

JOURNEY TO THE LAST CHRISTMAS DANCE

screenplay by

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FADE IN:

1. **EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - AFTERNOON**

A young man on a VINTAGE BICYCLE stops in front of a comfortable middle class home.

The young man pulls out a folded piece of paper from his coat pocket.

This is RON, 17 years old, baby-faced, dressed at the nines. He tucks the folded piece of paper back into his coat pocket.

He parks his bike and approaches the house. He rings the doorbell. And waits.

THE DAD (O.S.)
 (from inside)
 Someone's here!
 (pause)
 I'll get it!

The front door swings open to reveal the most genuinely good natured person you've ever met. This is THE DAD. He immediately disarms RON with a smile that suggests they've known each other for years.

RON
 Hi, (I'm) --

THE DAD
 (over)
 Hey! Welcome, welcome. I'm *The Dad*.
 Come on in. She'll be down in just
 a bit.

THE DAD welcomes RON into

2. **INT. SUBURBAN HOME, FOYER - CONTINUOUS**

THE DAD
 (calling upstairs)
 Hey, hey! He's here!

No response from upstairs, but we can HEAR the buzzing of a hair dryer.

THE DAD
 (to RON)
 Well, alright then, let's give her
 a couple minutes to finish up. Do
 whatever she's gotta do. I'm sure
 (MORE)

THE DAD (CONT'D)

she'll look great--you look great.
Liking the bow-tie. Very cool. Very
cool. So, let's give her--yeah,
let's give her a couple of minutes.
We can come right here into the
living room. Talk a bit.

We follow them into

***.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The living room is absolutely bursting with Christmas decorations. It's almost ridiculously perfect. RON takes in the room.

THE DAD motions for RON to take a seat on the couch. THE DAD then takes a seat in an arm chair adjacent to him.

THE DAD

You don't wear the corsages
anymore? Are they (not)--?

RON

(over)
(didn't hear)
I'm sorry?

THE DAD

I said--are they--do you guys not
wear corsages anymore? You know,
the flowers--the flower on your
lapel. They don't do that anymore?
That was a big tradition (when I
was)--

RON

(over)
(suddenly remembering)
Oh my god. The corsage, I forgot
the corsage.

THE DAD sees how much he's upset RON.

THE DAD

Oh, no, I'm sure it's fine--it'll
be fine. I (wouldn't)--

RON

(over)
Is that bad? Is she gonna be (mad)?

THE DAD
 Are you kidding?
 (pause)
 No, no. Of course--no.

RON's still not over it. THE DAD shakes his head at himself, sorry he said anything at all.

An awkward silence falls over the room.

THE DAD
 (loud; interrupting the
 silence)
 So my daughter tells me you like
 baseball. That you're a baseball
 guy.

RON
 She did? Wh--well, sort of. I
 guess. Yeah.

THE DAD
 Sort of?

RON
 Well, I follow the Mets but that's
 it, really.

THE DAD
 Oh, got it. So you don't play?

RON
 Not anymore, no. I quit a while
 ago.

THE DAD
 Oh. Why's that?

QUICK CUT TO:

***.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

RON, playing third base, takes a sharp line drive off his mitt that ricochets into his chin.

The runners on second and third advance. In the background, we can see the scoreboard change. The VISITORS have taken the lead in the 9th inning.

We'll come back to this scene later.

CUT BACK TO:

***.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

RON

(lying)

School. You know, got too hectic.
Got too hard to--you know--to
balance school and baseball.

THE DAD looks at RON for an extra beat.

THE DAD

That's a shame. That always
bothered me. School getting in the
way of kids growing up.

RON nods, doing his best to look sophisticated.

RON

(pause)

Have you--did you ever play ball?
In school?

THE DAD

Oh, yeah. Baseball? The old...
(can't find another word
for baseball)
...baseball? Oh, yeah. Had a mean
curve. Nasty curveball. Disgusting
curve.

RON

I could never figure out how to
throw a curve. I don't know. I've
been trying since I was ten but I
just can't throw a curveball.

THE DAD stands up and picks a BASEBALL ORNAMENT from the
Christmas tree.

THE DAD

Look. Come here.

RON joins THE DAD in the center of the living room. THE DAD
shows RON his grip on the plastic ball.

THE DAD (CONT'D)

Okay, so you got your index and
middle fingers on the side of the
seam, here. And you got--so that's
two fingers up over here and the
other two fingers down here. And
you got your thumb--your thumb's

(MORE)

THE DAD (CONT'D)

important. I never understood how important the thumb was. Never underestimate the thumb. Say that.

RON

Say what?

THE DAD

"Never underestimate the thumb."
That.

RON

Okay. Never underestimate the thumb.

THE DAD

Okay, great. Great. So then you just...push down with your index and middle fingers while you're pushing up with the thumb. And then. You let it go. Let it fly.

THE DAD pantomimes letting the ball slip out of his hand as he twists his wrist. He ends the motion with a thumbs up.

THE DAD tosses RON the ball and takes a step back.

THE DAD (CONT'D)

Okay. Give it a whirl.

RON

A whirl?

THE DAD

Yeah, a whirl. Give it a try.

RON

But what if--what if I break something?

THE DAD

You won't break anything as long as...*you don't (underestimate)--*

RON

(over)

Don't underestimate the thumb.

THE DAD nods and gives RON another encouraging thumbs up.

RON takes another step back. He checks his grip on the ball. He winds up.

And throws it.

The ball curves in the air and lands safely in THE DAD's hands.

THE DAD
 (after a beat)
 That's a curveball.
 (pause)
That was a curveball. And it had a
 little sink on it--did you see
 that?

RON
 That was cool.

THE DAD
 It was cool.

THE DAD hangs the baseball ornament back on the tree. They both take their seats again.

The mood in the room is much more relaxed, as if an imaginary barrier has just been knocked down.

3. **INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

THE DAD
 Gonna miss high school?

RON
 Oh, no. Definitely not.

THE DAD
 Really? Sounds like you've already
 made up your mind.

RON
 I mean--yeah. I'm just ready to get
 out, you know?

THE DAD
 Right.

THE DAD thinks for a moment.

THE DAD (CONT'D)
 Actually. No.
 (shaking his head)
 You're wrong. Dead wrong, actually.
 You are gonna miss high school. I
 mean--that's just common sense.
 You're gonna miss high school.

(MORE)

THE DAD (CONT'D)

Period. Plain and simple. Maybe not just yet. Right now. Maybe not--what do you wanna do when you get out of school?

RON

Oh, uh, I don't know.

THE DAD

Okay--good, perfect. You don't know what you wanna do. But what about--down the line, after high school, after college--when "I don't know" doesn't count anymore? When you gotta forget about what you want to do and start to figure out what you're gonna do.

(pause)

I--listen, I just know that if I could be your age again, I'd be looking out for those little moments you don't see coming and definitely don't see going.

(pause)

That's what I'm always telling Jessica, anyway.

The name "Jessica" lingers in the air for a moment. RON squints his eyes, not sure if he knows who Jessica is or if he *should* know who Jessica is.

THE DAD checks his wristwatch.

THE DAD

She's sure taking a while, huh.

RON

(who?)

Yes, she is.

(testing the waters)

Jessica...?

THE DAD

By the time she gets down here the dance'll be halfway over, you know?

RON

(pause)

When Jessica gets down here?

THE DAD

Yeah. When Jessica gets down here.
 (under his breath)
Jessica, Jessica, Jessica.

RON's blood runs cold. *Who's Jessica?*

THE DAD

Hey, can I grab you something to
 drink? Water, soda, (beer)?

RON

(over)
 No, I'm (okay).

THE DAD

(over)
 Nah, let me grab you a beer. I'll
 grab you beer.

THE DAD shoots up and exits into the kitchen.

RON, with the room to himself, stand sup. He looks to the
 front door. Then to the entrance to the kitchen. Then back
 to the front door. Then back to the kitchen as--

JESSICA (O.S.)

Ron?

Standing at the foot of the stairs in full Christmas dance
 attire is JESSICA HOWARD. She's probably the smartest and
 prettiest girl in her year, but she'd never admit to it.
 She's a genuinely good natured person, just like her father.

RON is stunned and embarrassed.

RON

Oh, shit.

JESSICA

(genuinely curious)
 What's--what's going on?

RON

Oh, my God. Jessica. Howard.
 (casual)
 Hey. I'm actually just leaving
 (actually)--

THE DAD

(back with the beers)
 (over)
There she is. I was just joking
 (MORE)

THE DAD (CONT'D)
 that the dance is probably over
 already!

THE DAD becomes aware of the awkward tension in the room.

THE DAD
 Hmm. What I miss?

As RON opens his mouth to explain himself, the doorbell
 RINGS.

JESSICA goes to the foyer to answer the door.

THE DAD
 (to RON)
 What I miss?

In walks MICHAEL MCALLISTER, a jock-type that looks like
 he's been held back in school a few years. JESSICA's actual
 date.

RON immediately recognizes him.

QUICK CUT TO:

***. **EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY**

MICHAEL smacks a line drive that ricochets off RON's glove
 and into his chin as we

CUT BACK TO:

4. **INT. SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME**

MICHAEL hands JESSICA some flowers that have clearly been
 sat on.

MICHAEL
 Those have been sat on and for that
 I am sorry. Also, very sorry that
 I'm late--
 (he notices THE DAD)
 Mr. Howard. Nice to meet you.

They shake hands.

MICHAEL finally notices RON.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 Ron, what's going on? How's it
 going?
 (he pats him on the
 shoulder)
 I haven't seen you since--what,
 (MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

baseball season? What's up, man?

RON

(to everyone)

I'm at the wrong house.

A pause.

MICHAEL

(beg your pardon?)

You're at the what?

RON

I came to the wrong house. I'm supposed to be at 12 Shea Drive.

THE DAD

(a step behind everyone else)

Ooh. This is 15 Shea Drive.

RON

(to JESSICA and MICHAEL)

I'm supposed to be at Marge Reiner's house.

JESSICA

(no big deal)

Oh, she lives right across the street. She's so nice.

MICHAEL

Oh, dude. She's super nice. That girl's the only reason I passed Mr. Phillips' chem class last year.

JESSICA

She's so nice. She really is. Just a nice girl.

MICHAEL

She's so nice.

RON nods and trudges towards the front door. He peers through the window where he sees MARGE sitting across the street, waiting.

RON

(to no one in particular)

What do I say to her? She's gonna think I'm so stupid.

JESSICA
What? No way--no, she won't.

MICHAEL
Yeah, no sweat. Just tell her what happened.

JESSICA
Yeah, just--hey. You don't have a corsage.

THE DAD
(That's what I said.)

RON
(over)
That's what your (dad said.)

MICHAEL
(over)
(realizing)
Oh, no. Neither do I.
(pause)
Is that bad?

THE DAD
That's what Ron said.

JESSICA
(to RON)
Here. Look.

JESSICA takes a few flowers from the ones that MICHAEL brought for her. She ties them together using a hair-tie and a bobby pin.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
(offering the homemade corsage to RON)
Look. You can use these.

RON
(pause)
(thanks but no thanks)
I think I'll just go home.

RON opens the front door and walks out.

JESSICA, half hurting for RON, half hurt by the rejection, looks to her father as we

CUT TO:

***.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

RON's halfway to his VINTAGE BICYCLE when THE DAD comes jogging out the front door.

THE DAD
Hey, wait.

RON stops. THE DAD catches up.

THE DAD (CONT'D)
You just gonna go home? Miss this Christmas dance. This--the last one. Your senior Christmas dance? And you don't think--just maybe--you'll regret that down the line?

THE DAD pauses. He musters up the courage for what he's about to say.

THE DAD (CONT'D)
Look. You got thrown a curveball. Now, you know how to throw a curveball. Question is...
(almost cringing as he says it)
...can you hit one?

RON looks up at THE DAD. Inspired.

RON
Yeah. And I'll hit it out of the park, too.

THE DAD
We don't have to continue the metaphor, but good. Good. I'm glad you get the--you're all set, then.
(THE DAD extends his hand)
You have a Merry Christmas, then...

RON
Ron.

THE DAD
Ron. I'm Mark.

They shake hands.

RON turns towards MARGE and crosses the street.

5. EXT. MARGE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MARGE looks up from twiddling her thumbs. It's RON and his VINTAGE BICYCLE.

RON
Hey.

MARGE
Hi.

RON
I'm late.

MARGE
A little bit.
(referring to THE DAD)
Who's that?

RON
(pause)
I got lost. I'm stupid. I went to
the wrong--do you still want to go
to the (dance)?

MARGE
(over)
Yes.

RON
Good. Me too.

RON starts to climb aboard his bike.

MARGE
Wait.

RON
Yeah?

MARGE
Can I ask you a question?

RON
Yeah, sure.

MARGE
(pause)
Never mind.

RON
No, go ahead. You can ask.

MARGE

No, never mind.

RON

Aw, what do mean 'never mind'?
What's up?

MARGE

I mean 'never mind'. I was gonna
say something but then I thought
about it before I said it and I
decided 'never mind'.

RON

I hate when people do that.

MARGE

Me too.
(pause)
Maybe I'll ask you later.

RON

Well, how am I supposed to dance if
I'm wondering what you're (gonna
ask me?)

MARGE

(over)
Will you dance with me?
(pause)
At the dance, will you dance with
me?

RON

(happy she asked)
Of course, I'll dance with you.
That's why we're going to the
dance. To dance.

MARGE

Okay. Because I know a lot of
people go to dances and don't dance
and I just wanted to let you know
that I'm a good dancer.

RON

Okay.
(pause)
Well, the more we talk about
dancing, the less time we'll have
to actually dance.

RON and MARGE share a smile.

RON gets on the bike. MARGE gets on the back pegs, wrapping her arms around him.

Before peddling off, RON looks back across the street where THE DAD is still standing.

THE DAD pantomimes throwing a curveball that ends in a thumbs up.

RON smiles and returns the gesture.

He peddles downhill as we

SNAP TO BLACK

THE END