

Christmas Cards
screenplay by David M Troop

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

On a dusty bedside table, a wind up alarm clock ticks next to a framed, black and white photo of a young BRIDE and GROOM. The bell CLANGS. A wrinkled, shaky hand turns off the alarm.

WALTER, 70s, pushes himself up, sits on the edge of the double bed. He grabs his glasses from the table, slides his feet into his slippers, and puts on a worn flannel shirt.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A tea kettle sits over a gas stove flame.

Walter waters an enormous, red poinsettia.

Walter emerges from the closet with an old shoe box.

The tea kettle spouts steam, WHISTLES.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

KITCHEN

Walter sits at the table, sips some tea. He removes the shoe box lid, pulls out a stack of old Christmas cards, takes a pen, and writes.

INSERT CARD

Merry Christmas, Walter and Mary Parker

LIVING ROOM

Walter slips on his coat and scarf, places a stack of envelopes in his pocket, unlocks the door, and leaves.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Walter stands on the snowy sidewalk, shivers. Looks down the street, shakes his head.

The bus pulls up, the doors open. Walter climbs the steps.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL, 20s, African-American, sits behind the wheel.

MICHAEL

Hey, Walter.

WALTER

You're late.

Walter passes ELDERLY MEN AND WOMEN on his way to the back of the bus. Michael watches him in his rear view mirror, shakes his head, then closes the door, and drives off.

Walter gazes out the window, then turns his head to see--

MILLIE, 70s, sweet, rosy cheeks, smiles at him.

MILLIE

Why don't you come to bingo with us?

WALTER

I can't. I have things to do.

Millie smiles, nods, then turns back to face front. Walter returns his gaze to the window.

INT. BUS - LATER

Michael stops the bus, opens the doors. As the parade of SENIORS pass by, he makes his announcement.

MICHAEL

Listen up, people. Please remember that tomorrow is Christmas. Bingo will be closed. I will not be here to drive your wrinkly butts all over town to get you prune juice and lottery tickets.

Some of the Seniors laugh at Michael.

Walter stands up, shuffles toward the front of the bus.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Don't laugh. I'm serious. Hey, Walter, did you hear what I said? There's no bus tomorrow.

WALTER

Yeah, I heard you.

MICHAEL

It's a five mile walk in freezing cold. Just stay home for one day. It's not like --

Michael stops in mid sentence. Walter shoots him a look.

WALTER

Don't worry about me. You spend Christmas with your family. I'll spend Christmas with mine.

Walter turns, walks down the steps.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Walter steps off the bus, the doors close behind him. As the bus pulls away, Walter turns and looks across the road.

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Walter throws his scarf around his neck, blows out some cold air, then walks through the iron gates of the cemetery.

He walks down the path, past graves decorated with wreaths, flowers, and large stuffed animals.

He stops at a bare tombstone, lowers his head in reverence. His hand retrieves the stack of envelopes from his pocket. Walter takes an envelope, places it at the base of the tombstone, and attaches it with a small piece of tape.

Walter makes his rounds. He stops at various graves in various stages of deterioration and disrepair and attaches an envelope to each tombstone with a small piece of tape.

Walter stands before a modest tombstone. His shaking hand brushes the snow from it.

WALTER

Morning, sweetheart. Sorry I'm late.

Walter walks over to a bench on the side of the road, brushes the snow from the seat, and sits down.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

MAN, 30s, stands at a bare tombstone, notices an envelope lying in the snow. He picks it up, opens it, and reads the Christmas card inside.

GIRL, 12, takes an envelope from another tombstone, hands it to her MOTHER, 30s, who opens it and reads the card inside.

OLDER MAN, 50s, bends down, picks up an envelope in the snow.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Walter catches himself nodding off. He checks his watch, stands up, and walks back to the grave.

WALTER

I'll see you tomorrow. I love you.

He brings his fingers to his lips, touches them to the --

TOMBSTONE

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Walter sits at the table, sips some tea.

A radio plays O.S.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

So, if you must go out, bundle up,
because it's gonna be a cold one.

Walter puts on his coat and scarf. Picks up the poinsettia.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Otherwise, cuddle up by the fire
with the ones you love, and spend
Christmas Day with some hot cocoa
and some holiday music--

Walter closes the door behind him.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Walter stands on the snowy street corner, looks down the quiet, empty street. He turns and walks away.

A car pulls up to Walter, stops.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Hey, Walter, get in.

Walter turns to the car, looks in the open window at Michael.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's me. Michael. Get in, it's
freezing, man.

Walter opens the door, gets in. As he closes the door, the poinsettia sticks out the window.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Nice, poinsettia, man.

WALTER

You're late.

Walter brings the poinsettia inside the car. The window closes, the car drives off.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Michael's car passes through the gates of the cemetery.

INT. CAR - DAY

MICHAEL

I never told you this, but I think this is a beautiful thing you're doing. Coming out here every day.

Walter stares out the window.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

At first, I thought it was a little crazy. But, I get it. I do.

Walter's attention remains outside the window.

WALTER

These are my friends. My wife. People are too busy with their own lives. Someone has to care.

MICHAEL

People do care, Walter. You just have to give them a chance.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Walter and Michael stand outside the car. They each carry a poinsettia.

WALTER

This may take a while. Don't you have somewhere to be?

MICHAEL

Take your time, man. I have to go see my Nanna.

Walter turns, then stops short.

WALTER

Thank you. Michael.

MICHAEL

Yeah. Merry Christmas, Walter.

Michael watches as Walter walks down the path.

Walter passes by the decorated graves. He walks onward, then notices wreaths and flowers now adorn his friends' tombstones. He turns and walks on.

Walter approaches his wife's grave. He stands still, his face fills with wonder.

White envelopes cover his wife's tombstone. Plants and wreathes lie in the snow all around.

Walter walks over, places his poinsettia in the snow, plucks an envelope from the tombstone. He takes out a card, reads.

MAN (V.O.)

Thank you for thinking of my father.
Merry Christmas.

Walter opens another envelope, reads the card.

WOMAN (V.O.)

I just lost my Mom last year. Thanks
for remembering her. Merry Christmas.

Walter removes envelope after envelope from his wife's tombstone until he holds a large stack in his hand.

MAN 2 (V.O.)

Did you know my Grandfather? He
died when I was two.

WOMAN 2 (V.O.)

This was so thoughtful of you. Hope
you have a very Merry Christmas.

Walter walks over to the bench and sits down, stares in awe at the monument to his wife.

He removes his glasses. Wipes a tear with his shaking hand.

FADE OUT.

