

CU: A MODERN-LOOKING CHRISTMAS BOOK ENTITLED: ELF

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

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

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

PULL OUT FROM THE BOOK TO REVEAL

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

PAPA ELF

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

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

PAPA ELF

(like it's liquor)

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

QUICK CUT AWAY TO

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

DISGRUNTLED COBBLER ELF

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

EXT. ELF TREE - DAY

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

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

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

PAPA ELF

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

CUT TO:

A TRACKING SHOT OF SANTA'S WORKSHOP

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

PAPA ELF

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

CUT AWAY:

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

PAPA ELF

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

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

NURSE

You're quite a giggler, aren't you?

(lying him down)

Well, it's time for night-night.

She tucks the baby in and exits.

NURSE

(as she leaves)

Merry Christmas, my angel.

CLOSE ON

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

Santa's black boots drop in from the chimney. The baby shakes the gate. Quickly, Santa moves to the Christmas tree, where he lays out presents. There is an OFF-SCREEN CLANG! Santa LOOKS UP and sees the empty crib. The gate is down:

BABY'S POV

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

FADE TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

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

SANTA

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

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

SANTA

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

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

SANTA

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

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

SANTA

What in the name of Sam Hill...?

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

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

ELF TWIN #2

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

ELF TWIN #1

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

Santa looks befuddled.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Santa had a decision to make. But fortunately when it comes to babies, Santa's a push over. So Buddy would stay with an older Elf who had always wanted a child, but had been so committed to building toys, he had forgotten to settle down. Yes, Buddy was raised by me, his adopted father. My, how I love that boy.

MONTRAGE: BUDDY GROWING UP AS AN ELF

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

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Tough Buddy grew twice as fast, he wasn't any different from the other little elves. I mean, not really...

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

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

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

ELF TEACHER

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

ELF STUDENTS

TREAT EVERY DAY LIKE CHRISTMAS!

ELF TEACHER

Number two?

ELF STUDENTS

THERE'S ROOM FOR EVERYONE ON THE NICE LIST!

ELF TEACHER

Number three?

We push in on Buddy as he recites...

BUDDY & EVERYONE

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

EXT. ELF HOCKEY POND - CURRENT DAY - DAY

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

ANNOUNCER

(on megaphone)

Lum Lum across the line, feeds it to Foom Foom, behind the net, looking, feeds Blinky...Wait! Rimpo-correction, Wombo. I think...and - uh-oh! - here comes BUDDY!

QUICK CUTS

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

ANNOUNCER

(like an elf Pat Foley)

He SCOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOORES! And it's 14-zero with eleven minutes left in the first period.

INT. ELF LOCKER ROOM - DAY

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

POM POM

Good game, Buddy.

BUDDY

Thanks! Sorry about your shoulder, Pom Pom!

POM POM

No sweat. It's just a collar bone!

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

RAPID FIRE:

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

BUDDY

Ow...jeez...yikes...golly...charles dickens! Some of a nutcracker!

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - DAY

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

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

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

Pom Pom sprays him with a mini-fire extinguisher.

POPPA ELF (V.O.)

And no where were Buddy's differences more obvious than in Santa's toy shop.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NORTH POLE - DAY

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

BUDDY

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

ELF SUPERVISOR

It's okay, Buddy. How many Etch-a-Sketches did you get finished?

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

ELF SUPERVISOR

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

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

BUDDY

I only made...

(crying)

Eighty-five.

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

ELF SUPERVISOR

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

BUDDY

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

ELF SUPERVISOR

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

BUDDY

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

ELF SUPERVISOR

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

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

ELF #1

You changed the batteries in the fire alarm!

ELF #2

(absurdly positive)

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

(everyone agrees)

ELF #3

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

ELF #1

In a good way!

ELF SUPERVISOR

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

BUDDY

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

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

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. ELF BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

KNOCK KNOCK.

We INTERCUT with Papa Elf at the door.

PAPA ELF

Son? Are you okay?

BUDDY

Go away!

PAPA ELF

(shocked)

Buddy!

BUDDY

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

PAPA ELF

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

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

PAPA ELF

Come sit with your papa.

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

PAPA ELF

Alright, let's hear it.

BUDDY

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

PAPA ELF

Well, there's something I should probably tell you, Buddy. And it's long over due...

(intense beat)

You see...um...

BUDDY

What is it, Papa?

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

PAPA ELF

(changing the subject)

I need your help on something.

(adjusting Buddy's weight)

Up up now, nice and -- ow, OW!... There we are.

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

SANTA'S SLEIGH

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

BUDDY

Wow. Santa's sleigh!

(hesitates)

Can I touch it?

PAPA ELF

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

BUDDY

I thought the magical reindeer made the sleigh fly.

PAPA ELF

And where do the reindeers get their magic from?

BUDDY

Christmas spirit. Everyone knows that.

PAPA ELF

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

BUDDY

What do you mean?

PAPA ELF

(hard to break the news)

Well, Buddy, as silly as it sounds, there are a lot of people down South who don't believe in Santa Claus.

BUDDY

(shocked)

What? Who do they think puts all their toys under the tree?

PAPA ELF

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

BUDDY

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

PAPPA ELF

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

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

PAPPA ELF

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

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

BUDDY

Oh my Gosh!

PAPPA ELF

Watch the language son.

BUDDY

Forgive me, Papa. What's that?

PAPPA ELF

A Viper turbojet with 358 cubic meters of displacement, high volume air intake and customized spark timing.

(off Buddy's look)

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

(around him)

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

BUDDY

(coming around)

Do I?!

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

DISSOLVE TO:

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

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

BUDDY

Ahh!

Another one: POP!

BUDDY

UJFJFJ!

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

BUDDY

(biggest one yet)

AJFJFJF!!

(to supervisor)

I'm going to take five, okay Krumpet?

KRUMPET

Okay!

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

FOOM FOOM

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

ELF SUPERVISOR

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

FOOM FOOM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BUDDY

Ow...jeez...yikes...golly...charles...Dickens! Some of a Nutcracker!

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

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

Pom Pom hurries over, concerned.

POM POM

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

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

POM POM

(muffled under Buddy)

I'm okay, Buddy. Don't worry about a thing. I'm warm.

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - TEN MINUTES LATER

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

BUDDY

Ooooooh. I had a terrible nightmare.

PAPA ELF

What is it, Buddy?

BUDDY

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

PAPA ELF

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

BUDDY

You mean I'm not an Elf?

PAPA ELF

No, son, you're a human being.

BUDDY

No wonder I'm always freezing!

PAPA ELF

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

BUDDY

But I thought elves can't lie.

PAPA ELF

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

BUDDY

(getting upset)

I thought I had a glandular problem.

PAPA ELF

Your glands are fine.

BUDDY

(emotional)

So, you're not my Papa?

PAPA ELF

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

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

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

BUDDY

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

Buddy runs off.

PAPA ELF

Buddy?! Buddy?!!

EXT. NORTH POLE - MINUTES LATER

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

RACCOON

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

BUDDY

Not now Pipsy!!

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(a faint whisper)

Oooohhh! Buddy...

BUDDY

Hi, Jim. What's wrong?

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(very quietly)

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

BUDDY

Sure, Jim.

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

(speaking at full volume)

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

BUDDY

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

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

BUDDY

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

JIM THE SNOWMAN

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

BUDDY

I guess I am pretty lucky after all.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

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

BUDDY

I understand about your arms, Jim.

JIM THE SNOWMAN

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

BUDDY

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

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - THE NEXT DAY

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

BUDDY

Bye Choo-choo! Bye Sunshine! Bye Tinkle Winkle! Bye Puffy! Bye Elade! Bye Gayle!

Santa steps into frame and puts his arm around Buddy.

SANTA

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

BUDDY

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

SANTA

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

BUDDY

Wow. What's it like?

SANTA

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

BUDDY

So much to remember...

SANTA

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

(patting him on the back)

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

BUDDY

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

SANTA

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

EASI PUSH INTO:

The NAUGHTY LIST, landing on "Walter Hobbs."

BUDDY

N^{oooooooo}!!!!

SANIA

I'm sorry, but it's true.

BUDDY

My stomach hurts. It feels like evil.

SANIA

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

BUDDY

I'm good at that!

SANIA

I know you are.

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

PAPA ELF

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

(crying)

Now go on, get!

BUDDY

(crying)

Yes, Papa.

(crying and skipping)

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

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

Animals wave as Buddy heads off into the unknown.

ANIMALS

Bye, Buddy.

BUDDY

Bye lovable woodland animals!

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

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

EXT. SNOW FIELD - DAY

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - MEANWHILE

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

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

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - DAY

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

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

NUN

You're taking the books back?

WALTER

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

NON

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

WALTER

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

(out window; to NYC)

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

NON

(begging)

The kids really love the books.

WALTER

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

DEB, the secretary, pokes her head in.

DEB

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

WALTER

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

DEB

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

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

DEB (O.S.)

(from intercom)

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

WALTER

(hitting button)

Got it.

(to Nun, compassionate)

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

(beat)

I'll give you a three-week extension.

NUN

(sarcastic)

Bless your heart.

WALTER

(too busy to hear)

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

EXT. CANADA - DAY

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

BUDDY

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

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

BUDDY

Sounds like someone needs a hug!

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

BUDDY

NOT CRACKERS!!!

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

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

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

EXT. MANHATTAN - MORNING

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

BUDDY

Whoa...

EXT. MID-TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER

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

WIDE SHOT

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY

Hi.

(no response; next person)

Happy afternoon!

(no response; next person)

Salutations!

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

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

WALKER

Why don't you watch your ass, buddy!

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

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

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

BUDDY

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

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

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

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

REVEAL: Empire State Building!

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

BUDDY

Dad...

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

WALTER

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

PRINTER

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

WALTER

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

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

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

Another passenger gets on.

ACCOUNTANT

Can you press 67 please?

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

BUDDY

Hey, that's pretty.

Like lightning, he presses ALL 75 BUTTONS.

BUDDY

Look at that!

QUICK CUTS

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

Buddy.

INT. WALTER JOBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walter and the printer continue.

WALTER

How the hell did this happen, anyway?

PRINTER

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

WALTER

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

INT. DEB'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY

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

DEB

You look hilarious. Who sent you?

BUDDY

Papa Elf, from the North Pole.

DEB

Papa Elf? That's rich.

INT. WALTER HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walter and the printer continue.

PRINTER

You really think we should ship them?

WALTER

(sarcastic)

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

(beat)

Ship them!

DEB (O.S.)

(over intercom)

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

WALTER

Go ahead.

DEB (O.S.)

I think someone sent you a Christmas-gram.

WALTER

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

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

BUDDY

Dad?

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

WALTER

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

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

BUDDY

I walked all day and night to find you.

WALTER

(playing along)

Looks like you came from the North Pole.

BUDDY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

Go on with what?

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

(trying to make up a song)

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

He hugs him.

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

What's a Christmas gram?

WALTER

(whispering)

Deb, we may want to call security.

DEB

(whispering)

I already did.

Buddy leans in.

BUDDY

(whispering)

I like to whisper, too.

EXT. STREET - FIVE MINUTES LATER

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

BUDDY

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

SECURITY GUARD #2

Must run in the family.

(they laugh)

I wouldn't come back for a while if I were you.

BUDDY

Yeah, it seemed like he may need some 'Daddy time.'

(as he's escorted)

You guys are strong!

SECURITY GUARD #1

Yeah, get lost.

BUDDY

I already am lost!

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

BUDDY

Bye, Glenn. Bye Chris!

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

REVEAL

EXT. GIMBELS DEPARTMENT STORE - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY

(face aglow)

Wow!

Buddy starts skipping across the street toward Gimbel's when --

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

BUDDY

I'm okay! Thank you!

EXT. GIMBELS - CONTINUOUS

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

PERFUME CLERK

Passion fruit spray?

BUDDY

Fruit Spray? For real?

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

BUDDY

(mouth open)

Ready when you are!

The clerk looks around, then, mildly curious, sprays it in like Binaca. PSS!

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

MONOLOGUE: Buddy Does Gimbels

ESCALATOR

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

ANGRY MAN

(annoyed)

Are you going or what?

BUDDY

Um, yeah...

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

BUDDY

Jiminy Christmas!

PUBLIC BATHROOM

Buddy leaves the stall, then accosts a stranger.

BUDDY

Have you seen this toilet? It's GI-NORMOUS!!!

(to another guy)

Look at this toilet!

STORE

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

ELEVATOR

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

ANGRY MAN

(about to punch him)

You think you're pretty smart, huh?

BUDDY

I'm not that smart, but thanks.

LINGERIE SECTION

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

BUDDY

For that special someone? Hmmm...

A HARD-ASS ELF MANAGER walks over.

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

Looking at shiny things.

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

Okay.

INT. GIMBELS - 9TH FLOOR SANTA LAND - LATER

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

BUDDY

This snow looks fake.

ELF MANAGER

It's white, ain't it?

BUDDY

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

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

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

ELF MANAGER

We'll take it down a notch.

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

ELF MANAGER

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

BUDDY

SANTA?!

(eyes wide)

OJF...MY...GOD!!!!

(suddenly skeptical)

Wait. Santa Claus?

ELF MANAGER

Yeah. Where've you been?

BUDDY

The North Pole.

ELF MANAGER

Ha. Ha. Start elfing.

(as he leaves)

And don't touch the snow.

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

BUDDY'S POV

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

JOVIE

Are you enjoying the view?

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

Well someone's been drinking the Kool Aid.

(Buddy doesn't get it)

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

(confused)

Are you serious?

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

Well, thanks, but I don't sing.

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

Actually, there's a big difference.

BUDDY

No there isn't. Watch.

(suddenly singing loudly)

I'M IN A STORE AND I'M SINGING! PEOPLE ARE HERE AND I'M IN A STORE!!

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

BUDDY

THE STORE IS ALL SHINY AND I'M IN A STORE!!

(then back to normal)

See?

JOVIE

(bewildered)

Wow.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(over loudspeaker)

Attention. Gimbels will be closing in ten minutes. Please make your final purchases.

All the elves look relieved. Their day is over.

J

OVIE

Dismissed.

BUDDY

You're leaving? But Santa's coming.

JOVIE

(she laughs at his joke)

Yeah, I'll see you tomorrow, um, what's your name?

BUDDY

Buddy.

JOVIE

Jovie. See ya.

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

QUICK SERIES OF CUTS

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

A SECURITY GUARD WALKS DOWN AN AISLE

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

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

BUDDY

They have Elves in Taiwan?

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

Are you sure?

WALTER

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

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

MICHAEL

Can I eat in my room?

EMILY

No.

MICHAEL

Why not? Dad's eating in his den.

(smart ass)

I have a bunch of homework to go over...I'm way behind on a bunch of stuff.

EMILY

You're eating here.

MICHAEL

Fine. But I'm not going to talk.

EMILY

Yes you are. You're going to tell me how your day was.

(beat)

How was your day?

Michael stares tight-lipped. This infuriates Emily.

EMILY

(suddenly)

HOW WAS YOUR DAY?!

MICHAEL

It was fine! Okay? Good.

INT. WALTER'S DEN - LATER

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

EMILY

What're you looking at?

Walter hides the book.

WALTER

Nothing. It's for work.

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

Actually, I do.

(beat)

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

WALTER

Well he is thirteen years old.

EMILY

He's ten.

(exasperated)

I don't know what's going on with you, but I've just about had it.

WALTER

Had it with what?

That was the wrong answer.

WALTER

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

(a tiny ounce of charm)

The chicken thing was delicious.

EMILY

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

WALTER

Well it was good.

INT. GIMBELS - SANTA LAND - 7 AM

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

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

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

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

REVEAL

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

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

JOVIE

AJfJfJfJfJfJfJfJfJf!!!

BUDDY

AJfJfJfJfJfJfJfJfJf!!!

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

EXT. GIMBELS - MORNING

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

PAN TO

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

A MAN SQUINTS

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

BUDDY

Ah! Holy fudge!

Buddy yawns and stretches ridiculously.

BUDDY

Good morning, everyone!

(looking off)

BUDDY

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

SECURITY GUARD #1

Okay.

INT. GIMBELS - SANTA LAND - DAY

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

REVEAL

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

ELF MANAGER

Who the hell took a dump in housewares?

Jovie walks up to Buddy.

JOVIE

Hey, I want to talk to you.

Buddy is now terrified by her.

BUDDY

Oh, uh, um, okay, uh...

(she lets him squirm)

What do you want to talk about?

JOVIE

What the hell do you think?

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

Why were you in the woman's locker room?

BUDDY

(sheepish)

I heard you singing.

JOVIE

Singing? Right. I'm sure it had nothing to do with me being naked. I should call the police.

(beat)

What were you doing here so early in the morning?

BUDDY

(re: epic Santa Land)

Making this.

JOVIE

You made this?

BUDDY

Yes...why were you here?

JOVIE

They turned my water off.

(she studies him)

You were standing there with your eyes closed. What is that, some kind of thing you do?

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

BUDDY

You have the most beautiful voice in the whole world.

Jovie looks at him, his innocence is contagious.

JOVIE

(sincere, compassionate)

You really were just listening to me, weren't you?

BUDDY

I'm sorry.

The Elf Manager walks over.

MANAGER

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

BUDDY

SANTA?! Santa is HERE?!

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

BUDDY

(happier than ever)

SANTA!

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

BUDDY

Santa, it's me! Buddy!

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

BUDDY

Who the heck are you?

GIMBELS SANTA

Why, I'm *Santa Claus*.

BUDDY

Are not!

GIMBELS SAN'IA

Well, of course I am. Ho Ho Ho!

BUDDY

(furious)

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

GIMBELS SAN'IA

Why you sang, uh, Happy Birthday?

BUDDY

(to the kids)

He's right.

'*Santa*' struts past Buddy and takes his chair.

GIMBELS SAN'IA

(under his breath)

Why don't you cool it, zippy.

(to the kids)

Ho Ho Ho!

The voice is wrong, the smell is wrong.

BUDDY

You're lying! I know it!

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

BUDDY

(at the beard, horrified)

Ah! Ah! Ah! Imposter! He's an imposter!!! His beard is fake! Come on, kids, get him!

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

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

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - GREENWAY PRESS - DAY

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

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

Deb enters and he scrambles to hide the nightie.

DEB

Hey the -- what's that?

WALTER

What's what?

(beat)

Intercom!

DEB

Right.

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

DEB (O.S.)

(from intercom)

Walter, the police are on line one.

WALTER

The police?

(grabbing phone)

Hello? My son? Michael? Is he okay?

(listening)

An Elf? He's not my -- you know what? Keep him there. I'll be right down.

Deb peeks in.

DEB

What's going on?

WALTER

Nothing. I need to go.

(lying)

I need to swing by my apartment real quick...they're delivering a chair.

DEB

(smart ass)

A police chair?

WALTER

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

INT. JAIL - DAY

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

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

REVEAL

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

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

Buddy hears the cell door clang open.

REVEAL

Walter stands at the open jail cell door.

BUDDY

Dad!!!

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

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

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

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

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

BUDDY

I'm so happy! I knew you'd come! I love that you came and I love you Dad! Know how much I love you?

(spreading his arms wide)

This much. Except my arms would have to be way longer, like pterodactyl wings --

WALTER

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

BUDDY

I'm Buddy. Your son.

WALTER

I already have a son!

BUDDY

Then who am I?

WALTER

Where did you get this picture?!

He holds up the picture he included in the gift.

BUDDY

Papa Elf gave it to me.

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

Walter senses an element of truth in here somewhere.

WALTER

(serious)

You really believe this, don't you?

BUDDY

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

WALTER

(conflicted)

Come with me.

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

INT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE - AN HOUR LATER

Buddy sits on the examining table as Walter watches.

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

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

WALTER

Don't eat those.

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

BUDDY

Am I sick?

WALTER

YES.

(beat)

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

BUDDY

Why am I sitting on paper?

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

DOCTOR

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

BUDDY

(happy)

Finger prick!

(to the Doctor)

Can I wear your head lamp?

DOCTOR

No.

BUDDY

Why?

DOCTOR

Just sit still.

BUDDY

Why is there a skeleton on the wall?

DOCTOR

I don't know but there just is.

BUDDY

What's his name?

WALTER

He doesn't have a name!

BUDDY

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

DOCTOR

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

WALTER

I'm sorry Ben. Buddy! Please!

BUDDY

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

BUDDY

Buddy.

GIRL

I'm Carolyn.

BUDDY

And what do you want for Christmas?

CAROLYN

A Suzie-Talks-A-Lot.

BUDDY

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

CAROLYN

Thanks. Your costume is pretty.

BUDDY

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

GIRL

(totally unfazed)

Oh. I'm a human...raised by humans.

BUDDY

Cool.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Walter is waiting for the results.

WALTER

Well?

DOCTOR,

Well...

(beat)

It's a boy.

The blood drains out of Walter's face.

WALTER,

It's impossible.

(feeling faint)

Is the test ever wrong?

DOCTOR,

No.

WALTER,

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

DOCTOR,

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

WALTER,

The man skips.

DOCTOR,

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

WALTER,

His name's BUDDY.

DOCTOR,

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

WALTER

An Elf.

DOCTOR

Yes.

(beat)

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

WALTER

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

DOCTOR

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

WALTER

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

DOCTOR

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

(off Walter's look)

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

EXT. EMILY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

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

EMILY

What are you doing here?

WALTER

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

EMILY

You thought you'd walk me home?

They begin to walk together.

WALTER

What, is that so weird?

EMILY

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

WALTER

Well it's a nice night.

EMILY

What's wrong?

WALTER

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

EMILY

Okay, okay, I'm sorry.

(taking his arm)

Thanks, this is really nice.

On Walter as he walks.

WALTER

Okay, something's a little wrong.

INT. HOBBS'S RESIDENCE - LATER

They're arriving home.

EMILY

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

WALTER

Wonderful. That's one way to put it.

EMILY

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

WALTER

He thinks he's an Elf.

EMILY

I'm sorry, what?

WALTER

He thinks he's a Christmas Elf.

EMILY

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

Walter swings open the door to the apartment to reveal:

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

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

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

WALTER

Buddy?

Buddy looks up, drooling.

WALTER

This is Emily.

EMILY

(muffled, mouth full)

Emuree!

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

BUDDY

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

Meanwhile, Michael, their son, has arrived.

MICHAEL

Why is mom hugging Robin Hood?

INT. DINING ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

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

BUDDY

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

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

EMILY

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

BUDDY

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

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

EMILY

You like sugar, huh?

BUDDY

Is there sugar in syrup?

EMILY

Yes.

BUDDY

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

EMILY

So, will you be staying with us, then?

WALTER

Emily.

BUDDY

You mean I can stay?

WALTER

Emily!

EMILY

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

BUDDY

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

WALTER

EMILY!?

EMILY

WHAT?!

WALTER

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

EMILY

Um, sure. Excuse me, Buddy.

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

BUDDY

Wow, did you hear that?

Yes, Michael did...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Walter argues with Emily in hushed tones.

WALTER

Are you crazy? He can't stay here.

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

That's his problem.

EMILY

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

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY

I love you.

MICHAEL

Eat me.

BUDDY

Eat you? OKAY!

(playing like the jungle)

I'm a Lion! Roar! CHOMP!

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

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

BUDDY

Goodnight, Dad.

WALTER

Goodnight.

BUDDY

Tuck me in?

WALTER

What?!

BUDDY

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

WALTER

I'm not tucking you in!

BUDDY

I promise I'll go right to sleep.

WALTER

(reluctantly)

Fine...

BUDDY

TICKLE FIGHT!!!

Walter fights him off, pissed.

WALTER

No, Buddy. Stop!

BUDDY

Sorry.

WALTER

Just lay down and go to sleep, okay?

BUDDY

Do you want to hear a story?

WALTER

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

BUDDY

Understand.

(Walter flicks off light)

Dad?

(flicks light on)

WALTER

What?

BUDDY

I love you.

WALTER

Go to sleep.

BUDDY

Do you love me?

WALTER

Yeah sure. Now go to sleep.

BUDDY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

(to himself, satisfied)

Significant

WALTER

Good night.

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

BUDDY

(in the dark)

Dad.

(long beat)

Dad?

(long beat)

DAD?

(long beat)

DAD?!

(longer beat)

DAD!!!!

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

WALTER

WHAT!!!!

BUDDY

Hi.

Walter slams the door. It's dark again.

BUDDY

Dad?

INT. HOBBS' KITCHEN - MORNING

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

EMILY

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

BUDDY

Want some more spaghetti?

EMILY

Um, sure, why not.

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

EMILY

So how'd you sleep last night?

BUDDY

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

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

EMILY

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

WALTER (O.S.)

Why is the TV on the ground?

REVEAL:

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

Walter walks into the kitchen, flabbergasted.

EMILY

Good morning, honey.

(she kisses her husband)

Buddy made us breakfast, isn't that nice?

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

EMILY

He packed us lunches too.

REVEAL:

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

EMILY

Well, I gotta run. Thanks for breakfast, Buddy.

(grabbing her bag)

And the lunch!

She kisses him on the cheek and leaves.

BUDDY

Bye Emily!

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

BUDDY

(to Walter)

So, how many scoops?

WALTER

I'm going to stick with coffee for now.

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

MICHAEL

(to Walter, awkward)

I need my allowance.

WALTER

(awkward)

Did you do the recycling?

MICHAEL

Yeah, I did, okay?

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

BUDDY

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

WALTER

(lying)

We hugged earlier.

MICHAEL

(partner in crime)

Yeah, we hugged already. Bye.

BUDDY

Bye!

Walter and Buddy are now alone.

WALTER

Listen, Buddy, I wanted to talk to you.

BUDDY

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

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

BUDDY

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

WALTER

Buddy, I have to go to work.

(beat)

And another thing, if you're going to be staying here, you should think about getting rid of the costume. We've got neighbors and people around here, you know?

BUDDY

(looking at himself)

I've worn this my whole life.

WALTER

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

Buddy is unsure.

WALTER

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

BUDDY

More than anything.

WALTER

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

BUDDY

As soon as possible?

WALTER

As soon as possible.

BUDDY

(sighing)

Yes, papa.

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

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

EMILY

I almost forg --- AAAAAAAAA!!!!

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

WALTER

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!

BUDDY

(as if it's a game)

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!

EXT. MANJATHATHAN - LATER

Walking to work, Walter answers his cell phone.

WALTER

(answering his cell)

Walter Hobbs.

BUDDY (O.S.)

(from phone)

It worked! It's you!

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

WALTER

How'd you get this number?

BUDDY

Emily left an emergency list.

WALTER

Is there an emergency?

BUDDY

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

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

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

WALTER

I'm hanging up now.

BUDDY

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

WALTER

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

BUDDY

Good idea. You call me.

WALTER

Okay, I'm hanging up.

BUDDY

I have a present for you when you get home!

WALTER

I'm hanging up.

BUDDY

I love you!

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE PRIVATE SCHOOL - LATER

Dozens of kids stream out of school.

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

BUDDY (O.S.)

MICHAEL! MICHAEL!

He looks over and sees Buddy cutting through traffic.

MICHAEL

(turns away in embarrassment)

Oh man.

BUDDY

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

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

BUDDY

Michael! Wait up!

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER

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

Michael finally turns and confronts him.

MICHAEL

LEAVE!

BUDDY

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

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

You really want me to leave

MICHAEL

Yes.

BUDDY

(sad)

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

Just then, a SNOWBALL WHACKS MICHAEL IN THE SHOULDER.

EDGE OF THE RAVINE

A big bunch of JACKASS WANNABE teenagers look down at them and laugh.

MICHAEL

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

Thump! Michael gets hit in the head.

BUDDY

Ow! PEANUT BRITTLE! SON OF A NUTCRACKER!

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

BUDDY

Dive!

MICHAEL

(genuinely worried)

There are too many of them!

BUDDY

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

Michael quickly sculpts two snowballs.

WE PAN BACK

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

BUDDY

Ready?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

WIDE SHOT

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

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

Michael stands to launch one. Exposing himself.

BUDDY

Noooo!

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

BUDDY

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

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

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

SNOWBALL GUY

Ow!

(holding his chest)

Hey, I surrendered!

BUDDY

(to Michael)

What does surrendered mean?

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER

Walter does some paperwork, then hits the intercom.

WALTER

Can you bring me in a bottle of water please?

DEB (O.S.)

(from the intercom)

Fulton Greenway is on his way in.

Fulton Greenway? Walter immediately loses blood in his face.

WALTER

Fulton Greenway? Why didn't you tell me?

DEB (O.S.)

He just showed up. What size water?

WALTER

When's he coming in?

DEB (O.S.)

Now.

WALTER

What do you mean now?

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

DEB (O.S.)

I mean now. What size?

FULTON GREENWAY (O.S.)

Jobbs!

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

WALTER

Fulton! What a great surprise!

FULTON GREENWAY

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

WALTER

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

FULTON GREENWAY

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

WALTER

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

FULTON GREENWAY

She's six.

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

FULTON GREENWAY

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

WALTER

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

Greenway holds up the proofs, signed by Walter.

FULTON GREENWAY

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

WALTER

(forcing a laugh)

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

Fulton Greenway nods skeptically. Walter adjusts in his seat.

FULTON GREENWAY

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

(Walter's dying)

Have you seen the numbers from this quarter?

WALTER

They should be coming in today.

FULIÖN GREENWAY

(holds up the numbers)

They're in!

WALTER

That good, huh?

FULIÖN GREENWAY

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

WALTER

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

FULIÖN GREENWAY

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

WALTER

Before the end of this quarter?

FULIÖN GREENWAY

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

WALTER

But that's Christmas Eve.

FULIÖN GREENWAY

And?

WALTER

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

INT. GIMBELS - LATER THAT DAY

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

MICHAEL

(looking at toy bugs)

Hey, look at this, it's a big mosquito!

BUDDY

What's a mosquito?

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

That's a scary toy.

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

(horrified)

OH MY GOD.

EXT. GIMBELS - CONTINUOUS

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

BUDDY

I wish Dad were here.

MICHAEL

Why?

BUDDY

He's the greatest Dad in the world.

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

All he does is work.

BUDDY

Working is fun.

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

Well, he is on the naughty list.

AND NOW WE SPOT JOVIE

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

MICHAEL

You like her?

BUDDY

Like who?

MICHAEL

The girl you're staring at.

BUDDY

Um, yes.

MICHAEL

Why don't you ask her out?

BUDDY

Out to where?

MEANWHILE

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

BUDDY

(flipping out)

We should leave. I need to leave.

MICHAEL

Don't leave! Ask her out!

BUDDY

Out?

MICHAEL

On a date, you know, to eat food.

BUDDY

(Jovie's almost there)

Food.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

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

JOVIE

Well look who it is.

BUDDY

Hi Jovie. This is --

Michael has ditched out. Buddy is on his own.

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

You really should get out of here.

BUDDY

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

Jovie is embarrassed.

JOVIE

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

BUDDY

Weird, like, good?

JOVIE

(smiling)

I haven't decided.

BUDDY

So, do you want to eat food?

JOVIE

Do I want to eat food?

BUDDY

You know...

(winking)

The code...

JOVIE

(letting that slide)

I just took my lunch break.

BUDDY

(defeated)

Oh, right. I follow.

JOVIE

(then)

But I'm free Thursday night.

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

BUDDY

(celebrating; ridiculous)

YEEEEEEEEEEEESSSS!

INT. HOBBS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

WALTER

What the hell is that?

MICHAEL

A Christmas tree!

WALTER

A Christmas tree?

MICHAEL

Buddy chopped it down in the park!

Buddy smiles at Walter, Walter does not smile back.

INT. WALTER AND EMILY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael and Emily are having a heated discussion.

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

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

Michael's happy for once.

(beat)

It's amazing what a little attention will do.

WALTER

What's that supposed to mean?

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

I think you're jealous.

WALTER

Jealous? Of Buddy? The man is wearing tights.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MEANWHILE

Buddy uses a drill to secure the trunk to the floor. ZZZZRRrrrr. He then stands at a distance. Like a high jumper, holding a star for the top of the tree in hand.

POV

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

MICHAEL

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

BUDDY

A ladder? What's fun about a ladder?

(concentrating)

Ready?

(taking off)

WAAAAH!!!!

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

BUDDY (O.S.)

I'm okay.

(then)

I found a quarter!

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

WALTER

What was that noise?

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

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

EMILY

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

WALTER

Take him to work with me?

EMILY

Yeah, I bet he'd like it.

WALTER

Absolutely never.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

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

CO-WORKER

Hey, Walter.

WALTER

Hey, Jack.

BUDDY

Hello, Jack!

Another co-worker, #2, nods hello.

WALTER

Hey, Sarah.

BUDDY

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

CO-WORKER #3

How's it going, Walter?

WALTER

Hello, Francisco.

BUDDY

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

WALTER

(whispering)

Could you at least lose that damn hat?

BUDDY

I like the hat.

(off Walter's look)

I could try, but I really like it.

INT. HOBBS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

WALTER

Thanks, Deb.

BUDDY

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

DEB

Oh, thanks.

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

BUDDY

(to himself)

Fran-cis-co.

WALTER

We're cutting down on your sugar intake.

BUDDY

Why is your name on the door?

WALTER

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

BUDDY

Is that a joke, Dad?

WALTER

Yes.

BUDDY

This is your office, isn't it?

WALTER

Well how about that? He's understanding sarcasm.

BUDDY

So what are we going to build?

WALTER

This really isn't that kind of work.

THE PHONE RINGS, Buddy beats Walter to it.

BUDDY

(super-fast into phone)

Buddy the Elf! What's your favorite color?

Walter hangs up the phone.

WALTER

Please don't touch anything!

(beat)

Listen, Buddy, have you ever seen a mail room before?

BUDDY

(excited)

A mail room? No.

WALTER

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

BUDDY

(dreaming)

Shiny...

INT. MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

FLOOR MANAGER

You Buddy?

(Buddy nods)

Well come on out of the elevator then.

BUDDY

Okay.

Floor manager leads Buddy over to the main work area.

FLOOR MANAGER

Welcome to the pit.

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

FLOOR MANAGER

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

BUDDY

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

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

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

WALTER

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

EUGENE

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

HUSKEY

You're going to love this.

MORRIS

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

WALTER

(pleasantly surprised)

Okay, great. Let's hear it.

HUSKEY

Picture this...

(long dramatic pause)

We bring in Miles Finch.

WALTER

The Miles Finch?

EUGENE

(excited)

The Golden Ghost.

HUSKEY

We bring him in.

MORRIS

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

WALTER

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

EUGENE

Yeah.

HUSKEY

Miles Finch.

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

WALTER

I like it.

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - MAIL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

Almost without noticing, Buddy begins singing to himself.

BUDDY

(singing)

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

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

TREY

(beat)

A partridge in a pear tree.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Walter and the writers are huddled around a speaker phone.

EUGENE

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

HUSKEY

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

WALTER

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

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

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

(intercom)

I'll give you five hours tomorrow, not a minute more.

WALTER

(relieved)

Great.

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

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

WALTER

We can do that.

DEB (O.S.)

(over intercom; BEEP!)

Walter! There's a situation downstairs.

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

I'm sorry, what? Hello?

WALTER

(in panic)

Deb, hang up! Miles stay on!

MILES FINCH

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

DEB (O.S.)

We have a problem in the mail room.

HUSKEY

What's going on?

WALTER

(pointing to Huskey)

Do not talk!

(into phone)

Deb, please hang up!

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

That's it, I'm gone!

WALTER

MILES! WHAT!

Dramatic pause. Is he gone?

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

I'll be there tomorrow.

(pew!)

71 degrees...

He clicks off.

DEB (O.S.)

Sir, Chuck in the mail room.

WALTER

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

INT. MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

TREY

Eleven-pipers-piping...

CRUIZ

Ten-lords-a-leaping...

LAZY-EYED CREEP

Nine-ladies-dancing...

CRANG BANGER

Eight-maids-milking..

THEY

Six-geese-a-laying..

EVERYBODY

FIVE GOLDEN RINGS!!!

REVEAL

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

BUDDY

(as he squat-thrusts)

On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love...gave...to...

Buddy notices his dad and smiles. Walter does not.

EXT. JOVIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

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

BUDDY

(taking her in)

You look miraculous.

JOVIE

Miraculous? Thanks.

(they start walking)

So what do you feel like doing?

BUDDY

I have a few ideas.

JOVIE

Well, I'm up for anything.

BUDDY

Really?

JOVIE

Sure.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

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

BUDDY

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

JOVIE

(smiles)

What are you doing?

She takes a sip.

BUDDY

Well?

JOVIE

It tastes like a crappy cup of coffee.

BUDDY

Ha ha.

He removes the blindfold.

JOVIE

It is a crappy cup of coffee.

EXT. MID-TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER

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

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

EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Buddy pulls her by the arm.

BUDDY

Check out the size of this...

He shows her a pine tree decorated for Christmas.

BUDDY

Can you believe it?

JOVIE

(nonplussed)

Come with me.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER - LATER

Jovie leads him around the corner.

REVEAL:

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

BUDDY

Wow, that looks wondrous.

They share their first genuine smile.

EXT. ICE RINK - LATER

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

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

BUDDY

Sorry.

JOVIE

You missed.

BUDDY

I missed?

JOVIE

Yeah.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NEXT DAY

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

HUSKEY

I sure hope that car's seventy one degrees.

EXT. MANHATTAN - CONTINUOUS

The door swings open with a purpose:

REVEAL

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

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

We see some of the workers' reactions.

This is epic.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

More nervous waiting.

EUGENE

I should have brought my camera.

More silence...and then:

MILES FINCH (O.S.)

Alright. Let's do this.

REVEAL

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

WALTER

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

MILES FINCH

Yeah, yeah. Great. Let's get the uh --

(i.e. Cash)

Taken care of so we can get started.

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

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

MILES FINCH

Okay, cool.

(right to the point)

So what have you guys got so far?

WALTER

(to Huskey)

Go ahead.

HUSKEY

(nervous)

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

MILES FINCH

No tomatoes. Too vulnerable. Kids are already vulnerable.

WALTER

That's what we were kind of thinking.

MILES FINCH

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

WALTER

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

MILES FINCH

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

(Walter is very happy)

There's one idea I'm especially psyched about. It's one of those ideas where you're just like YES!

WALTER

What is it?!

MILES FINCH

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

BUDDY (O.S.)

Dad!

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

BUDDY

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

WALTER

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

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

BUDDY

(looking at little Miles)

You didn't tell me you had Elvies working here!

MILES FINCH

(icy stare)

Boy you are hilarious, my friend.

WALTER

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

MILES FINCH

(back on track)

Okay, at the top of the cover is the title, et this, ready? A --

BUDDY

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

MILES FINCH

(another icy stare)

Gee whiz, we're *all* laughing our butts off.

WALTER

Buddy! Please. Just go in the basement!

BUDDY

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

MILES FINCH

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

(leaning in)

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

BUDDY

(to his Dad)

Boy, he's an angry Elf.

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

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

BUDDY

(looking at his fist)

What have I done?

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

Miles stands, victorious and grabs his coat.

MILES FINCH

All of you can kiss my vertically challenged ass.

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

WALTER

Miles! Wait!

BUDDY

(to himself)

A South Pole Elf.

Buddy rubs his chin and stands to face his father.

BUDDY

You're really red.

WALTER

DAMN!! BUDDY! THIS TIME YOU REALLY DID N! GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!!

BUDDY

(scared)

Where do you want me to go?

WALTER

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

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

EXT. MANHATTAN - LATER

QUICK CUTS

Buddy walking through the city, devastated.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER

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

WALTER

(into phone)

I can't really talk right now.

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

INTERCUT with Emily.

EM

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

WALTER

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

EM

Oh. Do you wanna send Buddy home early?

WALTER

(riddled with guilt)

Oh, um, we'll talk about it later. I gotta go, okay?

Suddenly the three writers rush in. Walter hangs up.

MUSKEY

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

WALTER

What is it?

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

HUSKEY

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

MORRIS

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

HUSKEY

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

EUGENE

I agree, a home run.

MORRIS

Monster.

WALTER

How much time do we have?

HUSKEY

Forty-five.

WALTER

Let's get some story boards ready.

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Buddy steps out of the closet...

REVEAL

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

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

WE HEAR BUDDY'S VOICE AS HE WRITES.

BUDDY (V.O.)

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

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

Buddy walks out into the night.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - LATER

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

MICHAEL

Buddy?

INT. GREENWAY PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

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

GREENWAY

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

(dramatic pause)

This better be good.

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

WALTER

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

GREENWAY

Let's hear it.

WALTER

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

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Dad?!

Walter turns.

His son Michael is standing in the room.

WALTER

Michael?

MICHAEL

Buddy left!

WALTER

What?

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

MICHAEL

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

WALTER

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

MICHAEL

Finish your meeting?!

(beat)

How'd I know you were going to say that?

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

WALTER

Michael! Wait!

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

WALTER

(to the board)

Mr. Greenway, we have to reschedule this.

GREENWAY

We don't have time to reschedule! I want to hear the damn thing NOW!

(to Michael)

Son, this has to wait.

WALTER

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

GREENWAY

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

WALTER

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

MICHAEL

Kiss my ass, too!!

INT. GREENWAY PRESS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

GREENWAY (O.S.)

(in the distance)

If you walk out, Hobbs, you can never come back to Greenway!

EXT. THE 59TH STREET BRIDGE - NIGHT

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

EXT. CENTRAL PARK WEST - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. 59TH STREET BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

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

SUDDENLY SOMETHING CATCHES HIS EYE.

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

Tangled with reindeer, fish-tailing, and CRASHING!

BUDDY

Santa?!

EXT. MANHATTAN - MEANWHILE

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

MICHAEL

Oh...My...God!

WALTER

(missing it; turning)

What was that?!

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

WALTER

What happened?

(running after him)

Michael, wait up!?

EXT. SANTA'S CRASH SITE - CONTINUOUS

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

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

BUDDY

Santa!

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

SANTA

Back off slick!!!

He then recognizes him.

SANTA

Buddy?? Is that you?

BUDDY

Are you okay?

SANTA

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

BUDDY

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

SANTA

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

BUDDY

Really?

SANTA

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

BUDDY

I will. Papa taught me how.

SANTA

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

Buddy runs off into the woods.

INT. JOVIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

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

REMOTE REPORTER

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

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

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

REMOTE REPORTER

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

LATINO MAN

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

REMOTE REPORTER

Something? Do you mean an airplane or a helicopter?

LATINO MAN

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

He's too embarrassed.

LATINO CHILD

It was Santa's Sleigh!

REMOTE REPORTER

(dismissive)

Aren't you a cutie.

(listening to earpiece)

This could be a big hoax. I'm now told we have some amateur footage of a strange man dressed as an Elf. Let's take a look.

ON THE SCREEN

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

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

JOVIE

(seeing Buddy)

Oh my God.

EXT. ENGINE SITE - CENTRAL PARK -

CONTINUOUS

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

WALTER

What the...

BUDDY (O.S.)

You found it!

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

MICHAEL

Buddy! You're here!

BUDDY

(in a hurry)

There's something I've got to tell you guys!

WALTER

(ignoring; focused)

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

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

SANITA (O.S.)

(from a foggy distance)

Buddy?! How are we looking?? We gotta move!

WALTER

Who was that?

EXT. SANITA'S CRASH SITE - CONTINUOUS

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

TRUFF

Santa's GROUND'D SLEIGH and nine grazing reindeer. Shocked awe.

MICHAEL

(can barely speak)

Cool...

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

TV COVERAGE - CONTINUOUS

REMOTE REPORTER

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

EXT. BELVEDERE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

TRACKING CLOSE UP OF HOOVES

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

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

REMOTE REPORTER (V.O.)

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

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

EXT. GREAT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

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

MICHAEL

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

SANTA

(re: sleigh; working)

Hold this for a sec.

WALTER

This is not happening.

Walter and Michael, stunned, hold the hood up.

MICHAEL

Buddy's really an Elf?

BUDDY

Actually, I'm adopted.

MICHAEL

I can't believe it.

SANTA

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

MICHAEL

I wanted a skateboard.

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

It's THE LIST.

SANTA

(verifying)

Not just a skateboard, a Real Huff Board with high 145 Thunder Trucks. 52 millimeter Spitfire Classic Wheels and bolts from Diamond and some Swiss Bearings.

In this moment, Walter and Michael both really believe.

ECU

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

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

MICHAEL

What happened?

SANTA

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

MICHAEL

They fly away! Quick! Before they catch you!

SANTA

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

MICHAEL

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

SANTA

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

Michael spots the RANGERS on the crest in the distance.

MICHAEL

Look!

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

BUDDY

Santa needs your help.

MICHAEL

But, what can we do?

BUDDY

I got an idea.

He whispers a PLAN to Walter and Michael.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

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

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

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

SANTA

My List!

Buddy stops Santa from chasing. He takes command.

BUDDY

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

SANTA

But Mrs. Claus made them for me...

WALTER

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

Santa complies and Walter dons the over-sized ensemble.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRICADES - CONTINUOUS

REMOTE REPORTER spots Michael running out of the trees.

REMOTE REPORTER

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

(to Michael)

Did you see anything?

MICHAEL

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

REMOTE REPORTER

(blowing him off)

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

MICHAEL

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

He pulls out the LIST and reads:

MICHAEL

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

SERIES OF CUTS TO:

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

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

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

EMILY

Michael!

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Michael reads the list into the camera.

MICHAEL

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

SERIES OF CUTS TO:

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

CAROLYN

Thank you, Buddy!

MICHAEL

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

WE CUT TO:

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

BIKER

Must be another Dirk Lawson...

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL

Dave Keckler wants some Pony High Tops!

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

The female Remote Reporter attempts to step in.

REMOTE REPORTER

That's quite enough little fella.

MICHAEL

What's your name?

REMOTE REPORTER

(smiling)

I'm Charlotte Dennon.

MICHAEL

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

Off the Reporter's look, we...

SMASH CUT TO:

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

SANTA

We got power!

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

BUDDY

I don't have the engine fixed yet!

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. NEW YORK ONE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The Anchorman is confused.

ANCHORMAN

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

MICHAEL

No!

REMOTE REPORTER

(stunned)

How did you know that?

MICHAEL

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

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

CROWD (O.S.)

Let the kid read! What do I want?!

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

JOVIE

Where's Buddy?!

MICHAEL

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

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

JOVIE

(to herself)

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

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Walter, standing watch, sees the MOUNTED POLICE CHARGING.

WALTER

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

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

WALTER

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

They ride right past him and after the sleigh.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

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

SANTA

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

BUDDY

What?!

SANTA

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

JOVIE

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

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

WALTER

(to Emily)

He wasn't lying.

EMILY

Merry Christmas.

They hug.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

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

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

BUDDY

Ah!

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

BUDDY

I've almost got it!

SANTA

We need power, now!

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

BUDDY

(in triumph)

YES!! I DID IT!! I'M THE GREATEST ADOPTED ELF IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD!

SANTA

Good job, Buddy!

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

SANITA

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

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

JOVIE

He sees you when you're sleeping..

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

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

REMOTE REPORTER

(to the studio)

Dick, come back to remote 3. I think I've got something here.

JOVIE & THE CROWD

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

CAMERAS TURN BACK ON.

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

REMOTE REPORTER

(into camera)

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

BRIEF CUTS AROUND THE CITY

The Broadcast is being watched...

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

ELF MANAGER

(as his friends sing)

Do what you want, I ain't singing a damn thing.

EXT. THE MOVING SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. BARRICADE - CONTINUOUS

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

MICHAEL

Wait! You're NOT singing!

WALTER

Yes I am.

MICHAEL

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

WALTER

Michael! Please, I have a terrible voice.

MICHAEL

Dad!!!

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

WALTER

(terrible)

Santa Claus is coming to town!

EXT. THE MOVING SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

SANTA

Ho, ho, ho. Merry Christmas!

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

FREEZE FRAME

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

INT. HOBBS' APARTMENT - CHRISTMAS DAY

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

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

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

INT. WALTER'S NEW COMPANY - DAY

Walter is stenciling the name 'JOB'S PUBLISHING'.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Walter started his own independent publishing company. His first book was written by a brand new critically acclaimed children's author...

INT. GIMBELS - DAY

The 'ELF' book from the beginning of the movie is Buddy's. He's doing a book signing. The place is packed.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

The book was called 'Elf'. A fictional story about an adopted Elf named Buddy who was raised in the North Pole. Went to New York, ate spaghetti, worked in a shiny mail room and eventually saved Christmas.

Buddy and Walter ice skate together at Rockefeller Center in the middle of the night.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And every year, on Christmas day, after all the presents are opened by children around the world, Buddy and his Dad make up for lost time...

Buddy still tries to hold his hand. Walter slaps it away.

INSERT

We see an Elfish hand applying white out to Walter's name on the List.

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

Walter even made the jump from 'naughty' to 'nice'.

INT. PAPA'S WORKSHOP - DAY

PAPA ELF (V.O.)

And, as for me, I can't complain. Buddy comes up to visit from time to time.

RAPID FIRE FLARE OF BUDDY SLAMMING HIS HEAD INTO DOORWAYS, BEAMS AND CABINETS.

BUDDY

Ow! Yikes! Golly! Charles Dickens! Some of a Gnome! Fiddlesticks! Snow Flickers!

INT. PAPA ELF'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Jovie, in real Elf clothes, sets a pitcher of milk in front of Papa Elf. She sits beside Buddy who cradles a NEWBORN BABY in his arms wearing a pink Elf hat that says SUSIE.

This is the last image of the movie and also the last image of the book. It freezes and now becomes a drawing and we pull out to see it's the last page of Buddy's ELF book, which magically flips closed.

We're back in the bookstore from the very first scene. A little kid grabs the book out of the window.

FADE TO BLACK.

Credits