do you want a piece of coal?

CALVIN

No.

GILDEROY

Then look like an elf. It'll only be till tomorrow.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

A lot of the elves are wearing BERETS, especially at -
LONNIE'S TABLE. She's waving a candy-flavored cane around and probably talking about the revolution.

PAN to Gilderoy and Bock, keeping a low profile with Calvin.

CALVIN

Candy canes are supposed to have stripes.

GILDEROY & BOCK

We know.

Calvin picks up his candy-flavored cane, gives it a lick.

CALVIN

Tastes like a parrot cage.

BOCK

I'd kick myself in the nose for a real one.

GILDEROY

Soon, brother, soon.

On Calvin, uneasy. PUSH IN on CALVIN'S JACKET POCKET.

X-RAY VIEW: a REAL candy cane inside.

INT. ELF DORM - LATER

Bunk beds. Not a lot of personal space. Like other DORM ELVES nearby, Gilderoy and Bock are getting ready for bed.

CALVIN

Do you think I could call my parents?

GILDEROY

Yeah. Hmm. We don't have phones here.

BOCK

Santa has a phone. But he might eat you.

CALVIN

Eat me?

GILDEROY

Santa's a very hungry man.

CALVIN
Santa works year-round to reward nice
kids. He doesn't eat them.

Gilderoy and Bock consider this.

GILDEROY
Maybe. But you'll get us in trouble.
Elves don't go up to Santa's house past
seven.

BOCK
Or ever.

GILDEROY
Yeah. We never go up there.

CALVIN
So you never see Santa?

BOCK
Oh, we see him.

GILDEROY
Sometimes.

BOCK
I saw his boot one time. It was awesome.

CLICK. The lights go out.

GILDEROY
Goodnight, human child.

INT. VARIOUS - WRIGHT HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

CHAOS as Mom, Dad, and Mike TEAR THE HOUSE APART.

MOM
Calvin!

DAD
Calvin!

MIKE
CALVIIIIIN!!!!

Looking in closets, under pillows, in the refrigerator.

On Mike - beside the candy cane bowl, looking guilty.

INT. ELF DORM - CONTINUOUS

As elves nearby snooze and snore, Calvin lies awake. Careful not to disturb Gilderoy and Bock in the bunk above him, he slips out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE SANTA'S MAN CAVE - LATER

THE DOOR. A sign reads 'KEEP OUT.' Calvin's thinking of turning back, when -

MOM (O.S.)
(faintly)
CALVIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIN!

With new resolve, he opens the door - quietly.

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - CONTINUOUS

Santa sprawls on the couch, phone in hand. BEEPY MUSIC.

THE PHONE: a game called CANDY CANE CRUNCH. In the midst of play, the game PAUSES -

SANTA
Oh, c'mon.

And serves up an AD FOR DIET PILLS.

Calvin watches, undetected, behind a life-sized cutout of Jimmy Buffett.

SANTA
(calling O.S.)
Milton, where are those cookies? I'm about to eat my own hand, here.

Too risky. Calvin creeps away.

FADE OUT.

INT. STABLES - THE NEXT MORNING

ON SANTA'S SLEIGH, in all its candy apple-red glory. REINDEER are hitched to the front. STABLE ELF, cowboy hat and Texan accent, strikes a deal with Gilderoy.

STABLE ELF
I don't know you. I never saw you. And I definitely never said you could take Santa's sleigh.

GILDEROY
I really appreciate it.

STABLE ELF
Just get the kid out of here.

GILDEROY
Roger that. Is Donner alright?

DONNER, the reindeer, sniffs, sniffs, and - ACHOO!
Gilderoy is covered in reindeer snot.

STABLE ELF
Dang. There's a bug going around. Give me
ten minutes.

Stable Elf starts unhitching Donner.

EXT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

REVEAL: Calvin has been watching the scene through the
open door. He sees his chance - and sneaks off in the
direction of -

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Calvin looks around, dazzled by the lights, trees, and
decorations. He refocuses -

CALVIN
(to himself)
Proof. Proof.

INT. TOY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Machines THUNK AND WHIR. FACTORY ELVES work at a FURIOUS
PACE - their hands and arms a blur as an onslaught of
toys comes down the production line.

A BALCONY. Calvin looks down. It makes him dizzy just to
watch.

ON LONNIE - in her E.L.F. beret. Other elves in berets
shoot conspiratorial glances in her direction.

Lonnie looks upward to -

THE CLOCK - as the seconds tick down to 9:05 AM.

LONNIE
STOP!

EVERY ELF IN THE FACTORY STOPS WORKING.

Half-built toys roll on the conveyor belts. Silence.

THE BALCONY. Calvin scratches his head.

Factory Elves get up from their work stations - and FILE OUT - Lonnie in the lead.

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Lonnie gets on a stage. She uses a BULLHORN to address the crowd of Factory Elves.

LONNIE

Friends! Now is the time for a reckoning.

CURIOUS ELVES come out of nearby buildings to see what's going on.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

Are candy-flavored canes what we deserve?

THE CROWD

NO!

LONNIE

Are we worth so little?

THE CROWD

NO!

LONNIE

Then put down your tools! Join us TODAY for a BETTER TOMORROW!

CHEERS from the Factory Elves. Tentative applause from BYSTANDER ELVES, too.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

We've got RIGHTS. And our rights are being TRAMPLED. We've got VOICES. And they're falling on DEAF EARS. But all that changes if we STAND TOGETHER!

CHEERS.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

Santa WILL meet our demands. But until he does - NO CANES, NO CHRISTMAS! NO CANES, NO CHRISTMAS!

THE CROWD

(taking up the chant)

NO CANES, NO CHRISTMAS! NO CANES, NO CHRISTMAS!

BACK OF THE CROWD. On Calvin - SHOCKED. Gilderoy and Bock rush up to him -

GILDEROY
Okay, human child, show's over.

CALVIN
Wait, what about -

Gilderoy and Bock seize Calvin before he can finish. They BUMP through the crowd of elves, toward -

EXT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

A NEW REINDEER is harnessed to Santa's Sleigh. Gilderoy and Bock pile in. But Calvin stands in his tracks.

GILDEROY
C'mon!

CALVIN
I can't.

Gilderoy gets down from the sleigh and approaches Calvin.

GILDEROY
Look. The North Pole is no place for you.
We're elves, you're a human. We make the
toys, you get them. There's no -

He crosses his hands back and forth.

BOCK
(finishing Gilderoy's thought)
Crisscrossing.

CALVIN
I'm not going anywhere.

GILDEROY
Either you get on the sleigh or I'll
personally put you on the naughty list.

CALVIN
What does that matter if there's no
Christmas?

Chants of 'NO CANES, NO CHRISTMAS!' continue from the
direction of the square.

GILDEROY
We'll work it out. This sort of thing
happens from time to time.

BOCK
This never happens.

Gilderoy shoots Bock a dirty look.

CALVIN
'No Christmas?'

GILDEROY
There's always Christmas. Elves can't
live without it. No elf would ever -

Calvin DUCKS as a CRAZED ELF topples a Christmas tree.
Gilderoy reconsiders his argument.

GILDEROY (CONT'D)
What about your parents? I'm sure they're
mildly to moderately upset that you ran
away.

CALVIN
They wouldn't understand. They don't
believe. But I do. And I'm not going to
be the kid who could have saved Christmas
and didn't.

GILDEROY
How are you going to save Christmas?

Calvin reaches into his pocket and pulls out - A CANDY
CANE.

GILDEROY
Is that?

BOCK
A real one?

CALVIN
Sorry, there's some lint on it.

Calvin brushes off the lint, breaks the candy cane in
two, and hands the pieces over to Gilderoy and Bock.

Gilderoy licks. Bock crunches. They both fall over in
delight.

CALVIN
I can get more.

GILDEROY
Alright let's go right now.

Bock is already in the sleigh.

BOCK
I'll drive.

CALVIN
First, I want to talk to her.

Calvin points toward the podium, where Lonnie is still on her bullhorn.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - LATER

A MONITOR - footage of Lonnie on her bullhorn.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: Milton and an ELF TECHNICIAN, watching the monitor. Milton hits pause.

MILTON

Oh c'mon, they're not that bad.

ELF TECHNICIAN

Please. Take mine.

Elf Technician hands Milton a candy-flavored cane.

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Milton gives the candy-flavored cane to Santa.

SANTA

Day shift walked out over this?

MILTON

It'll blow over. We might want to send Lonnie to the mines until it does, but -

SANTA

Who?

MILTON

Lonnie. She's the leader of the little, um, rebellion.

SANTA

Rebellion?!

MILTON

Too strong a word.

SANTA

I should hear her out. Where are the real candy canes?

MILTON

Back-ordered.

SANTA

Get us an update, will you?

MILTON

Sure.

SANTA
And get Lonnie in here.

Santa gives the candy-flavored cane a lick.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Pretty weird. Gluey.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - LATER

Lonnie waits at an empty desk. She looks at FRAMED PHOTOS of Santa and Mrs. Claus - younger, happier.

Santa enters. He gives Lonnie a cup of hot cocoa (way too big for her to hold) and sits down at his desk.

SANTA
So. Tell me what needs to happen to get your people back on production.

Lonnie takes a deep breath, and -

LONNIE
Item one - toy tester elves will be issued helmets -

CUT TO:

EXT. TESTING ROOM - FLASHBACK

BOING! TOY TESTER ELF goes flying as a jack-in-the-box malfunctions.

LONNIE (V.O.)
Item two -

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY - FLASHBACK

ELF LAUNDRESS sorts white sheets.

LONNIE (V.O.)
- coal elves will be issued a double ration of soap.

A white sheet stained SOOT BLACK in the shape of an elf. Elf Laundress frowns.

CUT TO:

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - BACK TO THE PRESENT

LONNIE

Item three -

SANTA

Hold on. I thought this was about candy canes.

LONNIE

That's item thirty-six.

SANTA

How many items are there?

Lonnie unspools a really long parchment scroll on Santa's desk. He frowns.

SANTA

Lonnie, you're asking for a lot. Now I'm the first to admit that elves pick up a lot of the slack around here, but -

LONNIE

When's the last time you visited the factory?

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Lonnie leads Santa through the square. POSTERS for the E.L.F. have appeared. Elves are lined up to modify their hats into berets. Santa notices these developments with mystification and horror.

INT. TOY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

A SOLDERING TABLE. Sparks fly from an overloaded wall socket. Lonnie shows Santa a soldering gun.

LONNIE

Do you know what this is?

SANTA

Sure. It's a metal sticky thingy.

LONNIE

It's a soldering gun from 1982. It barely works. But we can't make a Transmogrifier without it.

SANTA

What's a Transmogrifier?

INT. MAIL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

THE WALL. A BULLETIN BOARD shows a tally of 'MOST REQUESTED TOYS.' 'TRANSMOGRIFIER' is top in the running.

LONNIE

It lights up and makes noises.

SANTA

Kids want the latest and greatest. So?

LONNIE

Elves are exhausting themselves trying to produce the latest and greatest. Not to mention exhausting our financial resources - which is why you can't afford to get real candy canes anymore. I assume you're familiar with last year's budget?

SANTA

Mrs. Claus handles numbers and stuff.

LONNIE

Ask her how much it costs to make a Transmogrifier.

SANTA

Um. She's on vacation.

LONNIE

Then there's no hope.

SANTA

Excuse me? Who do you think you're talking to? I've been doing Christmas every single year since -

LONNIE

What about next year? And the next? Look at the numbers, Mr. Claus. Even if we make Christmas happen this year, we've got one, maybe two more Christmases before it all goes belly up.

Santa strokes his beard as this sinks in.

SANTA

Okay. I hear you. When Mrs. Claus gets back, we're going to have a serious talk about long-term planning. But for now, we gotta do what we can, right? I mean, kids gotta have Christmas.

LONNIE

I couldn't agree more.

SANTA

Short term, then. If I agree to meet your demands, no more walkouts?

LONNIE
You have my word.

Lonnie and Santa SHAKE ON IT.

INT. TOOL SHED - LATER

Fascinating ELFIN TOOLS hang on hooks - all the way to the ceiling. Calvin follows Gilderoy and Bock. They approach LONNIE'S DESK.

LONNIE
Hey! How'd it go in the mail room? Did they walk?

GILDEROY
Lonnie, this is -

CALVIN
Calvin.

LONNIE
Let me guess: shelver. Come to join our cause, Stretch?

BOCK
He's not an elf.

Gilderoy flicks Calvin's prosthetic elf ear - off it comes.

CALVIN
Hi.

LONNIE
Bock, get the flamethrower.

CALVIN
Hold on. I can get candy canes.

Lonnie shoots Gilderoy and Bock a skeptical look.

GILDEROY
It's true.

BOCK
I tried one. It moved me.

LONNIE
The E.L.F. intends to fix a lot more than just our food supply.

Lonnie thumps a scroll on her desk.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

Factory elves are still working ten-hour shifts. I've seen the paper cuts on wrappers' hands. And I bet they don't talk about the mine collapse in the brochure.

CALVIN

What brochure?

LONNIE

Two Christmases ago a dozen coal elves never came back from their shift.

CALVIN

Oh.

LONNIE

Yeah.

CALVIN

Look, I'm new here. And it sounds like there are a lot of things to fix. But it also sounds like candy canes are what the elves want most right now.

LONNIE

They're a priority. So?

CALVIN

I want to help.

LONNIE

Why?

CALVIN

I'm a kid. 'No Christmas' doesn't work for me.

LONNIE

I already went to Santa with our demands. He needs a chance to deliver.

(to herself)

Though, if *I* feed the people, I'm a hero.

(to Calvin)

Where are these candy canes?

CUT TO:

INT. TOOL SHED - LATER

A BLUEPRINT. Sort of. Calvin drew it from memory. It depicts a CANDY CANE FACTORY.

CALVIN (O.S.)

We went there on a school trip.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. CANDY CANE FACTORY - FLASHBACK

CANDY EXEC, frowny, reads from a clipboard:

CANDY EXEC

No free samples. No touching anything. No sneezing. No pimple popping. No photography. No smiling. Absolutely no free samples.

CALVIN (O.S.)

You already said that.

CANDY EXEC

No questions.

BACK TO:

INT. TOOL SHED - THE PRESENT

LONNIE

So we go there when nobody's around, and take as many candy canes as we can?

CALVIN

Yeah, pretty much.

LONNIE

There's a problem.

CALVIN

What?

GILDEROY

Elves don't steal.

BOCK

Yeah, we never steal.

GILDEROY

We don't even know what happens to elves who steal.

BOCK

They explode.

GILDEROY

(genuinely interested)
Oh, yeah?

CALVIN

If you don't steal, what about all those missing socks?

A beat.

GILDEROY, BOCK & LONNIE
Gnomes.

CALVIN
Alright. How about if we give something
back in return?

Gilderoy and Bock share a doubtful look.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Not stealing! Exchanging.

INT. STORE ROOM - LATER

Gilderoy and Bock load up a dolly with boxes of candy-
flavored canes.

INT. STABLES - LATER

SANTA'S SLEIGH. Bock lashes on a last box of candy-
flavored canes, while Lonnie and Gilderoy look on.

GILDEROY
Think the kid's for real?

LONNIE
We'll see.

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: DECEMBER 11TH.

I/E. SANTA'S SLEIGH - AIRBORNE - NIGHT

Soaring over a RIVER.

GILDEROY
I still say we should have gone left at
Nome.

CALVIN
Look!

Something in the water: GLOWING CANDY STRIPES.

EXT. RIVER - ALASKA - CONTINUOUS

Closer on the glowing stripes. TRACK along them - all the
way to the DRAINAGE PIPE of the -

EXT. CANDY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Razor wire fences. Smoke belching from smokestacks. A polluting behemoth.

INT. CANDY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Machines and conveyor belts at rest. A security camera in the corner of the room scans the scene. Silence. Until -

CRASH! - boxes of candy-flavored canes SMASH through a skylight window - and SCATTER across the factory floor.

I/E. SANTA'S SLEIGH - HOVERING ABOVE THE FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and the elves look over the edge of the sleigh - at the GAPING HOLE they just put in the factory roof.

GILDEROY

That's one way in.

(to Bock)

You got the grappling hooks?

INT. CANDY FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin, Lonnie, and Gilderoy RAPPEL down into the factory on ropes. Once on the floor -

CALVIN

This way.

Calvin leads the elves through a corridor of CANDY MACHINES. Gilderoy unwittingly walks up a large wheel and stays walking in place.

Lonnie checks out a DRYING MACHINE that cycles candy canes around on hooks. Intrigued, she starts it up -

LONNIE

(to herself)

So that's how they do it.

The machine HOOKS Gilderoy on the collar, lifts him off the drum, and deposits him back with Calvin.

Lonnie turns off the machine and rejoins the group ahead.

Nobody notices, but as the drying machine slows, one of the hooks LIFTS CALVIN'S SKI HAT OFF HIS HEAD.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A door marked 'STORE ROOM' - LOCKED. Calvin tries his library card - no dice.

LONNIE

Allow me.

Lonnie uncaps a fountain pen, disassembles it, and uses the nib to PICK THE LOCK. A click. A tick. Open sesame.

CALVIN

Whoa, how'd you do that?

LONNIE

I used to work in Delivery. Let's just say Santa doesn't always go down the chimney.

INT. STORE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Basically a treasure vault - FILLED WITH CANDY CANES.

Gilderoy dives into a candy cane pile. Bock finds a giant candy cane and starts hobbling around with it:

BOCK

Look at me, I've got arthritis!

The cane SNAPS - and Bock falls on his face.

GILDEROY

(through a mouthful)

Quit fooling around and start eating!

LONNIE

(to Calvin)

Let's work.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin, Gilderoy, and Bock pass boxes of candy canes hand-to-hand.

EXT. FACTORY FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

A FORKLIFT - frontloaded with boxes of candy canes. Lonnie steers while Bock works the pedals.

INT. LOADING BAY - CONTINUOUS

Calvin hits a SWITCH, but just as the door begins to raise, it trips an -

ALARM. FLASHING lights. HONK! HONK! HONK!

CALVIN
Yikes. Let's move.

EXT. LOADING DOCKS - CANDY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

THE ALARM CONTINUES - as Lonnie, still on the forklift, lowers boxes of candy canes onto the sleigh.

Gilderoy, Bock, and Calvin secure the boxes with straps. Ready to go, they look back toward the -

FORKLIFT. Empty now. Where's Lonnie?

INT. CANDY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

FLASHING LIGHTS from the alarm illuminate the candy machines. Lonnie watches, entranced.

CALVIN
Let's go!

The BAY DOOR IS LOWERING.

LONNIE
That's the stripe applicator.

CALVIN
I know, I took the tour!

LONNIE
We could do this. We could make them.

CALVIN
Maybe later! Let's go!

THE BAY DOOR - nearly closed. At the last second, Calvin YANKS Lonnie through.

EXT. CANDY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

SIRENS. BLUE AND RED LIGHTS. The COPS are getting close.

BOCK
Ooh, pretty lights.

Calvin and Lonnie hop on the sleigh with Gilderoy and Bock.

CALVIN
Hit it!

SIRENS GROW LOUDER. Cop cars closing in.

Bock is about to flick the reins, when Lonnie grabs his hand:

LONNIE

Wait! You're missing the big picture, guys. We've got an opportunity to learn how to make candy canes. If we make our own, that means we take back the means of production, and -

YANK! Calvin takes the reins. The sleigh TAKES OFF -

I/E. SANTA'S SLEIGH - AIRBORNE - CONTINUOUS

CHAOS. On Calvin, struggling to control the SPOOKED REINDEER. The elves hang on for dear life as the sleigh PITCHES AND WOBBLER.

LONNIE

(to Calvin)

Think Christmas!

On Calvin. In a FLASH he sees:

HIS MOM'S FAMILY CHRISTMAS PORTRAITS -

Family. Warmth. Tradition.

The reindeer settle a little. Calvin gains enough control to bank HARD RIGHT. But then -

CRUNCH. The sleigh clips a SMOKESTACK. Calvin watches in horror as half their load tumbles ground-ward.

But he keeps flying - up, up, and into the night.

FADE OUT.

INT. KITCHEN - WRIGHT HOUSEHOLD - THE NEXT MORNING

A FLYER. It shows a snapshot of Calvin, along with the following text:

MISSING. CALVIN WRIGHT. 10 YEARS OLD. SLEDDING ENTHUSIAST. BELIEVES IN SANTA.

Mom and Dad are busy sorting the flyers into piles.

MIKE

Mom? Dad?

They look up.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm the reason Calvin's gone.

MOM
What?

DAD
How?

MIKE
I bet him he couldn't prove Santa exists.
He's probably up at the North Pole by
now. I'm sorry. Maybe we could take the
mail plane and -

Mom and Dad share a look of puzzlement.

DAD
Mike, we live in Alaska. The North Pole
is thousands of miles away.

MIKE
But what if -

DAD
There's nothing up there but snow. No
Santa. No elves. Just snow.

Mike, a little crestfallen, looks to Mom.

MOM
Let's start with the flyers.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK - at the door. Dad gets up.

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Dad answers the door. Outside stand OFFICER MOSCOWITZ and
OFFICER MOSELY, small town cops.

EXT. CANDY FACTORY - LATER - DAY

The place is wrapped in YELLOW POLICE TAPE.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - CANDY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Dad and Mike stand with the officers in front of a BANK
OF MONITORS.

A MONITOR. Yup, that's Calvin, losing his ski hat.
Officer Moscovitz holds up the hat.

OFFICER MOSCOWITZ
Is this your son's hat, sir?

DAD
This doesn't make any sense. My son's not
a criminal.

OFFICER MOSELY
 A circus came through town in October.
 Has your son been 'hanging out' with any
 circus folk?

DAD
 Uh. No?

OFFICER MOSELY
 Well, what does that look like to you?

THE MONITOR. It's Lonnie.

MIKE
 (to himself)
 An elf.

But to Dad she looks like -

DAD
 That looks like a burglar who's not very
 tall.

OFFICER MOSCOWITZ
 Circus folk are a shiftless people.

OFFICER MOSELY
 Nomads.

OFFICER MOSCOWITZ
 If Kelvin got mixed up with them -

DAD
 Calvin.

OFFICER MOSELY
 Calvin could be wearing a red nose by
 now.

DISSOLVE TO:

A vintage illustration of RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER
 and a TITLE:

HOW TO MAKE A REINDEER FLY

It's an INSTRUCTIONAL FILM. Grainy. Jumpy.

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - THE '70S

A YOUNGER SANTA, fitter and wearing a bell-bottom version
 of his suit, stands beside a reindeer.

SANTA
 Reindeer can smell what you're thinking.
 If you're thinking about supper or your

special lady, your reindeer will smell it, and they'll sit on the ground like a sack of potatoes. What you gotta think about is Christmas. The lights. The warmth. The smiles on the faces of your family and friends. Now take the reins. You should feel a light upward pull. That's a good sign. Next -

Santa's voice WARPS. The film BUBBLES.

CUT TO:

INT. STABLES - THE NORTH POLE - THE PRESENT

BOCK

No, no, no, no, no!

CRASH! The film projector falls to the floor. Lonnie flicks on the lights.

LONNIE

(to Calvin)

Well. You get the gist. Think about Christmas. Work on your steering.

CALVIN

Thanks. Sorry I goofed up.

LONNIE

It's alright.

Lonnie shoots a look over at the haul of CANDY CANES, sitting nearby.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

Which one of you wants to guard the haul tonight?

Gilderoy points to Bock, Bock to Gilderoy.

CALVIN

I'll do it.

LONNIE

Pretty cold once the sun falls.

CALVIN

It's okay.

Lonnie walks off - but then reconsiders. She hands Calvin a BOOK.

LONNIE

Here's a little bedtime reading for you, Stretch.

THE BOOK. Old. Worn. TO FIX A BROKEN TOY, by Dr. Angelo Radrescu - the guy from the opening V.O.

CALVIN
I'll get it back to you.

LONNIE
Consider it a gift. Merry Christmas.

INT. STABLES - LATER

Calvin reads in a pile of hay. In the BG: boxes of candy canes. PUSH IN on THE BOOK.

DR. RADRESCU (V.O.)
What follows is a compendium of knowledge on the fixing of toys. It is dedicated to elves who do not wish to let broken things stay unfixed. Elves are spreaders of joy and makers of many wondrous things. But as long as our means of production lies in the hands of others, we will never be -

MILTON (O.S.)
Who ordered these?

Calvin jumps. Milton has sidled up beside him.

CALVIN
Uh, I did?

MILTON
I don't think so. I do the ordering around here.

Milton reaches out and fixes Calvin's prosthetic elf ear - which is falling off. On Calvin, nervous -

CUT TO:

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - LATER

Calvin sits opposite Santa, at his desk. Santa's squinting, trying to place Calvin.

SANTA
Calvin Wright. Calvin Wright. You're not the Calvin Wright who swallowed his sister's goldfish?

CALVIN
No, sir. I don't have a sister.

SANTA

Sledding enthusiast?

CALVIN
Yes, sir.

SANTA
Gotcha. How's that Norsker Sledsker holding up?

CALVIN
Not well, sir.

SANTA
The Norwegians make the best sleds, but they hold you over the coals for parts.

CALVIN
That's true, sir.

SANTA
Where'd you get this 'sir' stuff? Do kids do that?

CALVIN
Uh. No.

SANTA
Call me Santa. I hear you stole a bunch of candy canes for me.

CALVIN
How did you -

SANTA
I know when you're sleeping, know when you're awake, bad, good, et cetera.

CALVIN
Wow.

SANTA
Nah, I'm pulling your leg. There are cameras all over the place.

CALVIN
Then you know we didn't get enough.

SANTA
Look. I'm not a bad guy. The only reason the elves have been getting candy-favored canes is because our shipment of real candy canes has been delayed. Turns out it costs a lot of money to ship a bajillion candy canes to the North Pole, which means we had to take a budget shipping option. But here's what we do. You give me the candy canes you stole.

That'll keep my elves happy and making toys till the shipment arrives. Everybody wins.

CALVIN

What about Lonnie?

SANTA

Have you heard her out there? If she and her friends get their hands on those candy canes, they aren't going to work - they're going to throw a little beret party and dance around.

CALVIN

I don't think she's asking anything unreasonable. Elves have it rough. I've seen the paper cuts on wrappers' hands, and -

SANTA

Right, right. Ten hour shifts, whatever else she said.

CALVIN

'Mine collapse' is what she said.

SANTA

Mmm.

CALVIN

How about I give you the candy canes, you give the E.L.F. what they want. Start with the mines. No more mines, no more mine collapses, no more kids with coal in their stockings. Everybody wins.

SANTA

Hmm. That's tricky, actually.

CALVIN

Tricky how?

SANTA

Let me put it this way. Every elf wants to work delivery. It's fast paced, it's exciting, and you get to see the world. But unfortunately not every elf gets to do that job. We only award it to elves who prove themselves. On the other side of things, there are some elves here who have shown that they're not ready to get with the program. They whine and complain, steal cookies out of my fridge, hide out in a stocking when they're supposed to be working, and there's even the rare elf who's just plain mean. Those

are the elves who work the coal mines. And if they work hard down there they get out. It's about motivation. Without the idea that they might get sent to the mines, elves aren't motivated to work. And if they're not motivated, Christmas doesn't happen.

A beat.

CALVIN

So you're telling me you can't shut down the mines because you need to be able to punish elves?

SANTA

Uh. Yeah.

CALVIN

That's not nice at all and I don't like it.

SANTA

Yeah. I don't really like it either.

CALVIN

The mines gotta go!

SANTA

But, well, you gotta understand, change happens a little slower up here. That's just the way it goes.

CALVIN

And whose fault is that?

Santa considers.

SANTA

Okay, fine. I'll get the miners out of the mines. But you gotta get me those candy canes.

CALVIN

Deal.

Santa and Calvin shake hands.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Hey, I got a guest room you could stay in up here. It's warm. And technically you're not supposed to be anywhere near the elves.

CALVIN

Why?

SANTA
Cause you're a human.

CALVIN
But they're my friends.

SANTA
Friends? Right now I think elves are
looking out for elves.
(into an intercom)
Milton! Load the furnace, will you?
Calvin's staying in the guest room
tonight.

MILTON
(on the intercom)
On it!

Santa looks up at Calvin, lost in thought.

SANTA
Is there something else I can help you
with?

CALVIN
How can you tell what's naughty and nice?

SANTA
Good question. I try to look at the whole
picture. Stealing candy canes? Not so
nice. Probably a felony, now that I think
of it. Saving Christmas? Nice.

CALVIN
Felony. Okay.

He gets up to leave.

SANTA
Want me to show you the guest room?

But Calvin's already gone.

INT. BOILER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THE FURNACE. Flames leap on a pile of - paper?

MILTON (O.S.)
Alright, kid.

REVEAL: Milton is tossing LETTERS into the furnace. And
looking SCARY - mean eyes, sharp teeth.

MILTON (CONT'D)
Let's tango.

CU: THE GLOWING FIRE - where a letter marked 'DEAR SANTA' incinerates.

FADE OUT.

EXT. MAIN STREET - SMALL TOWN ALASKA - CONTINUOUS

Mom staples 'MISSING: CALVIN WRIGHT' posters on telephone poles.

CRUNCH. Another staple goes in.

CALVIN (V.O.)
Was I good this year?

CRUNCH. Another staple.

MOM (V.O.)
Better than last year.

CRUNCH.

MOM (V.O.)
- last year.

MOM'S FEET - soaked in snow and slush.

MOM (V.O.)
- last year.

Mom sees a bench nearby and sits down. She gazes out at a street scene plastered in flyers - and sighs.

CALVIN
Mom?

MOM
Yeah?

Calvin has appeared on the bench beside her. A FLASHBACK.

CALVIN
I'm sorry. I just thought it would be cool to have a really big Christmas tree.

MOM
You knew that tree was special to me. It was a home for birds and squirrels and -

CALVIN
But - Christmas!

MOM
Calvin, you're this family's reigning authority on Christmas. But sometimes I'm

convinced you don't know a thing about it.

PULL OUT: Calvin is GONE and Mom's alone again.

She sniffs back some tears and gets up. Another flyer, another telephone pole. CRUNCH.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Santa searches the pockets of his suit for something.

SANTA
(to himself)
Calvin Wright. Calvin Wright.

He finds what he was looking for - a folded NOTE.

THE NOTE. Calvin's handwriting. It reads:

CALVIN (V.O.)
Dear Santa. Nothing this year. Calvin Wright.

SANTA
Knew it.

INT. STABLES - LATER

Calvin and Bock prepare a sleigh.

BOCK
Are you sure?

CALVIN
I gotta face the music, Bock. If I turn myself in now, maybe they'll let me out of jail in time to see a cool futuristic society with flying cars.

BOCK
Couldn't you just blame it on us?

CALVIN
Nah. When I'm bad, I gotta own it.

Bock considers this, then -

BOCK
Take me to jail!

CALVIN
You've got work to do. Santa's going to meet Lonnie's demands, and everything is gonna be -

Gilderoy rushes in.

GILDEROY
The letters!

INT. MAIL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On an ENORMOUS PILE OF MAIL SACKS.

GILDEROY
I put four sacks there last night, and
now they're GONE!

Calvin looks at the pile.

CALVIN
Is it possible you made a mistake?

BOCK
Gilderoy is Chief Sorter. Mistakes aren't
in his job description.

GILDEROY
And look at this -

He leads them toward the -

EXT. BACK DOOR - MAIL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the snow, they find DRAG MARKS - consistent with a
mail sack - and LITTLE ELFIN FOOTPRINTS.

CALVIN
Well, it wasn't Santa.

Calvin, Gilderoy, and Bock follow the FOOTPRINTS.

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Still following the footprints.

EXT. BOILER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The footprints stop at a DOOR. Calvin opens it - and his
face falls into DESPAIR.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - THE NEXT MORNING

LIGHTS! MUSIC! JOY! Santa rides his sleigh in a parade
loop, throwing candy canes to a crowd of cheering Elves.

THE SLEIGH. Using his phone, Milton snaps pictures of Santa.

SANTA
How's my beard look?

MILTON
Pure as the driven snow!

THE CROWD. Elves rejoice as they catch candy canes from the air.

Only Lonnie, at the back, is frowning. She turns to Calvin -

LONNIE
How could you let this happen? I trusted you!

CALVIN
I'm sorry! But Lonnie, there's a bigger problem. The letters -

LONNIE
You know, I really thought you cared about the elves. You got a problem? Solve it yourself.

ON MILTON - as he snaps another pic of Santa playing the hero.

EXT. A BEACH - FLORIDA - DAY

Mrs. Claus, in a bikini, lounges on a towel. BZZT. Her phone vibrates.

THE PHONE. In comes a PIC OF SANTA - throwing candy canes from his sleigh. Mrs. Claus sees the pic - but before she can reply -

TOOTH FAIRY
Claudia?

Mrs. Claus looks up, and recognizes her friend, the TOOTH FAIRY, also in a bikini.

MRS. CLAUS
Dentina! It's been ages!

The two women share a hug. Nearby, a pair of nearby SURFER DUDES look their way.

TOOTH FAIRY
Still got that sweet tooth?

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Santa steps down from the sleigh into a throng of CHEERING ELVES. He spots Calvin nearby, looking worried.

CALVIN
You need to see this.

INT. BOILER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

THE FURNACE. An empty sack marked 'NORTH POLE' nearby. Santa lets a BURNT LETTER sift through his fingers. So much for jolly.

SANTA
Who would do this?

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - LATER

Santa paces behind his desk. Lonnie sits in the hot seat, Calvin beside her.

LONNIE
This is the work of an elf pushed too far. The factory is still working ten-hour shifts, and -

SANTA
Long hours? Really? Long hours didn't stop you from plotting a revolt in your spare time.

LONNIE
Hey! I work just as hard as anyone!

SANTA
Yeah? I've seen your file, Lonnie. You've worked every job here and nothing stuck. So what now? You want to blow the place to smithereens?

Lonnie grits her teeth.

LONNIE
Maybe.

SANTA
So you DID burn the letters!

LONNIE
No!

CALVIN
Hey, hey. Hold on. Can we stop pointing fingers and talk about how we're gonna

fix this?

SANTA
(bitterly)
Ask her.

LONNIE
(to Calvin)
I know it's hard to accept, but maybe
some kids don't get a Christmas this
year.

CALVIN
No way. Christmas is every year. For
everyone. Forever.
(to Santa)
Right?

SANTA
(despondent)
Nothing's forever.

Calvin takes this in for a beat.

CALVIN
I can't believe what I'm hearing. Do you
know how many kids set their ovens on
fire trying to bake you cookies?

SANTA
Couple hundred.

CALVIN
At least! Kids spend all year trying to
be good for you. And now you're telling
me you're not going to give us your best
effort?

SANTA
Don't talk to me about effort, Calvin.
You think I like squeezing down chimneys?
I don't. It hurts. And let me let you in
on another little secret. It's really,
REALLY easy to make the 'nice' list. You
don't steal any cars, you're pretty much
a shoe-in.

CALVIN
I work my butt off to be nice, and when
I'm not, I own that.

SANTA
WELL, MAYBE THIS ISN'T ABOUT YOU!

Calvin is startled by this outburst.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(pointing to Lonnie)

Well, what about her? She started it!

LONNIE

I didn't burn any letters!

CALVIN

Both of you, stop it! We all want Christmas to happen. So what's it going to take?

LONNIE

I want livable working conditions for elves. If I shut up and keep my head down, that will never happen.

SANTA

Lonnie, I'm trying. I already called the miners in, didn't I?

LONNIE

You did?

Lonnie shoots Calvin a look. He nods.

SANTA

Your list is really long, but I'm doing my best.

She sees the sincerity on his face.

LONNIE

I don't appreciate that you threw a parade for yourself with our candy canes. But I believe you when you say you're trying.

SANTA

And I believe you want what's best for Christmas. Even if it's a real pain in the keister for me. So let's compromise, huh? You get your people back on production, I'll meet the E.L.F. protocols. I can do it by the twenty-second. I promise.

On Calvin - hopeful.

LONNIE

Agreed.

Sigh of relief from Calvin. Santa holds up a burnt letter.

SANTA

So how are we going to find out what these kids want?

CALVIN
I'll find out.

SANTA
How?

CALVIN
Give me a couple of days.

SANTA
We don't have a couple of days. Even with production humming -

CUT TO:

EXT. TOOL SHED - LATER

Calvin scans frantically through racks of ink pots.

LONNIE
Can I help you find something?

CALVIN
Stamp ink. Gilderoy's stamping up a storm in there.

LONNIE
Let me check my desk.

HER DESK - covered in crossed-out drafts of manifestoes and sketches of the E.L.F. logo. Lonnie sees Calvin looking at her work.

LONNIE (CONT'D)
Don't ever let them tell you starting a revolution is easy.

CALVIN
I know. My Mom used to take me to protests all the time. All day in the freezing cold, chained to a moose.

LONNIE
A moose?

CALVIN
Or maybe it was a tree. I don't really remember.

LONNIE
Why'd you stop?

CALVIN

Well they cut down the forest. They put in the pipeline. They built condos where the beautiful old house once stood. I'm pretty sure the moose is in the zoo.

LONNIE

Oh.

CALVIN

But that doesn't mean your revolution won't work!

LONNIE

Sometimes I'm not so sure.

(looking around the room)

There are tools for everything elves do - except start revolutions.

CALVIN

Lonnie, you've got all the tools you need, in here -

Calvin gestures to his heart.

LONNIE

Save it, Stretch. Santa's right. I've tried everything and failed at everything. Maybe if I had just stuck it out as a wrapper -

CALVIN

Well, sure, rappers sip champagne when they're thirsty, but are they truly happy?

LONNIE

No, Stretch, I'm talking about -
(sighing)

Forget it. If we get through the season, I'm going to make candy canes. Feed the people. As long as our means of production lies in the hands of others -

CALVIN

'We will never be free.'

LONNIE

You read it.

CALVIN

(nods)

The biggest question I have is, why don't elves fix toys anymore?

LONNIE

I wish I knew.

INT. MAIL ROOM - LATER

STAMP. STAMP. STAMP. Gilderoy puts the finishing touches on a LONG PAPER SCROLL and hands it to Calvin.

GILDEROY

This is everyone who's missing.

THE SCROLL. Two columns: NAME - filled in - and REQUEST - ???

CALVIN

You're the best.

GILDEROY

Nah, I just do the thing I do.

CALVIN

Well I think it's a difficult thing and you're brilliant at it.

GILDEROY

(bashful)

Thanks.

(a beat)

Next step is a phone.

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

SANTA

(on the phone)

Claudia? I need you to take me through the sew thingy.

REVEAL: Santa has split his suit at the seat.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Because I split the suit.

(a beat)

Yes, again.

(a beat)

No, I don't want to have an elf do it.

(a beat)

Because I'm embarrassed! What's all that noise?

THE DOOR. Calvin is watching covertly.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Oh, right, the concert. Did Jimmy play our song?

(a beat)

What do you mean 'what song?'

Calvin shuts the door.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Calvin takes a breather outside Santa's door. Milton rounds the corner, distracted while playing Candy Cane Crunch on his phone.

CALVIN

Hey.

MILTON

(without looking up)

Wutup.

CALVIN

Can I borrow your phone? I gotta call a bazillion kids and figure out what they want for Christmas.

MILTON

(still on his phone)

Just one -

(a long beat)

Secondddddd.

Finally he puts the phone away.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Sorry, what did you want?

CALVIN

Could I borrow your phone, please?

MILTON

Oof. Um. This is my work phone and, uh. Did you ask Santa?

CALVIN

He's kinda busy in there.

MILTON

Busy. Yeah. Me too!

Milton walks off.

CALVIN

What level are you on?

Milton pauses.

MILTON

Forty nine.

CALVIN

Respectable. It was better before they had ads.

MILTON

Agree. One more ad for height booster insoles and I just might buy a pair.

Milton continues down the hall. But not Calvin. He's got an IDEA.

INT. MAIL ROOM - LATER

Gilderoy and Bock mull over Calvin's IDEA.

GILDEROY
It might work. We'd need computers.

BOCK
(to Gilderoy)
The Information?

GILDEROY
If anyone could do it, it'd be her.

INT. THE INFORMATION'S OFFICE - LATER

A HOMEMADE COMPUTER sits at a big messy desk. THE INFORMATION - a hacker elf in black clothing - spins around in her desk chair.

THE INFORMATION
You guys want any tea?

Calvin takes a tiny cup.

THE INFORMATION (CONT'D)
Calvin's right. Candy Cane Crunch uses your browsing history to figure out stuff you're likely to buy, then serves you ads based on that.

CALVIN
(to Gilderoy & Bock)
That means Candy Cane Crunch knows what kids want. And if it knows, so can we.

THE INFORMATION
I'll have to do a little hacky-wacky in the database.

Calvin hands her the list of kids/toy requests. She feeds the list into a SCANNER.

THE INFORMATION (CONT'D)
And I guess the kids on this list who don't play the game are out of luck?

CALVIN
Trust me. They play it.

FURIOUS KEYSTROKES. The Information looks up -

THE INFORMATION

Lol.

THE SCREEN. A long list of GREEN NAMES - with their TOY REQUESTS. Only a couple RED NAMES - ???

THE INFORMATION (CONT'D)

Get in touch with the red ones and you should be all set.

ONE OF THE RED NAMES: 'CALVIN WRIGHT'

CALVIN

Weird.

CUT TO:

A FACETIME CONVERSATION.

Between Calvin and ANOTHER CALVIN WRIGHT.

CALVIN

Is this Calvin Wright?

ANOTHER CALVIN WRIGHT

Yeah.

CALVIN

I'm calling on behalf of the North Pole. Congratulations on making the Nice List this year.

ANOTHER CALVIN WRIGHT

After all the leaves I raked? I should be on it for life!

CALVIN

Okay. Well, I'm calling to correct an error in our system. What was your gift request this year?

ANOTHER CALVIN WRIGHT

Transmogri-fier.

CALVIN

Got it.

(a beat)

May I ask why?

CUT TO:

TV AD.

Against a spiraling background, a HYPNOTIST presents the TRANSMOGRIFIER - a useless electronic toy that makes a distinctive BEEP-A-DEEP-A-DEEP sound.

HYPNOTIST

The Transmogrifier is your friend. Your only friend in the world. You must have it or else the monsters will come. The best children ask for TWO Transmogrifi-

BACK TO:

FACETIME CONVERSATION.

ANOTHER CALVIN WRIGHT

You know what? Put me down for two Transmogrifiers. I want to have a backup.

CALVIN

Okay. Thanks for your time.

ANOTHER CALVIN WRIGHT

Actually - three!

Calvin, disappointed, ENDS THE CALL.

CALVIN

Sheesh, the nice list really needs to up their standards.

THE INFORMATION

'Nother Transmogrifier?

INT. TOY FACTORY - THE NEXT DAY

SOLDERING TABLE. SOLDERING ELF puts the finishing touches on a Transmogrifier.

PULL OUT: the Elves are BACK AT WORK - churning out toys at lightning speed.

THE BALCONY. Calvin watches alongside Santa.

SANTA

You really pulled me out of the fire on this one. Thanks, Calvin.

CALVIN

Thank The Information.

SANTA

Is that one of my elves?

CALVIN

Yeah.

(a beat)

They're not really your elves.

SANTA

You know what? You're right. The elves and me? We used to be buds! We'd sip a little egg nog together, tip over a reindeer once in a while. Somewhere along the line we lost that. I hope it's not too late to get it back.

(a beat)

Can I ask you something?

CALVIN

Sure.

SANTA

What'd you do last year?

CALVIN

Um. School. Went sledding. Beat my brother Mike at Boggle once. Why?

SANTA

Usually when I get a note from a kid who wants nothing for Christmas, it means they've done something horrific.

CALVIN

Oh.

On Calvin: nervous to admit it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - WRIGHT HOUSEHOLD - FLASHBACK

TITLE: LAST YEAR

BZZZZZ! That's the sound of a TREE SURGEON warming up his CHAINSAW near a BEAUTIFUL PINE TREE.

TREE SURGEON

You sure your mom is okay with this?

CALVIN

Um. Yup!

As the Tree Surgeon STARTS SAWING -

CUT BACK TO:

INT. TOY FACTORY - THE NEXT DAY

CALVIN

I just thought it would be cool to have a really big Christmas tree.

SANTA

Yeah. Big trees are awesome.

CALVIN

But I probably should have picked a tree that Mom didn't plant when she was nine years old. And one that wasn't a home for birds and squirrels.

SANTA

Oh. Right.

CALVIN

It wasn't a nice thing to do.

SANTA

Yes, you're right. Totally thoughtless and coal-worthy.

CALVIN

I may never redeem myself.

SANTA

True. Then again, from what I've heard about parents, I'll bet she misses you anyway.

CALVIN

She doesn't actually know I'm here.

SANTA

Seriously?

CALVIN

Well the thing is, um, she doesn't believe in you.

Santa strokes his beard.

SANTA

Look, there are plenty of fine people out there who don't think I exist - just like there are plenty of fine people who don't share my high regard for piña coladas. None of that really matters. Family does.

CALVIN

But you don't have a family.

SANTA

Oof. That stings a little, Cal. I may not

have kids, but Mrs. Claus and me, and the elves? If that's not a family, I don't know what is. Here -

Santa hands over his phone.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Call your family.

INT. KITCHEN - WRIGHT HOUSEHOLD

PHONE RINGS on an empty room. We hear a GRINDING NOISE from the -

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

LOUD GRINDING as Mom applies an ORBITAL SANDER to the runner of Calvin's sled.

She thinks she hears something, and stops - but the phone is no longer ringing.

INT. TOY FACTORY - THE NORTH POLE - CONTINUOUS

BEEP! Answering machine.

CALVIN
(on phone)
Hi. It's me, Calvin. I love you and I'm safe. I'll be home for Christmas.

BEEP-A-DEEP-A-DEEP. Calvin bumps into a table of TRANSMOGRIFIERS. The machines start lighting up and making noises.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

As the Tranmogrifiers continue BEEPING, he hangs up.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - LATER

A COAL ELF stands opposite Santa.

SANTA
There's a retraining program in the pipeline, but for now, hit the showers and take a load off.

Santa hands over a bar of soap.

COAL ELF
Thanks, Santa.

SANTA
Don't mention it.

Coal Elf heads for the door.

Santa presses the INTERCOM -

SANTA (CONT'D)
Hey Milton, any word on when the candy
canes are coming in?

No answer. Santa tries again.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Milton?

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Santa's voice booms out over the P.A. system.

SANTA (O.S.)
MILTON, PLEASE REPORT TO THE OFFICE.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. SANTA'S SLEIGH - AIRBORNE - CONTINUOUS

On Milton: piloting the sleigh. He brings it in for a
landing on a ROOFTOP.

REVEAL: a SIGN on the building.

LAW OFFICES OF DONNIE "MONEYMAKER" MUNTZ

INT. LAW OFFICES - ALASKA - LATER

Milton, in a suit, sits with DONNIE, a lawyer. They're
looking over a MAP OF THE NORTH POLE.

DONNIE
So let me get this straight. Your boss
has been illegally running his operation,
tax-free, out of the North Pole?

MILTON
Former boss.

CUT TO:

A PHONE VIDEO. BUCK and TOMMY, two TACTICAL ENFORCERS,
push back against a crowd of PROTESTORS.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

Milton looks at Buck's phone. Buck and Tommy wear workout gear.

BUCK

Check it out, that's me with the riot shield.

MILTON

Smushing that guy's face?

TOMMY

Yeah, that's a tactical smush. How big are your undesirables?

Milton measures to his own forehead.

BUCK

Shouldn't be a problem.

INT. HANGAR - LATER

EXILED SLEIGH ELF

It was my life's work. But you know Santa - 'Change comes slowly.' When he scrapped the project, I decided I'd had enough.

MILTON

Tell me about it. Trust me, you're much better off here.

EXILED SLEIGH ELF

(wistful)

Yes. I do miss the lights sometimes.

Lights flicker on as Milton follows EXILED SLEIGH ELF toward a big, dark THING.

EXILED SLEIGH ELF (CONT'D)

Well, this is it.

On Milton, in awe, as he takes in -

THE SLEIGHER, a giant sleigh-like aircraft large enough to haul a fleet of tanks.

INT. A BOARDROOM - THE MALL - LATER

A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION. A slide shows an illustration of an elf smiling dumbly at a big candy cane.

MILTON (O.S.)

And so, because elves have no use for money, they can be paid in candy canes.

'OOOHS,' 'AAHHS,' and 'I LIKE THAT' from MALL EXECs at the boardroom table. BEARDED EXEC raises a hand.

BEARDED EXEC

Question.

MILTON

Of course.

BEARDED EXEC

Do they have to be fed on real candy canes, or would a substitute suffice?

MILTON

Unfortunately, we've had limited success with substitutes. But, once the elves are yours, you're welcome to try anything you please.

BEARDED EXEC

Can the elves dance?

MILTON

Um. Yup!

Mall Execs NOD and jot down notes. FEMALE EXEC raises her hand.

FEMALE EXEC

What about quality of life? I mean, do elves really want this?

MILTON

Elves will do pretty much anything if you dangle a candy cane in front of them. To be blunt, they're not very smart. Great workers, but, when it comes to independent thought, totally deficient.

EXEC WITH PIMPLE

I need a workforce like that ASAP!

BEARDED EXEC

Would it be possible to push up the timeline?

EXT. STABLES - SANTA'S VILLAGE - LATER

Milton brings Santa's sleigh in for a landing.

SANTA (O.S.)

HEY!

Santa, furious, storms over.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Who said you could take my sleigh?

MILTON
Nobody.

SANTA
(spluttering)
Well, you can't!

MILTON
Well, excuse me for taking a little
initiative.

Milton lifts a tarp - revealing BOXES OF CANDY CANES.

SANTA
Oh.

INT. TOY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Calvin stands at the end of a CONVEYER BELT. As toys whiz past, Calvin puts check marks on a LONG CHECKLIST.

CHECK. CHECK. CHECK. CHECK. But then -

THE CONVEYOR BELT. Empty - no more toys.

Calvin can't believe his eyes. He looks to -

THE LIST. Checkmarks everywhere. Could it be?

A WHISTLE SOUNDS.

WIDE on the factory floor, as exhausted elves SIGH IN RELIEF.

CALVIN
Let's get Santa!

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - CONTINUOUS

SANTA'S PHONE. Pics of Mrs. Claus living it up on the beach in Florida. Santa sighs as he scrolls.

CALVIN (O.S.)
Santa! The toys are done!

Santa hides the phone.

SANTA
All of them?

CALVIN

Yes!

SANTA

Oh. Great. Awesome.

CALVIN

What's wrong?

SANTA

Nothing. You saved Christmas. Couldn't ask for more.

A beat.

CALVIN

Do you miss her?

SANTA

Yeah.

(a beat)

Hey, you know, I'm going to have to retire one day. How'd you like to take the reins on this operation when I do?

CALVIN

Wow! Really?

SANTA

You're young. You're in the know. The elves seem to like you. And -

Santa sees that Calvin is reconsidering.

CALVIN

It should be an elf.

SANTA

Ugh. Since when did you become champion of the elves?

CALVIN

Well, I read this book.

SANTA

Let me guess: To Fix a Broken Toy. Did they tell you the guy who wrote that book went nuts? He used to sneak aboard my sleigh and burglarize houses. Said he was trying to fix the toys.

CALVIN

Well, he's a good writer anyway.

SANTA

Elves are awesome at wrapping bows and spreading Christmas cheer. Writing books?

Not so much.

CALVIN
Elves are smarter than you think.

SANTA
Then why do they wear dunce caps?

CALVIN
Elves write books. Elves hack databases.
Elves run your factory, your mail room,
your mines. Elves do everything for you!

SANTA
They're still kinda dumb.

CALVIN
UGH!

SANTA
Know what? I don't think I want to let
you be Santa anymore.

CALVIN
Fine by me. I don't want to be Santa.

SANTA
Fine.

CALVIN
Good.

SANTA
FINE!

CALVIN
GOOD!

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - LATER - NIGHT

AN E.L.F. POSTER ON A WALL - featuring an illustration of
Lonnie in her beret.

OPPOSITE: Milton, smirking, RIPS THE POSTER DOWN.

INT. MILTON'S ROOM - LATER

A MIRROR. Milton has set up the poster beside a beret and
a wig. He opens a case of - makeup?

As Milton begins to apply makeup, he WHISTLES a tune:

"IF I HAD A HAMMER"

INT. TOOL SHED - LATER

The door opens. Looks like - LONNIE?

Or is it? As the elf steps into the light, we see it's MILTON IN A LONNIE DISGUISE.

Milton/Lonnie walks the racks of tools until he reaches the HAMMER SECTION. Milton picks up a HAMMER.

CUT TO:

SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE.

Milton/Lonnie makes his way across the village square, through halls, through the factory, all the way to the -

CUT TO:

INT. TOY VAULT - CONTINUOUS

Toys of every description, glittering and new.

Milton/Lonnie grins in DASTARDLY DELIGHT as he approaches a pony figurine. He gives it a stroke -

Then SMASHES IT.

Thus begins a DANCE OF DESTRUCTION.

Milton leaps, sashays, kicks, and can-cans through the room, SMASHING TOY AFTER TOY. He smashes, bashes, and shatters until he's out of breath.

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: DECEMBER 20TH

SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - THE NEXT DAY

TRACK IN - as we follow Calvin through a CROWD OF ELVES, murmuring somberly.

INT. TOY VAULT - CONTINUOUS

Calvin stops at the front, near Lonnie.

CALVIN
What's going on?

Calvin's face falls when he sees -

THE BROKEN TOYS. And there, in the midst of the wreckage:
Santa - eyes red from crying.

Milton whispers something in Santa's ear. Santa looks up
- directly at Lonnie.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A MONITOR. It's Lonnie (actually Milton in disguise)
smashing toys in the vault.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: Lonnie is watching the footage,
horrified, next to Santa.

LONNIE

But that's not me!

SANTA

Who else could it be, Lonnie?

LONNIE

I don't know, but I didn't smash those
toys! I was sleeping - you can ask anyone
in my bunkhouse.

SANTA

I did. They all slept right through your
little escapade. Convenient for you.

(a beat)

I guess you got what you wanted.

LONNIE

That's a lie. I love Christmas just as
much as you.

SANTA

You know, I actually thought you might
come clean?

(into an intercom)

Milton, show Lonnie out.

Milton comes in, takes Lonnie's arm, and leads her out of
the room.

LONNIE

Wait. Where are you taking me?

MILTON

It's okay. Don't fight it.

Milton leads her into the -

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Santa stands, resolute in the doorway, as Milton drags Lonnie away.

LONNIE
 (to Santa)
 Please! Wait!

Lonnie struggles, and in response, Milton puts a set of TINY HANDCUFFS on her.

LONNIE (CONT'D)
 Let me go!

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Milton drags Lonnie through the square, as throngs of elves watch, judging her. Hard faces.

Calvin rushes to Lonnie's side.

CALVIN
 What's going on?

LONNIE
 Stretch! Help me! I was framed! I don't know how, but -

Milton pops a WADDED SOCK into Lonnie's mouth and tapes it in place. She goes on, muffled:

LONNIE
 MHRMM! MHRMM! RHRHM!

CALVIN
 (to Milton)
 Where are you taking her?

Milton gives Calvin a devious grin.

MILTON
 Come see.

INT. ENTRANCE - MINE SHAFT - MOMENTS LATER

Dark and foreboding. A railroad track takes a steep incline to pure blackness.

MILTON
 I was barely out of diapers when they sent me to the mines. It was because I took a blanket off another elf's bed. I was cold.

Milton lifts a barrier that says 'DO NOT ENTER.' He marches Lonnie over to a CART on the track.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Santa tells every miner they were put in the mines for a reason. At least with Lonnie it's true.

Milton unlatches the cuff from his wrist.

CALVIN

But Santa closed the mines. I don't see -

MILTON

Santa doesn't know everything. Some elves spend their entire lives in these mines. Some mine shafts go down and don't come back up. That's where Lonnie's going: nowhere. I think she'll fit right in.

Before Milton can latch the handcuff to the cart - Calvin snatches it and CUFFS HIMSELF.

CALVIN

If she goes down, I do too.

MILTON

Fine by me.

Milton SHOVES Calvin onto the cart with Lonnie. And before Calvin knows what hit him, THE CART STARTS ROLLING. Down into the blackness.

I/E. CART IN MINESHAFT - CONTINUOUS

TWISTS. TURNS. DARKNESS. A rollercoaster of terror, as the coal walls and timber supports whip by.

LONNIE

GRHMM! MMHMM! GRHMM!

Lonnie's trying to say something. Calvin rips the tape off her mouth -

LONNIE (CONT'D)

Your sweater! Give me your sweater!

Calvin takes off his sweater - a feat of contortion, because he and Lonnie are cuffed together.

Working quickly, Lonnie loosens a thread and hooks it onto the wall whizzing past. As the cart continues down the mineshaft, the sweater UNRAVELS.

Calvin looks behind him at the unspooling thread. The light at the top of the tunnel narrows to a pinpoint.

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - LATER

Santa packs a suitcase with tropical clothing.

MILTON
But what about Christmas?

SANTA
No Claudia, no Christmas. I gotta save my marriage if that's alright with you. Keep an eye on the elves for me?

MILTON
(disingenuously)
Oh, I'm not sure I can handle that kind of responsibility!

Santa considers.

SANTA
Where's Calvin?

MILTON
Unknown.

SANTA
He must have gone back to his parents. You're it, Milton. Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

Santa goes back to packing.

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - LATER

Milton watches from the window as Santa's sleigh takes off into the night. Just when he's out of sight -

MILTON
YESSS.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS.

As Milton GOBBLES COOKIES. Does donuts in a BARBIE JEEP. Puts a SHAVING CREAM BEARD on his face.

Finally, he flops back on Santa's favorite couch. Spent. But then -

SFX: RUMBLING.

COAL ELVES (O.S.)
HELP!

On Milton, a look of pain in his eyes. PUSH IN and -

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MINE SHAFT - FLASHBACK

SOOT. DARKNESS. CONFUSION.

COAL ELVES (O.S.)

HELP!

Milton crawls through coal rubble toward A DISTANT LIGHT.

COAL ELVES (O.S.)

HELP!

EXT. ENTRANCE - MINE SHAFT - LATER - DAY

THE LIGHT. Milton has finally freed himself from the mine shaft, and emerges, soot-black, on a snowbank.

CRANE UP: his leg hangs beside him, BROKEN.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - SANTA'S HOUSE - LATER

Milton lies in bed, sleeping, broken leg in an elevated CAST. We see the shadows Santa and Mrs. Claus cast over him from the doorway.

SANTA

What do you want to do with him?

MRS. CLAUS

We'll find something.

(a beat)

Poor thing.

INT. MRS. CLAUS'S STUDY - LATER

A MESSY DESK. Milton punches away at a CALCULATOR as Mrs. Claus reads off items from receipts -

MRS. CLAUS

Little tiny toothbrushes - \$35.50. Little tiny combs - \$10.90. Little tiny nail clippers - \$12.90.

MILTON

That's down 3 percent from last year. I found a cheaper supplier.

MRS. CLAUS

Well done, Milton.

Milton nods at a pair of CRUTCHES, leaning against the desk.

MILTON
How much did my crutches cost?

MRS. CLAUS
\$95.50.

On Milton - considering.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
It's alright. You're worth it. You've got a splendid head for figures and you've been a great asset to this office. Not every elf can do what you do.

MILTON
You mean, survive a mine collapse?

On Mrs. Claus, suddenly chilled.

MILTON (CONT'D)
Only joking.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MRS. CLAUS'S STUDY - DAYS LATER

Milton sorts the mail. He pauses when he sees -

JUNK MAIL. It's an ad for a correspondence course in business. We hear the SALES PITCH:

PITCHMAN (O.S.)
Are you smarter than your boss? Time to BE THE BOSS! Get out of that dead-end job TODAY and start making the BIG BUCKS!

Milton slips the piece of mail inside his jacket.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - LATER

A HIGH BOOKSHELF. Milton, no more cast, climbs a ladder to put away a LEDGER on a high shelf.

SANTA
That leg's healed up pretty good.

MILTON
Coming along.

Milton steps down from the ladder.

MILTON (CONT'D)
 Guess I'll be heading back to the mines
 soon, huh?

A beat, as Santa strokes his beard.

SANTA
 I think we can find some things to keep
 you occupied here instead.

MILTON
 Thank you, Santa.

SANTA
 Don't mention it.

MILTON
 I've learned a lot here. Just the other
 day I ran some numbers and it seems like
 we actually have a lot more coal than
 naughty kids to give it to, so I guess I
 was wondering, why do we still have mines
 -

But Santa is already distracted, rummaging for cookies in
 a big fridge.

MILTON
 (to himself)
 At all.

SANTA
 Where are those snickerdoodles?

On Milton, deeply disappointed -

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SANTA'S MAN CAVE - THE PRESENT

CU: Milton's eyes. He takes a deep sip of egg nog.

CRANE UP - on this troubled elf, alone on Santa's couch.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STAGE - SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - THE NEXT DAY

FEEDBACK SOUNDS - as Milton takes up a BULLHORN.

MILTON
 (on bullhorn)
 Anybody want a candy cane?

Elves begin to gather at the STAGE - where Milton has set up bins of candy canes.

ELF IN THE CROWD
Where's Santa?

MILTON
Florida. Santa needed a break, guys. And I don't blame him. We've all been working WAY too hard!

MURMURS OF AGREEMENT from the Elves.

ELF IN THE CROWD
What about Christmas?

MILTON
Great question! Yeah, I guess Christmas is canceled.

Elves let out a collective SIGH OF DESPAIR.

MILTON (CONT'D)
I know, big letdown, right?

The Elves: 'YEAH!' 'THAT'S RIGHT!'

MILTON (CONT'D)
Hmm. Well, maybe there's one way we could save Christmas. It wouldn't be exactly like Santa's Christmas. It might even require relocation. But maybe -

BACK OF THE CROWD - Gilderoy and Bock.

GILDEROY
Who is this clown?

BOCK
(eating a candy cane)
I don't know, but he sure has a lot of candy canes.

Gilderoy takes Bock's candy cane away.

GILDEROY
You seen Lonnie and Calvin?

Bock shrugs.

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

PITCH BLACK - except for a red sweater thread and the GLOWING EYES of Calvin and Lonnie.

CALVIN

Look!

Up ahead: FLICKERING CANDLELIGHT. The sweater thread leads directly to it. Calvin and Lonnie drop the thread and RUN.

INT. DR. RADRESCU'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A quick pair of elfin hands are KNITTING THE THREAD BACK INTO A SWEATER.

The hands belong to DR. RADRESCU, an ancient elf with a bad cough. Calvin and Lonnie stop in their tracks at the sight of him.

DR. RADRESCU

Oh, hello.

He finishes the sweater and holds it up.

DR. RADRESCU (CONT'D)

My cross-stitch isn't what it once was,
but -

(coughing)

Looks as though it'll fit you, young man.

Dr. Radrescu offers the sweater to Calvin.

DR. RADRESCU (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas.

CALVIN

Thank you.

DR. RADRESCU

It is almost Christmas, isn't it? I've often wondered about the accuracy of my calendar.

Lonnie and Calvin look over at the wall - where a CALENDAR scratched into the stone stretches OFF INTO THE DARKNESS.

CALVIN

Looks right to me.

DR. RADRESCU

That's gratifying to hear. First the sweater, and now some company - could the day get much better?

Dr. Radrescu gets up to light candles throughout the small chamber. As he does, Calvin and Lonnie lay eyes on a variety of WONDROUS MACHINES - all made of repurposed junk. A loom. A printing press. An exercise bike.

DR. RADRESCU (CONT'D)

Let's get you out of those shackles, eh?

Dr. Radrescu cuts the handcuffs between Calvin and Lonnie with a bolt-cutter.

CALVIN

What are you in for, sir?

DR. RADRESCU

Books, my dear boy. Writing them, mostly, but I suspect the people who put me down here didn't much care for me reading them, either.

LONNIE

(realizing)

Are you - Dr. Radrescu?

DR. RADRESCU

That's right.

LONNIE

(to Calvin)

This man is a legend. He wrote -

CALVIN

I know.

DR. RADRESCU

Tell me, is it still in print up there?

LONNIE

Of course.

DR. RADRESCU

I'm surprised. Judging from the so-called rubbish that tumbles down that shaft, toys don't often get fixed anymore.

Lonnie removes a pocket-sized copy of To Fix a Broken Toy from her tool belt.

LONNIE

Will you sign my copy, Doctor?

DR. RADRESCU

With pleasure.

Dr. Radrescu takes the book and scans through quickly, frowning.

DR. RADRESCU

Ugh. I see they've made mincemeat of my preface. I'll give you the latest edition, instead.

Dr. Radrescu takes two volumes from a table beside the printing press. He hands one to Lonnie, the other to Calvin. Calvin leafs through -

DR. RADRESCU (CONT'D)

Is it intelligible to you? I've often wondered what would happen if children could fix their own toys.

THE BOOK. A detailed diagram on how to fix a little red wagon.

CALVIN

The pictures help. Can you really fix anything?

DR. RADRESCU

Just about.

CALVIN

What about that cart?

A RAIL CART - sitting on the tracks, gathering dust.

DR. RADRESCU

It goes. But the shaft is steep. And I haven't the strength.

LONNIE

We'll get you out of here, Doctor. If people knew you were alive -

DR. RADRESCU

I'm not sure there's a place for me up there. Especially if they're sending nice folks like you down here.

Calvin is on the rail cart, testing the hand crank mechanism.

DR. RADRESCU (CONT'D)

(to Calvin)

Get down from there, please.

Coughing, Dr. Radrescu approaches Calvin on the cart.

DR. RADRESCU (CONT'D)

Tell me about Christmas! What's the hot toy this year?

INT. TOY FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

A LONG LINE OF ELVES - leading to a table, where CONTRACT ELF reads a CONTRACT.

CONTRACT ELF
What does 'in perpetuity' mean?

MILTON
It means 'for a while.'

CONTRACT ELF
And who is 'Malls of the World, LLC?'

MILTON
That's the new Santa. And unlike the old Santa, Malls of the World will never ever run out of candy canes.

Milton is twirling a candy cane between his fingers. Contract Elf hesitates for a moment - then SIGNS THE CONTRACT. Milton hands over the candy cane.

MILTON
NEXT!

EXT. POOLSIDE BAR - FLORIDA - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Claus and the Tooth Fairy are pinning up Christmas decorations. BRUCE, a handsome bartender, looks more than pleased to hold Mrs. Claus's ladder.

MRS. CLAUS
Think I'm ready for that mistletoe, Bruce.

ON SANTA: watching from across the room, dismayed. But then, inspiration strikes: Santa rushes for the door.

INT. MALL - FLORIDA - LATER

Santa navigates a crowd of MALL SHOPPERS.

SANTA
OW!

RASCAL SHOPPER runs over Santa's foot with his scooter.

RASCAL SHOPPER
Watch it, Kringle!

Santa limps toward a -

INT. FLORIST - MOMENTS LATER

Santa brings a big bunch of poinsettias to the CHECKOUT.

FLORIST
That'll be eighty dollars.

Santa rummages in his suit, but only finds -
Spare change. Lint. A really old bill.

THE FLORIST - frowning.

INT. MALL - MOMENTS LATER

Outside the flower shop, Santa takes a look at the wilted and pathetic bouquet he just bought.

CRUNCH. Rascal Shopper, going the other way, runs over his foot again.

SANTA

OW!

Santa collects himself and limps on. Up ahead, he catches sight of a CROWD at -

INT. FAKE SANTA'S VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

MALL KIDS line up to sit on a FLORIDA MALL SANTA's lap. Santa, curious, approaches. But as he does, Mall Kids start to notice - and look CONFUSED. 'SANTA?'

FLORIDA MALL SANTA

Little early for your shift, buddy?

SANTA

Shift? What shift?

MURMURING: 'WHICH ONE'S REAL?'

FLORIDA MALL SANTA

You're ruining the Santa experience.

SANTA

I AM the Santa experience!

FLORIDA MALL SANTA

Just hit the food court until I'm done, huh?

SANTA

Get out of that chair!

Santa wrestles with Florida Mall Santa. Kids and Parents, horrified, clear out as holiday decorations TOPPLE.

Finally, Florida Mall Santa has had enough - he PUNCHES SANTA IN THE EYE. Santa crumples to the ground.

FLORIDA MALL SANTA

It's cool, everybody. The real Santa has

to fend off imposters every now and then.
Hee, hee, hee!

SANTA
(in pain)
It's 'ho, ho, ho,' you fool!

SECURITY ARRIVES.

INT. HOLDING CELL - MALL - LATER

GUARD unlocks the door on a weary Santa, sporting a fresh black eye.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: Mrs. Claus in the doorway.

Santa musters a smile and shows her the bouquet.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Plenty of stones to kick.

SANTA
We could get an RV. Follow Jimmy on tour.

MRS. CLAUS
Retirement?

SANTA
We've been talking about it for years.

MRS. CLAUS
I know.
(a beat)
But if you're not Santa, then who are you?

SANTA
What do you mean?

MRS. CLAUS
Maybe you're right, maybe you can't go on being Santa forever. But I fell in love with Santa. The Santa who squeezes down the narrowest chimneys. The Santa who can make the stubbornest reindeer fly. The Santa who's - beloved. Not just by kids and elves but by everyone. I fell in love with that Santa. So when he's gone, where does that leave me?

They have reached a BROKEN BOAT, lying on the sand. Santa checks out the wreckage. 'SEA PUP II' is painted on the stern in a childish hand.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
 Let me put it this way. Why'd you get in
 a fight with that guy?

SANTA
 Because I'm Santa and he's not. I've got
 more Christmas in my little finger than
 he has -

MRS. CLAUS
 Of course you do. That guy was a jerk.
 But he also made a bunch of kids happy
 today. What did you do?

SANTA
 Came here. Moped around. Got my foot run
 over. Twice. Also jail.

MRS. CLAUS
 The day's not over yet, Kris.

On Santa, catching her meaning -

CUT TO:

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - MOMENTS LATER

The reindeer aren't budging.

SANTA
 The good news is, there's a big bucket of
 feed for each of you back at the North
 Pole.

The reindeer SNUFFLE and paw the ground.

SANTA (CONT'D)
 You're right. This is no place for anyone
 in a fur coat. It was inconsiderate of me
 not to think of that and I'm sorry.

The SLEIGH BEGINS TO RISE -

SANTA (CONT'D)
 And I want you to know, Christmas
 couldn't happen without you.

- AND TAKES OFF.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Claus watches with pride as her husband's sleigh
 shoots across the sky.

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: DECEMBER 22ND

INT. DR. RADRESCU'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A WORKBENCH. Broken toy parts lay in a heap. Dr. Radrescu strokes his chin.

DR. RADRESCU

Show me.

Calvin quickly reassembles A TOY TRUCK. Dr. Radrescu nods, then turns to Lonnie.

DR. RADRESCU (CONT'D)

Have you ever set type before?

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE. INSPIRATIONAL MUSIC PLAYS as -

A printing press churns out PAGES.

Dr. Radrescu binds the BOOKS with glue and thread.

Calvin stacks books into PILES.

CU: book cover - 'TO FIX A BROKEN TOY: REVISED EDITION'

THE RAIL CART - loaded with books. Calvin and Lonnie work the hand crank; Dr. Radrescu sits and coughs. Inch by inch, the cart RISES OUT OF THE TUNNEL.

INT. TOOL SHED - LATER

LONNIE'S DESK. Gilderoy and Bock read over CONTRACTS. Gilderoy has a pen in his hand, about to sign, when -

LONNIE

Hey.

Lonnie stands in the doorway, beside Calvin and Dr. Radrescu. All three are covered in coal soot.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

We meet tonight.

Gilderoy puts down the pen, a smile of hope on his face.

INT. STABLES - LATER

CALVIN
Tonight.

STABLE ELF
But I already signed a contract.

The protest falls on deaf ears - Calvin is already out the door.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

LOW on feet in stalls.

BATHROOM ELF
Tonight.

INT. ELF DORM - LATER

Elves whisper: 'TONIGHT. TONIGHT. TONIGHT.'

TRACK - to Gilderoy and Bock's bunk.

BOCK
Tonight.

GILDEROY
I know that.

BOCK
Just making sure.

FADE OUT.

EXT. NIGHT SKY - LATER

Peaceful. Starry. Until -

A TEAM OF REINDEER, HUNDREDS STRONG, enters frame. They pant and strain against the burden of THE SLEIGHER.

ON THE WINDOWS -

INT. THE SLEIGHER - CONTINUOUS

Looks like the inside of a private plane. Mall Execs and Donnie the lawyer sip champagne in cushy chairs.

BEARDED EXEC
So I said, 'No, you idiot, the BACK NINE!'

This gets a BIG LAUGH from the other passengers.

MILTON
(trying to fit in)
Haha, yeah! Golf!

He gets some weird looks.

I/E. SANTA'S SLEIGH - AIRBORNE - CONTINUOUS

Santa is steadily piloting his aircraft when - WHOOSH -
the Sleigher ZOOMS OVERHEAD.

SANTA
Jiminy Christmas!

The strong tail draft sends Santa's Sleigh SPIRALING.

SANTA'S REINDEER. Terrified. Losing altitude -

SANTA. Also terrified. Struggling with the reins.

TAILSPIN. Santa closes his eyes. And -

SANTA
(to himself)
Christmas.

QUICK CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS - as Santa envisions Christmas. COOKIES
ON A TABLE. A DOG BARKING UP A CHIMNEY. MRS. CLAUS
LOOKING UP FROM A BOOK. MRS. CLAUS SMILING. MRS. CLAUS'S
WARM EMBRACE -

BACK TO:

I/E. SANTA'S SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

The reindeer steady. And once steadied, they ZOOM AHEAD -
faster than ever before - hot on the trail of the
Sleigher.

SANTA (O.S.)
Ho, ho, ho!

INT. TOOL SHED - CONTINUOUS

Lonnie, Calvin, and Dr. Radrescu set up chairs.

LONNIE
If anyone can make them see it, it's you.

DR. RADRESCU

(coughing)
 I hope so. I'd hate to disappoint the children of the world. But elves are fickle. Easily influenced. And we enjoy candy canes to an inordinate degree.

CALVIN
 I believe in you.

DR. RADRESCU
 Thank you, Kevin.

JUMP CUT TO:

A DISORDERLY CROWD OF ELVES suck candy canes and talk amongst themselves. Lonnie, at the front of the room with Dr. Radrescu, tries to bring order.

CROWD ELF
 Who?

LONNIE
 Dr. Radrescu! Author, toy fixer. His book's in your tool belt!

HECKLER ELF
 We don't care about him. Let's hear from from YOU!

JOINER ELF
 Yeah! Why'd you smash all those toys?

THE CROWD: 'YEAH!' 'THAT'S RIGHT!' 'GET HER OUT OF HERE!'

On Dr. Radrescu, nervous. Coughing, too.

LONNIE
 Please! Let him speak!

As Dr. Radrescu rises out of his chair, the crowd hushes a little.

DR. RADRESCU
 Let me begin by honoring my esteemed colleague, Lonnie, whose revolutionary spirit -

But that's as far as Dr. Radrescu gets before a COUGHING FIT incapacitates him. Lonnie hands him a glass of water as he sits back down.

HECKLER ELF
 Spent time in the mines, pops?

Dr. Radrescu nods.

HECKLER ELF (CONT'D)

Come join us. There's no coal at the mall.

CALVIN (O.S.)

Have any of you ever been to a mall?

HEADS TURN - to Calvin, at the front of the crowd. Calvin steps into the light at the front of the room.

CALVIN

The mall is where parents go to buy stuff. It's too bright. It smells like cardboard. And it's full of people who don't believe in you.

GASPS!

HECKLER ELF

Who are you?

CALVIN

I'm a kid.

Elves OOOH and AHHH. Also, faintly: 'GET A FLAMETHROWER!'

HECKLER ELF

Nice or naughty?

CALVIN

I'm not really sure anymore. But I've been wondering something, and maybe you guys can help. What do elves want for Christmas?

ALL THE ELVES

To spread Christmas cheer.

CALVIN

Oh, no. Don't try doing that at the mall. Sleigh rides? Not in the parking lot. You'll get run over. Chestnuts roasting on an open fire? They kicked the chestnut vendors out years ago, and as for the open fire, don't even try it.

JOINER ELF

But they got toys!

CALVIN

I love toys. Really, I do. But I also know that toys are why we're in this mess. Kids don't need toys. What they need is to stop needing.

HECKLER ELF

Sounds like that's on the kids.

A beat.

CALVIN

You're right. You've given kids your heart and soul already. You don't owe us anything.

HECKLER ELF

That's right!

Lonnie, confused at the direction this is going, turns to Calvin.

LONNIE

What about our plan?

CALVIN

That elf is right. Kids need to figure this out for themselves. The only thing I have to say is thank you.

ALL THE ELVES

You're welcome.

LONNIE

(to the crowd)

Look. This kid gets it. But there's a whole world of other kids out there who don't. They're going to keep sending us letters. They're going to keep asking for toys. They're going to keep needing and needing. And as long as they keep needing, the machine keeps running. You want to stop the machine? You give kids one more thing. You give them this one thing and they'll stop needing. Forever.

A hush falls over the crowd.

HECKLER ELF

What is it?

Before Lonnie can answer -

A DRONING/SCREECHING SOUND. SPOTLIGHTS filter in from cracks in the roof. Everyone looks up. A gigantic WHUMP.

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

The Sleigher has landed - in a crater of snow. At the front end, reindeer collapse in exhaustion. At the back end stands Milton, dressed in a Santa suit.

Behind Milton, the bay door LOWERS, revealing MOUNDS OF CANDY CANES.

MILTON
Come aboard, friends!

Milton throws out a candy cane.

MILTON (CONT'D)
Don't be shy. All this is yours.

The elves hesitate for a beat - then RUSH ABOARD.

INT. TOOL SHED - CONTINUOUS

Calvin stands in the doorway, miserable, as elves slip past him.

WRAPPER ELF
Sorry kid, I signed a contract.

INT. LOADING BAY - THE SLEIGHER - CONTINUOUS

On Milton. He sees Calvin, standing in the doorway to the tool shed.

I/E. DOORWAY - TOOL SHED - CONTINUOUS

Milton walks right up to Calvin's chest.

MILTON
Those are my elves you got in there.
Indeed, a few HOLDOUT ELVES have stayed behind.

CALVIN
You can't own an elf.

MILTON
Maybe, maybe not. But contracts are contracts. And as of -
(checks watch)
Fourteen minutes ago, those elves are obligated to dance at the mall.
(calling beyond Calvin)
C'mon guys, we're taking off.

Holdout Elves gather behind Calvin in the doorway.

HOLDOUT ELF
We want to hear them out first.

MILTON
Two words, guys: Con. Tract.

Holdout Elf looks to Calvin for guidance.

CALVIN
He doesn't own you. He doesn't own any of
you!

HECKLER ELF
The kid's right! I'm staying!

Other Holdout Elves chime in: 'ME TOO!' 'DARN TOOTIN'!'

MILTON
(to Calvin)
Alright, kid. You made me do this.

Milton WHISTLES. TACTICAL ENFORCERS, dressed in riot
gear, SPRING INTO ACTION.

They SHOVE Calvin out of the way. They kick things over
for no reason. They grab terrified Holdout Elves - and
put them in TINY HANDCUFFS.

INT. LOADING BAY - CONTINUOUS

Elves drop their candy canes and watch as their friends,
the Holdout Elves, are dragged aboard. Before they can
make sense of it, Tommy the enforcer hits a button and
the BAY DOOR CLOSES.

INT. TOOL SHED - CONTINUOUS

The room is stripped of Holdout Elves, leaving only
Calvin, Lonnie, Gilderoy, Bock, and Dr. Radrescu behind.

MILTON
Merry Christmas, rabble rousers. Stay
warm.

SHOOF! Buck the enforcer sprays the fireplace with a fire
extinguisher - then sprays everyone else in the room.

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

With a triumphant grin, Milton walks toward the Sleigher.
But then -

WHUMP. Santa's sleigh lands in his path. Santa hops out.
He looks to the BAY DOOR, where elves are BANGING on the
metal from inside.

SANTA
The elves don't sound too happy in there,
Milton.

MILTON

Happy? Since when do you care?

SANTA

You know what? You're right. I've failed you. I've failed all the elves. And I'm sorry.

Santa BANGS HIS HAND on the closed bay door.

SANTA (CONT'D)

You hear that, guys? I'm sorry! I failed you!

The trapped elves BANG BACK.

MILTON

You can stuff your sorries in a sack, Santa. You've dug yourself a big, fat hole, and I'm not going to spend one second of my day feeling sorry for you.

SANTA

I accept that. But I want you to know I owe you the biggest apology of all, Milton. What happened to you, what happened to all those miners - is unacceptable. That's why I boarded the mines. No more miners, no more coal.

MILTON

Please. I asked you to shut the mines down years ago, but no-o-o-o. It took Calvin and Lonnie and a whole lot of fuss and unproductive behavior to make it happen. You don't give a hoot about me or any of the elves. You never did.

SANTA

You're wrong. I do. And I'll prove it every day if you let me.

Milton looks like he's considering it - maybe?

SANTA (CONT'D)

Why don't you let the elves out of there and we can all sit down and talk?

MILTON

Sorry, Santa. I just don't buy it.

Milton WHISTLES AGAIN. This time Donnie materializes.

DONNIE

Sir, you are Kristopher Claus, I presume?

SANTA

Yes.

Donnie hands Santa a sheaf of PAPERS.

DONNIE
This is a notice of eviction. You'll need
to vacate the premises within 24 hours.

Santa, baffled, looks up at Milton.

MILTON
(to Santa)
We've been squatting on federal land for
years. Sorry, big guy.

Milton and Donnie board the Sleigher. Santa calls after
them -

SANTA
You can't stop Christmas, Milton. No
matter what. Christmas is forever!

The Sleigher TAKES OFF.

INT. TOOL SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Santa finds Lonnie, Gilderoy, Bock, and Dr. Radrescu,
wiping off the foam from the fire extinguisher.

SANTA
Where's Calvin?

EXT. THE SLEIGHER - AIRBORNE - CONTINUOUS

Establishing.

INT. CARGO BAY - THE SLEIGHER - CONTINUOUS

Confused elves watch a spray-tanned DANCE INSTRUCTOR at
the front of the wide open space. He's trying to teach
them a coordinated ROUTINE -

DANCE INSTRUCTOR
And one. And two. And one. And SHIMMY.
SHIMMY. SHIMMY -
(a beat)
Yes?

ELF NOT DANCING has their hand up.

ELF NOT DANCING
Elves don't dance.

DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Everyone can dance!

ELF NOT DANCING
We never danced at the North Pole. It's a
common misconception.

OTHER ELVES
Yeah.

DANCE INSTRUCTOR
Well, you're going to dance now.

Dance Instructor starts up a song again.

DANCE INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Or else.

TRACK down a row of FRUSTRATED ELVES, trying to dance,
all the way to a VERY TALL ELF:

It's CALVIN, in his elf costume.

INT. KITCHEN - WRIGHT HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

Mom and Mike huddle around the ANSWERING MACHINE.

MOM
Play that part again.

CALVIN (O.S.)
- I'll be home for Christmas.
(a beat)
I'm sorry.

BEEP-A-DEEP-A-DEEP.

MOM
What's that beeping in the background?

MIKE
Transmogriifiers. The best children ask
for two.

MOM
Where do they sell this thing?

MIKE
The mall.

Mom and Mike share a look of realization.

MIKE (CONT'D)
But Calvin hates the mall.

Mom's already putting on a jacket.

EXT. MALL - ALASKA - LATER

Large banners read "LAST CHANCE FOR CHRISTMAS!" and "BUY OR DIE!"

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

A SNOWMAN. Beautifully constructed. MALL GOERS crowd around it.

HARDWARE STORE MANAGER

Let's see what the Driveway King can do!

PRODUCT DEMONSTRATION. Hardware Store Manager DESTROYS THE SNOWMAN with the Driveway King snowblower. Mall Goers CHEER.

As the snowblower demo continues, Mom hands out flyers to the crowd. She tries to give one to -

HARDWARE SHOPPER

Coupon?

MOM

No, actually, my son's missing and -

HARDWARE SHOPPER turns away.

CRANE UP TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

REVEAL: Heckler Elf and others have been watching from the edge of the roof.

BUCK

Hey, get back from there!

Buck shoos the elves back to their TASK:

BUCK (CONT'D)

These cages aren't going to build themselves.

WIDE: the rest of the elves are building cages for themselves. Tactical Enforcers stand around, guarding the Sleigher and the elves.

INT. FAKE SANTA'S VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

A crowd of MALL PARENTS and MALL KIDS lend their attention to ALASKAN MALL SANTA.

ALASKAN MALL SANTA
 Now it's time for our Holiday Pageant,
 sponsored by Kill-Crazy Rampage 4,
 available on all major consoles. Take it
 away, elves!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We hear weak applause from outside, as Elves line up.

DANCE INSTRUCTOR
 Alright, munchkins. Don't let me down.

INT. FAKE SANTA'S VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

THE STAGE. Applause dies down as the elves get in
 formation. Calvin, in his elf costume, stands among them.
 LIGHTS DIM.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

WHUMP. Santa's sleigh comes in for a landing. Santa jumps
 out and approaches the elves. But the Tactical Enforcers
 step into his path.

SANTA
 Step aside, goons.

Nope - they close ranks. Santa looks into the faces of
 the Tactical Enforcers. They're bigger and tougher. But -

SANTA (CONT'D)
 Tommy Wheeler. I last heard from you at
 age nine. You wanted a toy sailboat. You
 didn't get one because you burned down
 your brother's treehouse.

Tommy winces at the memory. Santa looks into the face of
 another Tactical Enforcer, Buck.

SANTA (CONT'D)
 Buck Burton. You wrote to me when you
 were ten. You wanted a piebald pony,
 didn't you, Bucky?

Buck looks sheepishly to his companions.

SANTA (CONT'D)
 It's not too late to turn it around,
 boys.

The Tactical Enforcers share a look of deliberation - and
 STEP ASIDE.

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: DECEMBER 24TH

INT. FAKE SANTA'S VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC: it's a song called "Buy, Buy, Buy" (to the tune of "Bye, Bye, Bye"), a promotional ditty for the season's latest toys.

As the elves start to dance, Fake Santa throws out handfuls of COUPONS to the crowd.

CUT TO:

BACK OF THE CROWD. Milton and Bearded Exec are watching the show.

BEARDED EXEC
Shouldn't your elves be peppier?

MILTON
It was a long flight.

Bearded Exec frowns.

CUT TO:

THE STAGE. As the dance routine continues, Calvin nods to elves nearby. Elves nod to elves - something's about to go down.

An elf PULLS THE PLUG. Music CUTS OUT -

THE ELVES: Not dancing anymore. Standing still.

ALASKAN MALL SANTA
Technical difficulties, folks.

WRAPPER ELVES pounce on Alaskan Mall Santa and WRAP HIM FROM HEAD TO FOOT, immobilizing him. The crowd GASPS.

On Calvin: testing out a MEGAPHONE.

CUT TO:

BACK OF THE CROWD.

BEARDED EXEC
Those elves are deranged!

MILTON
I could knock off ten percent.

BEARDED EXEC
I wanted dancing elves, not disobedient

elves. You're not getting a cent!

MILTON
But we had a deal!

BEARDED EXEC
Clause 7B. 'All elves will dance with vigor.' Read your contract, Munson.

MILTON
You can't do this!

BEARDED EXEC
Hey, hey. Let's not get cranky. Here -

Bearded Exec hands Milton a candy cane.

BEARDED EXEC (CONT'D)
Suck on this. You'll feel better.

Milton SWATS away the candy cane and STORMS OFF.

EXT. TOY STORE - MALL - CONTINUOUS

Mom, Dad, and Mike are handing out flyers to TOY SHOPPERS, when a CROWD OF GAWKERS rushes past.

GAWKER
You gotta see this! Santa's elves have gone NUTS! The ringleader's some crazy kid.

Mom turns to Dad. Mike is already following the GAWKER.

CUT TO:

INT. FAKE SANTA'S VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The crowd is growing. They're pushing past SECURITY to see -

CALVIN
(on megaphone)
I've got something to say, and I gotta be quick about it because I'm sure they're going to throw me in jail for saying it.
(a beat)
Christmas is broken. And I think the only way for us to fix it is for everybody to go home and think about things for a while. Think about what Christmas looks like for the folks who make Christmas happen. It looks like a lot of hard work and not a lot of gratitude. Try to

remember that when you're opening presents.

BACK OF THE CROWD: Mom is BEAMING WITH JOY.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I don't know about you, but I'm trying to be a little more grateful for what I've got. Like friends. Like family. Like -

SECURITY RUSHES IN.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Milton rushes over to the Sleigher. But before he can open the door, the aircraft LIFTS OFF THE GROUND.

THE SLEIGHER. Hovering above Milton. The bay door opens. And standing there, in a tableau of elves, is Santa.

SANTA

Nice sleigh.

MILTON

Get down from there! It's mine!

SANTA

I'll try and get it back in one piece.

The Sleigher TAKES OFF. Milton runs after it, but trips in the snow, and falls, face-first - RIGHT INTO A PILE OF REINDEER POO.

On Milton. Lying still on the ground.

PULL OUT: Gilderoy and Lonnie are watching, unsure what to do. Lonnie steps forward.

MILTON

Please don't pulverize me.

LONNIE

Nobody's pulverizing anyone.

MILTON

R-r-really?

Lonnie gives Milton a hand up.

LONNIE

Nope. I need something from you.

MILTON

What?

LONNIE

You're the only elf who survived the collapse, right?

MILTON

Yeah. I tried to save the others, but it was too dark, and -

LONNIE

Why don't you start at the beginning.

INT. FAKE SANTA'S VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

SECURITY OFFICERS are dragging Calvin off the stage while elves try to stop them. Alaskan Mall Santa is struggling to get free from his wrapping. CHAOS.

Mom fights through the crowd.

CALVIN

Mom!

MOM

Let him go!

THUNK. An elf trips a Security Officer. Calvin gets free.

Mom and Calvin rush toward one another and connect in a BIG HUG. Dad and Mike pile in, too.

CU - as a tear traces down Calvin's cheek.

When Calvin finally comes up for air, Mike reaches out to him with something in his hand -

A candy cane.

INT. SLEIGHER - AIRBORNE - LATER

BAY DOOR OPEN. A rush of wind. Santa stands at the front of a long line of PARATROOPER ELVES.

SANTA

Ready?

First in line is BOCK. He gives the thumbs-up, and is about to jump, when -

SANTA (CONT'D)

Wait. What's your name?

BOCK

Bock. I saw your boot one time. It was awesome.

SANTA

Merry Christmas, Bock. We couldn't have done it without you.

PARATROOPER ELF
Merry Christmas to you, too, Santa.

Bock JUMPS.

EXT. OPEN AIR - CONTINUOUS

FREEFALL. Then - WHOOSH. A parachute deploys.

We see Bock's POV as he heads straight for a CHIMNEY.

INT. A LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THE FIREPLACE. Bock hits the ground. He scoots past the Christmas tree, right to the -

INT. A GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

With miraculous speed, Bock fixes a SCOOTER with a missing wheel.

INT. A LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THE CHRISTMAS TREE. Bock puts the FIXED SCOOTER next to a copy of To Fix a Broken Toy.

EXT. A SMALL TOWN - CONTINUOUS

WIDE on rooftops, as the Sleigher slides into the top of the frame. It drops hundreds and hundreds of Paratrooper Elves from its doors - so many they look like snow.

EXT. BLACK VOID - CONTINUOUS

TITLE: CHRISTMAS

EXT. BEACH - FLORIDA - THE NEXT MORNING

Mrs. Claus loads up her sleigh. She looks up when she overhears -

BEACH BOY
No way.

BEACH GIRL
It's true! He was two feet tall and he

tarred the whole hull in ten seconds. He gave me a book, too.

Mrs. Claus approaches the Beach Kids, over by their fully repaired BOAT. Beach Girl is holding a BOOK.

MRS. CLAUS
Can I see that?

It's To Fix a Broken Toy.

HONK. HONK. Foghorn blasts from offshore. Mrs. Claus looks up -

It's a YACHT, thronged with VACATIONING ELVES. Santa waves from the helm.

INT. HOT TUB - LUXURY YACHT - CONTINUOUS

Gilderoy and Bock sip tropical drinks as Vacationing Elves frolic around them. They're about to clink glasses, when -

LONNIE
Guys! Try these.

Lonnie offers a handful of HOMEMADE CANDY CANES to the elves. Bock licks.

BOCK
Great texture. Where'd you get them?

LONNIE
Made 'em. I still think I could go a little thinner on the stripes, but -

GILDEROY
Made them? When?

LONNIE
I can never sleep on Christmas Eve.

BOCK
Lonnie, look, see what I'm doing here in this hot tub? It's called 'relaxing.' Santa gave us a book about it.

Bock holds up the book - Kick Back with Kringle.

GILDEROY
Yeah, you got the book, didn't you?

LONNIE
Scooch over.

Lonnie splashes into the hot tub.

INT. LIVING ROOM - WRIGHT HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

A Christmas tree, bright and inviting. Dad and Mike clink mugs of hot cocoa. But -

MOM
Where's Calvin?

Dad points to an orange EXTENSION CORD, running toward -

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mom follows the extension cord through the snow, all the way to -

Calvin. He's crouching in a snowless patch of lawn, using a HAIRDRYER to thaw out the ground.

Beside him, a shovel and a TREE.

MOM
Is that my hairdryer?

CALVIN
I asked Dad. He said it was alright. I'm pretty sure it's the only way we're gonna get this baby in the ground.

MOM
I see.

CALVIN
It's for you.

Mom looks at the tree - a pathetic sapling.

MOM
I love it.

CALVIN
Really?

MOM
Yes.

CALVIN
(over-explaining)
It's a Christmas gift. But it's also my way of saying sorry for sawing down your tree. You know, last year.

MOM
(playing along)
Ah, yes.

On Calvin, satisfied: she gets it.

MOM (CONT'D)
 Hey, speaking of gifts, how'd you like to
 take a little break?

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Mom shows Calvin his sled: TOTALLY FIXED.

CALVIN
 You fixed it!

MOM
 Well, it's the funniest thing. I tried to
 fix it while you were away. Total
 disaster. I was missing this little pin
 that -

CALVIN
 (knowingly)
 Holds the whole rudder system together.

MOM
 Right? So frustrating. I almost gave up.
 But you know me, I can never sleep on
 Christmas Eve. I came down late last
 night to give it another shot, and, what
 do you know? The pin's in place.

CALVIN
 Elves.

A beat.

MOM
 Yeah, probably.

EXT. MANGLER'S HILL - LATER

Calvin and Mom approach the precipice. Calvin sits down
 on the middle of his sled.

MOM
 Scooch up, Stretch.

'STRETCH?'

Calvin has no time to wonder. Mom gives the sled a MIGHTY
 PUSH - and hops on behind her son.

Thrilled, they ZOOM down the hill. A JUMP APPROACHES.

SWISH. They're airborne. Floating. Right into a -

FREEZE FRAME.

DR. RADRESCU (V.O.)
And so it was that a human child
contributed, in his own small way, to the
great December Revolution.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE - YEARS LATER - DAY

Dr. Radrescu, sitting on the edge of a PEDESTAL, closes a
book on his lap.

DR. RADRESCU
See you next week, children.

DOLLY BACK - to reveal an audience of ELF CHILDREN,
listening to Dr. Radrescu's tale. As the Elf Children run
off to play -

PAN UP - to where Dr. Radrescu is sitting. It's the base
of a STATUE.

The statue depicts:

'HEROES OF THE DECEMBER REVOLUTION'

LONNIE, GILDEROY, BOCK . . .

AND CALVIN. On Calvin's face, carved in stone, we -

FADE TO BLACK.