

CHRISTMAS STORY

Story By

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Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A Middleboro police car churns through blizzard-like conditions. Its lights flash.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

The police car pulls up.

SUPER: THE THIRD BULLET

Two other cop cars are already stopped with their lights on.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

The police officer, CHRIS DEJESUS (28), three-day-old stubble, depression poster boy, steps out of the car.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Chris shuffles to a uniformed cop, JAMES ANDERSON (38), burly, rugged, who slams the back door of his car.

James turns to Chris.

JAMES
Merry Christmas.

CHRIS
Not now, James.

JAMES
My bad.

Chris peers in the back of James' police car at --

RANDALL EDWARDS (42), haggard, in a Santa Claus outfit, leans his head back against the seat.

Chris lights a cigarette. He offers one to James.

James waves them off.

CHRIS
Quit?

JAMES
(Nods)
Last week.

Chris takes a long drag.

CHRIS
(Shrugs, to himself)
More for me.

JAMES
This is what we got. Santa Claus is your trigger man. Real name's Randall Edwards. Clerk is -- well, was -- Heather Harrington, she's DOA. Ambulance is en route. No sign of the money yet and it went out as a silent alarm.

CHRIS
Just another Christmas Eve.

Chris heads for the liquor store.

JAMES
How's things with Julia?

Chris doesn't break stride.

CHRIS
She loves Christmas.

INT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

At a glance, everything appears to be normal.

Chris takes a step forward and peers over the counter.

The body of HEATHER HARRINGTON (22), petite, with a once-vibrant face, stares back up at him with lifeless eyes.

Blood drains from two bullet holes in her chest.

CHRIS
(Mutters)
Such a waste.

Chris checks out the security camera on the ceiling.

His attention turns towards a 12-pack of beer and a half-empty bottle of Jack with two shot glasses on the counter.

Chris spots a puddle of wine on the floor by the coolers. He approaches the shattered glass door.

AMBROZIK (O.S.)

Hey!

Chris turns to see --

A chubby, plainclothes State Police Detective, AMBROZIK (46), waits behind him, with his arms crossed.

CHRIS

Hey, yourself.

AMBROZIK

You mind not trampling my evidence?

CHRIS

Sorry about that.

Chris walks down the aisle then stops by Ambrozik.

CHRIS

Quick bit of advice. Walk sideways down the aisle...

Chris taps Ambrozik's belly twice.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Gets kinda narrow down there.

Chris winks and clicks his tongue on the way by.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

James' police car is gone.

In its place is Ambrozik's state police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Chris gets in his squad car. He grabs the CB receiver.

CHRIS

Dispatch, this is Unit 20, going for dinner. Time is 18:38.

The Dispatch Operator, JULIA, responds with a young and friendly yet authoritative voice.

JULIA (V.O.)
 Roger that, Unit 20. Bring me back
 somethin' good, yeah?

Chris backs the car out. He leaves the liquor store behind.

CHRIS
 Don't I always?

Chris admires the decorated houses. His eyes shift between
 the rearview mirror and the road.

JULIA (V.O.)
 'Least I'm not waking you up at 3AM
 for pickle ice cream.

CHRIS
 Anymore... I'll pick up somethin'
 on the way for you and our boy.

JULIA (V.O.)
Girl.

CHRIS
 Lemme dream, all right? 20 out.

Chris stops at a red light and looks ahead to a '50s-style
 diner, Dave's, appropriately decorated for Christmas.

The light turns green.

Chris doesn't notice. He pulls a quarter from his pocket.

CHRIS
 Heads, you do it.

Chris flips the quarter on the passenger's seat. Heads. He
 stares down the quarter.

CHRIS
 Two outta three.

Chris flips the quarter again. Heads again.

CHRIS
 Shit.

Chris pulls into a spot next to a red 1990 Chrysler LeBaron.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

A Salvation Army Santa, JASON HOUSTON (28), rings a bell by a
 donation canister in front of the diner.

Chris breezes straight past Jason, dropping the quarter into the canister as he passes. He ascends the front stairs.

A man in a short-sleeve T-shirt with a high-quality camera slung over his shoulder, DAVID CARLISLE (28), pushes open the front door, with a winter coat in his arms.

David smacks into Chris. David falls onto the ground.

Chris looks down at David.

David lies on his back with the coat at his side.

DAVID
God... damn.

Chris walks down the steps and holds his hand out.

CHRIS
You hurt?

DAVID
Only on the inside.

Chris hoists David up.

CHRIS
You'll be alright.

David bends down to grab the coat. He walks away.

CHRIS
(Calls out)
How are you not freezing?

David peers over his shoulder.

DAVID
I love winter.

Chris shrugs as he heads into the diner.

INT. DAVE'S - NIGHT

Chris takes it all in; the perfect '50s diner. Black and white tile floors, red and white vinyl seats, a jukebox.

Dave's is empty except for a mother, KASEY EDWARDS (45), looks stressed and tired, and her daughter, ABBY EDWARDS (8), headscarf, friendly smile.

Chris steps on a crumpled up piece of paper. He picks it up and tosses it in the trash.

He takes his hat and jacket off then hangs them atop a coat rack by the front door. He sits at the counter.

An aged woman in a green and red apron, MAGGIE DEJESUS (62), emerges from the kitchen, writing in a little flipbook.

MAGGIE

'Evening, hon. What can I get --

Maggie glances up.

Chris smiles back at her.

The sight of him stops her cold.

MAGGIE

Christopher?

CHRIS

Hey, Mom.

Maggie sets the notepad on the counter.

MAGGIE

What are you doing here?

CHRIS

I was just in the neighborhood.

MAGGIE

You just happened to be in the area? Today?

CHRIS

Just lucky, I guess.

MAGGIE

Very lucky. So, how're things with you?

CHRIS

Never better.

The roar of an engine gets Chris' attention. He looks out the window as a black 1987 Chevy Camaro IROC-Z pulls out.

Chris turns his attention back to Maggie.

MAGGIE

Last thing I ever pegged you being was a cop.

CHRIS
(Scoffs)
Same here.

MAGGIE
Chris, you didn't stop by for the
conversation. Did you?

CHRIS
Well, it's my dinner break, too.
Figured I'd kill two birds with one
stone.

MAGGIE
Gotcha. Same old?

Chris holds up two fingers.

MAGGIE
I think your eyes are a bit bigger
than your stomach.

CHRIS
Second's not for me.

Maggie writes the order and places it on the kitchen spindle.

MAGGIE
A girl?

Chris nods.

MAGGIE
Are you two...?

CHRIS
Yeah. I think I'm gonna propose to
her. Tonight.

MAGGIE
Congratulations.

CHRIS
Thanks.

Awkward silence.

CHRIS
So, how's work?

MAGGIE
Never changes. Had a couple chuds
in here.

CHRIS
Just needing their caffeine fix,
huh?

Maggie doesn't react to the piss-poor joke.

Chris anxiously taps his fingers on the counter.

CHRIS
How are you?

MAGGIE
Fine.

CHRIS
When did you start smoking again?

MAGGIE
A while back.

CHRIS
You said you'd quit.

MAGGIE
I did. A few times.

CHRIS
But...

MAGGIE
After a while, I realized I didn't
have to protect you anymore.

CHRIS
You never needed to protect me.

MAGGIE
You don't think so, but I did.

Chris won't look Maggie in the eye. He glances at a small, green, tree-shaped piece of paper on the wall.

He looks at the gold construction paper star and wrapped presents below it.

CHRIS
You know, those little plastic
trees are only, like, ten bucks.

Maggie eyes the paper tree with admiration.

MAGGIE

There's something about a real tree
that that plastic garbage can't
touch.

CHRIS

It's just a piece of construction
paper. They put stuff in it so it's
not just paper...

(Sighs)

It looks nice.

ABBY (O.S.)

Mommy, I'm hungry.

KASEY (O.S.)

It's coming, baby. You've got to be
patient.

Chris glances at Kasey and Abby in the booth behind him.

Kasey makes eye contact with Chris. They share a nod.

Chris turns back to Maggie.

MAGGIE

Be honest, Chris, what are you
really doing here?

CHRIS

I just wanted to say Merry
Christmas.

MAGGIE

Thank you. Merry Christmas to you.

CHRIS

I think I oughta get going.

MAGGIE

What about the food?

CHRIS

She'll understand.

MAGGIE

Well, it was good to see you...
That is, unless you have something
you wanna say.

Chris' demeanor turns irritated.

CHRIS

Something like what?

MAGGIE
It's not for me to say.

CHRIS
This about Dad?

Maggie shrugs. Chris is unsure how to take that.

CHRIS
I'm not in the fucking mood for games. What do you want from me?

MAGGIE
You could start with an apology.

CHRIS
For what? Leaving?

MAGGIE
We can start there, yeah.

CHRIS
I'm not gonna start anywhere. He got sick. I moved out. That's it.

MAGGIE
It wasn't the fact that you left, Chris. It was the fact that you abandoned us, the day after your father got his diagnosis.

Chris looks down, ashamed. Maggie realizes it.

MAGGIE
That's why. That's why you came back. You feel guilty about it.

CHRIS
Guilty?

MAGGIE
That's why you picked Christmas to come back, isn't it? Nine years to the day?

CHRIS
That's not why.

MAGGIE
That's exactly why. You may be able to lie to yourself, but you've never been able to lie to me.

CHRIS

Thanks for telling me.

MAGGIE

You know, you didn't even ask how he was. Your father.

CHRIS

I didn't need to. When I saw you manning the counter instead of him... I got the hint.

MAGGIE

He wanted you to come back. He even told me, before he passed, that he forgave you.

CHRIS

I don't need his forgiveness.

MAGGIE

That is so typical of you. Just passing the buck. It's always somebody else's fault.

CHRIS

I didn't say that.

MAGGIE

But you still didn't have the nerve to say anything? To me. Did you?

CHRIS

What was there to say?

MAGGIE

"I'm sorry"?

Chris wants to say something, but can't.

MAGGIE

You can't, can you? You can't say those two little words because you're too...

Maggie peers over Chris' shoulder at Abby.

MAGGIE

...darn stubborn to admit it when you're wrong.

CHRIS

No, I'm not.

MAGGIE
Not what? Not stubborn or not
wrong?

CHRIS
Pick one. I gotta go.

MAGGIE
Chris, don't.

Chris steps away from the counter. He grabs his jacket and
hat off the rack.

MAGGIE
Please don't leave.

Chris turns back to Maggie.

CHRIS
Just 'cause you'll never let me
forget what I did wrong, doesn't
mean I don't spend every day
wishing I could change it. But, I
came to accept that you can't turn
back time. Why can't you?

Chris pulls a red envelope from his coat. He slaps it down on
the counter then heads for the door.

Maggie stares down at the envelope.

Chris swings the door open and exits the diner.

MAGGIE
Wait.

Maggie runs around the side of the counter.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

Chris gets in the car and backs out of the parking lot.

Maggie pushes the door open to see Chris driving away.

MAGGIE
Christopher!

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Chris stops at a red light. He picks up the CB receiver.

CHRIS
Dispatch, this is Unit 20,
returning from dinner. Time is
18:49.

JULIA (V.O.)
Roger, Unit 20... Are you okay?

CHRIS
No, I'm not. 20 out.

Chris puts the receiver back.

CHRIS
You stupid... FUCK! God...

Chris looks in the rearview mirror. He sees Maggie, standing
in the doorway. He can't take his eyes off her.

After a moment, he gives a slight nod.

CHRIS
(Deep exhale)
Okay. Fuck it.

The light turns green.

Chris starts a U-turn as --

The IROC-Z skids through the intersection. It narrowly misses
Chris' car.

Chris slams on the brakes. He watches as the IROC-Z keeps
driving. Out the back window, Chris checks on Maggie.

Maggie has gone back inside the diner.

CHRIS
All right.

Chris picks up the CB receiver.

CHRIS
Unit 20, currently in pursuit of a
black late '80s Camaro on Palmetto.
Over.

JULIA (V.O.)
Roger, Unit 20.

Chris flips on the lights and siren as he gives chase.

After a block and a half, the IROC-Z pulls over.

Chris shuts off the siren and steps out of the car.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE - NIGHT

Chris steps forward with a flashlight and his hand on his gun. He walks up to the window, which is already rolled down.

DAVID (O.S.)

Shut up.

David turns to Chris and smiles, awkwardly.

DAVID

Hey, officer. Long time, no see.

Chris doesn't seem to recognize him.

DAVID

The... the diner? We bumped into each other?

CHRIS

Right. Do you realize how close you came to hitting me?

David looks off to Chris' side. He covers his mouth, trying to conceal laughter.

Chris shines the flashlight right in David's face.

CHRIS

Something funny?

David tries his best to compose himself.

DAVID

No, sir.

CHRIS

You ran a red light while speeding in a fucking blizzard and you're laughing about it?

DAVID

I'm not, honestly. I just wasn't paying attention. I'm really, really sorry.

David slowly shakes his head.

Chris shines the flashlight throughout the car.

A shovel and a fire axe rest in the back seat.

CHRIS
What's the deal with those?

DAVID
Oh, those? Some side work I do.
Busting down ice dams and things
like that. Way better than hair
dryers and screwdrivers, lemme tell
ya.

Chris shines the light on David, suspicious of the response.

CHRIS
License and registration.

DAVID
Sure thing.

David chuckles as he reaches in the glove compartment. He hands them to Chris and lets out a deep exhale.

Just then, a slight bump against metal.

Chris and David's attention turns to the trunk.

CHRIS
What was that?

DAVID
I don't know.

Chris walks backwards to the trunk, with his gun drawn.

CHRIS
Pop open the trunk, right now!

David opens the driver's side door with a pistol drawn.

Chris turns his gun towards David.

A bump in the trunk distracts Chris as --

David fires two single shots; once in the chest and once in the throat.

Chris falls to the ground, bleeding from his throat. His bulletproof vest protects his chest. He clutches his neck with one hand.

His free hand tries to grab the gun off the ground.

David stands over Chris with a solemn look in his eyes.

DAVID
I'm sorry.

David shoots Chris once in the head then lowers the gun. He stands like a statue.

DAVID
(Soft)
Yeah.

After a moment, David collects the license and registration off the ground. He stuffs them into his pocket.

David hops back in the IROC-Z and speeds away, leaving Chris' dead body in the street.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. IROC-Z - NIGHT

David stares at himself in the rearview mirror. He angles it away then grabs his coat off the passenger's seat.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - NIGHT

David gets out and slams the door. He swings the coat over his shoulder.

SUPER: NOTHING IMPORTANT HAPPENED TODAY

David trudges through the day-old snow. He kicks something metal on the ground. He bends down to pick it up --

A black pistol.

DAVID
What the hell?

David runs his finger along the grip where three small, red dots form a triangle. He recognizes the gun. His.

David looks in all directions, but there's nobody. David puts the gun in the back of his pants and heads around the diner.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

David heads for the front door.

Maggie stands outside by Jason, smoking a cigarette.

MAGGIE
'Evening, sir. Grab a seat
wherever. I'll be in, in a sec.

DAVID
Yep.

David heads inside the diner.

INT. DAVE'S - NIGHT

David walks in and spots a young woman --

SASHA HARRINGTON (26), platinum blonde hair and a sour
expression, in the corner booth.

David hangs his coat on the rack.

DAVID
Hey.

SASHA
Hey.

David leans in for a kiss.

Sasha turns away. David kisses her cheek.

David takes a seat in the booth, opposite Sasha. He sets an
expensive camera down next to him.

Sasha sniffs the air.

SASHA
Were you smoking?

DAVID
No.

SASHA
You sure?

DAVID
Pretty sure I'd know, yeah.

SASHA
(Scoffs)
Whatever.

Sasha glances over at the camera.

SASHA
Get any good shots?

DAVID
Couple.

SASHA
They gonna make you rich and famous?

DAVID
Rich? I doubt it, and I'll probably never be as famous as Avedon, but...

David snaps a picture of Sasha.

Sasha shields her eyes from the flash.

DAVID (CONT'D)
...it's an interesting hobby.

SASHA
(Scoffs)
So, you're just gonna be one of those starving artists?

DAVID
Are we starving?

SASHA
No. No thanks to you.

DAVID
What's that supposed to mean?

SASHA
I hate to break it to ya, but your trust ain't gonna last forever.

DAVID
You know, you're probably among a handful of people who would think that seven figures won't last a lifetime.

SASHA
At the rate you spend it?

DAVID
On you.

David checks out Sasha's gaudy, diamond-encrusted engagement ring. She notices.

SASHA
Regretting it yet?

DAVID
(Shakes his head)
Not at all.

SASHA
So, David, I been meaning to ask
you something.

David glares at Sasha.

SASHA
This brooding photographer shit's
for the birds. When are you gonna
get a real job?

DAVID
A real job? The fuck is that?

SASHA
Well, I know it's a foreign concept
to you, but most people tend to
leave the house for about eight
hours a day, five days a week, and
go to a magical, far away land
called "work". And make money.

DAVID
How about that? Guess I been kept
outta the loop, huh?

SASHA
David, I'm serious. You lounging
around the house all day is kind of
fucked up when I have to go out and
work.

DAVID
What's bothering you more? That
you're working or that I'm not?

SASHA
Both.

DAVID
Wanna switch?

SASHA
No. I just wanna be equal.

Outside, a group of CAROLERS sing "Hark! The Herald Angels
Sing". David glances over to the counter, at --

VINCENT (28), black hoodie and blue jeans, who reads a hardcover copy of "Sybil".

Vincent peers over at David and gives him a slight nod before returning to the book.

SASHA
David, are you listening to me?

DAVID
(Distant)
Not really.

Maggie enters the diner.

MAGGIE
(To David and Sasha)
Sorry 'bout the delay. Hope I
didn't keep you too long.

Maggie heads behind the counter and makes two cups of coffee. She sets them down in front of David and Sasha.

MAGGIE
There ya go, guys. First round's on
the house.

SASHA
Thanks?

DAVID
Appreciate it.

MAGGIE
So, y'all want some food or dessert
to go with that?

DAVID
I think we'll need a minute or two.

MAGGIE
Sure thing. Just lemme know.

Maggie heads back into the kitchen.

David pours the sugar jar into his coffee.

Sasha seems disgusted by the amount of sugar he puts in.

DAVID
So, you wanna be equal?

SASHA
Why not?

DAVID

'Cause I think we are.

SASHA

Bullshit, we are. You treat me like your fucking pet. You hang around on the sofa, jerking off and watching TV while I'm at work all day...

DAVID

Slaving over a hot keyboard. Those starving kids in Africa got nothing on you, I tell ya.

SASHA

That's not fair.

DAVID

Sorry, sweetheart, but life isn't fair. I paid off the house. Our house. The one we live in. Paid off my car. Paid off your car, the one you handpicked. Gotcha that rock ya love to flaunt so fuckin' much. All your fuckin' jewelry and your spa treatments, whatever the hell they are. In return, you handle the groceries -- which I cook, by the way -- and utilities. Is that so tough? 'Cause if it is, you're free to walk. With your propensity to be the village bicycle back in the day, I'm sure you'd have no trouble hookin' up somewhere. So, don't pretend that you're Mother Teresa and you don't give a fuck about money, okay? I know you too well. Despite your contempt for me, I'd prefer you stay. I love you, Sasha, regardless of how you might feel about me.

SASHA

You sure know how to show it.

DAVID

You don't think I wish you loved me as much as I love you?

SASHA

Meaning what?

DAVID

Let's just say that you love your low-cut tops and gettin' dolled up all the time and you're not doing it for me.

SASHA

You think I'm fucking around behind your back?

DAVID

I don't think that.

SASHA

Then, what?

DAVID

I think you like looking your best. And, you do. Meanwhile, I still look like a fuckin' savage.

SASHA

In a short-sleeve shirt...

DAVID

Yep.

SASHA

During a blizzard...

DAVID

"Winter weather advisory".

David places his hand on top of Sasha's.

DAVID

You wanna go home? I think we should discuss a couple things.

SASHA

Yeah, maybe we should.

Sasha and David leave the booth.

David slings the camera over his shoulder. He slips a \$20 bill under his coffee cup.

Vincent watches over his shoulder as they leave the diner.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - MOMENTS LATER

They come upon David's IROC-Z. Sasha gives David "the look".

SASHA

When are you gonna get rid of the white trash Corvette?

DAVID

Get rid of it? Thing's a classic.

SASHA

(Mumbles, to herself)
A classic piece of shit.

DAVID

I'm gonna pretend like I didn't hear you blatantly dissing my car within earshot of me.

SASHA

Of course not.

Sasha reaches for the passenger's side door.

DAVID

Wait. Not yet. I got a present for ya.

SASHA

Want me to put it in the back?

DAVID

It's in the trunk.

SASHA

Great.

DAVID

Let's open it here.

SASHA

Are you serious? It's ten fuckin' degrees outside.

DAVID

Cold air's good for you.

SASHA

Like fuck it is. We're gonna get hypothermia! And, you're not even wearing a coat!

DAVID

It's worth it, though. Trust me.

SASHA

Why can't I just open it at home?
We're only two blocks away.

DAVID

Don't you trust me?

A look of discontent overcomes Sasha's face as she shuffles to the trunk and blows into her hands.

Sasha glances down at a faded bumper sticker on the IROC-Z:

WE ALL GO A LITTLE MAD SOMETIMES

David unlocks and lifts the trunk.

Sasha stares down inside, almost confused.

DAVID

You know, when I took 'em, I was
praying they'd be top quality.

David reaches into the trunk and emerges with a photograph of Sasha kissing ANOTHER MAN outside his house.

DAVID

Here, I thought you weren't the
intimate type. Guess it was one of
those "it's not you, it's me"
things?

Three-dozen other photographs line the trunk, all of similar intimate moments.

DAVID

You, uh, wanna look at the others?

SASHA

When did you take these?

DAVID

Last night. You believe that?
Suppose Christmas came early.

SASHA

How could you do this?

DAVID

See, it took a bit of doing, that's
for sure. While you were kissin'
'im in the dark, I had to open up
the aperture a bit with an F/3.5
and slow the shutter down a bit...

SASHA

David...

DAVID

(Mumbles, to himself)

ISO was kind of a bitch, but I got there eventually.

SASHA

David, stop!

Sasha finally has David's attention.

DAVID

When I said I loved you, that wasn't bullshit.

(Deadpan)

But, you never loved me, did you?

SASHA

Of course I did.

DAVID

Hmm. Past tense.

SASHA

I still do.

DAVID

I don't know what hurts more. That you can lie with a straight face... or that I wish I could believe you.

Sasha slips her purse off her shoulder. She emerges with the gun which --

David knocks away as he lunges forward and tackles her to the ground. He squeezes her neck with both hands.

Sasha reaches out and scratches David's face, to no avail.

She takes hold of his camera and tries to smash him in the face, but he deflects it.

David takes one hand off her neck as he --

Slides his knee up and pins her arm down.

David returns his hand to her throat as she slowly weakens.

Sasha lets out a couple weak gasps.

SASHA

Pl...
(Coughs)
...ease.

David stares off to the side as Sasha goes unconscious. He keeps choking her until he's sure.

A hand comes down on David's shoulder.

VINCENT (O.S.)

I think she's dead, Davey.

David snaps out of his trance. His eyes dart over but --

The hand is gone.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Hey!

David looks up to see Vincent, sitting Indian-style on the roof of the IROC-Z.

Vincent lights a cigarette.

VINCENT

Why the long face?

Vincent slides forward and hops off the car. He playfully punches David on the shoulder.

VINCENT

Buck up. You got work to do.

David seems almost shell-shocked.

Vincent kneels down at David's side.

VINCENT

First things first, you stay out here like this too long and you're gonna end up lookin' all like Jack Nicholson when he got turned into a fuckin' ice cube.

David rises to his feet and shuffles towards the diner.

VINCENT

I'll just keep watch. It's cool. No hurry or anything...

INT. DAVE'S - MOMENTS LATER

David swings the door open and grabs his coat off the rack.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
Forget somethin'?

DAVID
Was wondering why I was freezing
my...

MAGGIE (O.S.)
Cojones off?

Davie turns to face Maggie.

Maggie sees blood dripping down his face.

MAGGIE
Jeez, are you okay?

David seems confused. Maggie points to his face. David feels the side of his head and gets blood on his fingers.

DAVID
Oh, I didn't know. I just tripped,
getting in the car.

MAGGIE
Tripped?

DAVID
Yeah. I'm not gonna sue or
anything. It was my bad.

Maggie grabs a couple napkins and offers them to him.

David takes them and wipes the blood off.

DAVID
Thanks.

ABBY
(Sings loud)
"Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer/Had
a very shiny nose..."

David glances at Abby and Kasey in a booth to his right. He turns to the door and pushes it open.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

David crashes into Chris and falls to the cement.

Chris looks down at David who has the coat at his side.

DAVID
God... damn.

Vincent stands right over David, staring down at him with the cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He knocks on the camera.

VINCENT
A pratfall? Seriously?

Vincent winks as he steps away.

Chris extends David his hand.

CHRIS
You hurt?

DAVID
Only on the inside.

Chris helps David to his feet.

CHRIS
You'll be alright.

David picks his coat up off the ground. He carries it with him as he walks away.

CHRIS
(Calls out)
How are you not freezing?

David peers over his shoulder.

DAVID
I love winter.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - MOMENTS LATER

David comes up on the IROC-Z.

Vincent leans on the driver's door, smoking his cigarette.

VINCENT
Since when do you love winter, Mr.
72 and sunny?

David kneels down by Sasha's body. He holds her hand as he gently kisses her lips.

Vincent looks down at David and shakes his head.

VINCENT
She's not gonna wake up, Prince
Charmless.

David looks up, irritated by Vincent.

DAVID
Just leave me alone!

VINCENT
Pssh. Whatever.

Vincent takes a long drag of his cigarette.

David rises to his feet. He drags her legs towards the car.

VINCENT
Feeling better?

David turns and glares at Vincent.

VINCENT
What? I'm just saying, you're a
free man, now. You should be happy.

David pulls the gun from his pants and aims it right at
Vincent's chest.

DAVID
Shut the fuck up!

VINCENT
All right, fine. No need to get so
testy, man. Sheesh.

Vincent takes another drag.

David turns his attention back to Sasha.

VINCENT
Should still be grateful,
though,... dick.

David yells out as he turns with fury and pushes Vincent flat
against the car. He puts the gun right under Vincent's chin.

DAVID
Look, I'm gonna give you one more
fucking chance! Shut! The fuck! Up!

Vincent flicks the cigarette away and blows a puff of smoke
right in David's face.

VINCENT

Or what?

David hand shakes. He can't pull the trigger.

Instead, he punches the car.

DAVID

Fuck!

Vincent checks out the dent.

VINCENT

Nice. Now, your car's got some character. More than you, anyway.

David puts the gun back in his pants. He lifts Sasha's body into the trunk.

Vincent puts his arm around David's shoulder.

They stare down at Sasha.

VINCENT

She looks so peaceful. Don'tcha think?...

(No reaction)

Me, too.

Vincent slams the trunk.

VINCENT

Let's go, Tex.

Vincent heads towards the passenger's side.

David walks over towards where Sasha dropped her gun. He picks it up and heads for a pile of trash by the diner.

VINCENT

What are you up to, man?

David completely ignores Vincent.

VINCENT

(Mumbles)

Fuck our life.

David hides the gun inside a metal trash can then turns back towards the IROC-Z.

INT. IROC-Z - NIGHT

David starts the car. He glances over at Vincent in the passenger's seat.

VINCENT
Halfway home.

DAVID
Yep.

David puts the car in drive.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The IROC-Z pulls into the driveway.

David gets out and leaves the engine running.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

David swings the tool shed door open.

INT. TOOL SHED - NIGHT

David flips on a light. He starts searching.

VINCENT
Twenty bucks says I find it first.

Vincent searches the other side of the shed.

David throws things out of the way.

DAVID
I don't even have a shovel.

VINCENT
'Course you do. It's one of those things everyone has stashed away somewhere.

David reaches deep behind a pile of garden tools. He emerges with a shovel.

VINCENT (O.S.)
(Scoffs)
See, I'm the kind of guy who's gonna tell you, "I told ya so".

DAVID
Let's go.

VINCENT
Hang on a tick.

Vincent pulls out a fire axe. He smiles.

VINCENT
Now, we're ready.

DAVID
Are you fuckin' crazy?

VINCENT
Heh. Irony.

DAVID
I'm not choppin' 'er up.

VINCENT
What kind of sick fuckin' maniac do you take me for? Ground's harder than my cock, man. We gotta get through it with somethin'.

DAVID
You're right.

VINCENT
(Smiles)
Then, we chop 'er up.

David gives Vincent a disgusted, "What the fuck is wrong with you?" look.

VINCENT
Kidding...

David pushes Vincent out of the way.

VINCENT
We're simpatico, man.
(Calls out)
I know you better than anybody!

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

David throws the axe and shovel in the back seat. He and Vincent get in the car.

INT. IROC-Z - NIGHT

David stares at himself in the rearview mirror.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Don't let that conscience bullshit
get in the way.

David adjusts the mirror to see Vincent in the back seat.

VINCENT
That's why humans invented
confession. So, focus. It's your
time to shine.

David backs out of the driveway.

Vincent is now in the passenger's seat.

The IROC-Z pulls onto Palmetto Drive.

VINCENT
You can always think of this in
different terms, if you're
uncomfortable with it.

DAVID
Different than murder?

VINCENT
Sure, sure. You're, uh... you're
Santa and a bunch a' Chinese crap's
gotta be delivered to a whole
gaggle of whiny brats before
daybreak or you get fired.

DAVID
I don't wanna get fired.

Vincent pats David on the shoulder.

VINCENT
Even the Grinch got in the
Christmas spirit...

DAVID
(Sighs)
I still can't believe she did that
to me.

VINCENT
You knew. Don't pretend like you
didn't.

DAVID
I knew, but I... didn't. Guess I
was just being optimistic.

VINCENT
Learned your lesson, though?

DAVID
Definitely.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE - NIGHT

The IROC-Z speeds towards the diner intersection. It doesn't
slow down for the yellow light.

Chris' police car waits for the light.

INT. IROC-Z - NIGHT

David stares blankly at the road, but is in deep thought.

DAVID
(Mumbles, to himself)
What does he have that I don't?

VINCENT
Sense of humor? Red light.

David looks over at Vincent.

DAVID
Go fuck yourself.

VINCENT
Red light.

DAVID
What red light?

David turns his attention back to the road.

DAVID
Fuck!

David slams on the brakes, but can't stop. He continues
through the intersection as Chris skids to a stop.

DAVID
Oh, my god. Oh, my god. No!

Vincent is in the back seat, on his knees, watching out the
back window.

VINCENT
(To himself)
Of all the intersections in all the
world...

Chris chases after them with his lights and siren wailing.

Vincent turns to face David.

VINCENT
See, this is what happens when you
don't pay attention TO WHERE YOU'RE
FUCKING GOING!

David slams his palm down on the wheel.

Vincent is now in the passenger's seat.

VINCENT
Pull over. Just pull the fuck over!
You're not out-running a cop in a
blizzard with a fucking Camaro.

David pulls over to the side of the road. He hides his pistol
in a slot on the driver's side door.

VINCENT
Just cool down. You're not going to
jail.

DAVID
I am if he finds her fucking body.

VINCENT
I'm not going to jail, hence we're
not going to jail. Get me?

DAVID
Don't do anything.

VINCENT
Trust me.

David rolls his window down.

VINCENT
If you want, I'll handle this. I
can play nice.

DAVID
You did more than enough tonight. I
don't want you screwing this up
worse.

VINCENT
Screwing what up?

Chris approaches the car.

DAVID
Shut up.

David faces Chris and smiles, awkwardly.

DAVID
Hey, officer. Long time, no see.

Chris doesn't seem to recognize him.

DAVID
The,... the diner? We bumped into
each other?

CHRIS
Right. Do you realize how close you
came to hitting me?

David looks up to see Vincent wrapping his arm around Chris.

Vincent gently pounds Chris' shoulder.

VINCENT
Slow your roll, Mr. Police Officer.
Close only counts in horseshoes,
grenades and nuclear war.

David covers his mouth, trying to conceal laughter.

Chris shines the flashlight right in David's face.

CHRIS
Something funny?

David tries his best to compose himself.

DAVID
No, sir.

CHRIS
You ran a red light while speeding
in a fucking blizzard and you're
laughing about it?

DAVID
I'm not, honestly. I just wasn't
paying attention. I'm really,
really sorry.

Vincent leans on the driver's side window. He looks David straight in the eye.

VINCENT

Don't apologize to this prick. Take him out so we can get back to business.

David slowly shakes his head.

Chris shines the flashlight throughout the car.

A shovel and a fire axe rest in the back seat.

CHRIS

What's the deal with those?

DAVID

Oh, those? Some side work I do. Busting down ice dams and things like that. Way better than hair dryers and screwdrivers, lemme tell ya.

Chris shines the light on David, suspicious of the response.

Vincent stands next to Chris, mimicking his every movement.

CHRIS

License and registration.

DAVID

Sure thing.

VINCENT

(Mocks)

Must be serious. Officer of the law. Emotion is forbidden.

David chuckles as he reaches in the glove compartment. He hands them to Chris then exhales.

Vincent is in the passenger's seat. He leans over and whispers in David's ear.

VINCENT

Take him out. For your own good.

Just then, a slight bump against metal.

Everyone's attention turns to the trunk.

CHRIS

What was that?

DAVID
I don't know.

Chris walks backwards to the trunk, with his gun drawn.

David lifts his gun out of the slot.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Pop open the trunk, right now!

A sly smile creeps across Vincent's face.

VINCENT
You heard him.

David opens the door with his gun drawn.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE - NIGHT

Chris turns his gun towards David.

A bump in the trunk distracts Chris as --

David fires two single shots; once in the chest and once in the throat.

Chris falls to the ground, bleeding from his throat. His bulletproof vest protects his chest. He clutches his neck with one hand.

His free hand tries to grab the gun off the ground.

David stands over Chris with a solemn look in his eyes.

Vincent stands off to the side with his arms crossed.

DAVID
I'm sorry.

David shoots Chris once in the head then lowers the gun.

Vincent steps over Chris' body and wraps his arm around David's shoulder.

VINCENT
Now's not the time to ponder your shitty life choices. Okay?

DAVID
(Soft)
Yeah.

Vincent collects the license and registration off the ground. He stuffs them into David's pockets.

He wraps his arm around David's waist and leads him back towards the car.

INT. IROC-Z - NIGHT

David drives away with Vincent in the passenger's seat.

DAVID
This isn't working out. Us. You and me.

VINCENT
(Chuckles)
You breakin' up with me?

DAVID
I'm serious. Every time I listen to you, things just go to shit.

VINCENT
Whose fault is that? Yours or mine?

DAVID
(Sighs)
Mine.

David looks Vincent in the eye.

DAVID
I don't wanna see you anymore. I want you to go away.

VINCENT
Maybe you don't get how this works, but you can't just wish me into the cornfield, you know.

DAVID
But, I can sure as hell try.

CLOSE ON David with an intense stare at the road.

DAVID
Ever since the beginning, I just wanted to do the right thing. I find somebody who really makes me happy and you blow that. You can't stand the fact that you're not the most important thing in my life.
(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I have other things I want and that doesn't include you. Maybe one day things'll change, but they won't until you gimme some space. Okay? Just for a while.

David glances over at the passenger's seat.

Vincent is no longer there.

DAVID

(Sighs)

Goodbye, Vincent.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE - NIGHT

The IROC-Z cruises down the street, heading out of town.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

Sasha strides along the sidewalk, with her cell phone in-hand, without a care in the world.

She texts a message then puts the phone inside her purse.

SUPER: DOWN PAYMENT

Sasha grips the railing as she traverses the steps.

Randall holds the door open as he exits the diner.

Sasha breezes straight past him.

RANDALL

(Scoffs)

You're welcome.

INT. DAVE'S - NIGHT

Sasha heads for the far left booth where she finds --

MATTHEW WINSLOW (32), a distinguished black man with a nice suit and an impatient gaze.

MATTHEW

You're late.

SASHA
Are you the guy?

Matthew checks the time on his silver pocket watch.

MATTHEW
Forty-seven minutes and twenty-seven seconds, to be precise.

SASHA
Dude, whatever. It was a long walk. Are you the guy or not? I don't got time for this shit.

Matthew gives Sasha a smarmy grin.

MATTHEW
I'm the guy.

Sasha holds her hand out. Matthew refuses.

MATTHEW
Never shakes the devil's hand.

Sasha gives him an awkward stare as she sits. She sets her purse down at her side.

MATTHEW
You realize I was about two seconds from walking out that door?

SASHA
I don't see chains on that booth.

MATTHEW
Funny, I don't see money in yours.

SASHA
It's coming.

MATTHEW
Is it gonna be here sometime between now and New Year's?

SASHA
Have some faith.

MATTHEW
In you? Not on your fucking life. So, what kept you?

Matthew notices small details about Sasha; her evenly-coated makeup, her engagement ring and her manicured nails.

MATTHEW
Busy getting the matching pedi?

SASHA
Traffic.

MATTHEW
A lotta traffic on that sidewalk?

Sasha tries her best poker face.

Matthew closes the watch. Sets it on the table.

MATTHEW
My mother used to say that you
shouldn't say anything if you can't
say something nice.
(Clears throat)
Lying is something similar.

SASHA
Maybe I just didn't care enough,
about your feelings, to rush.

MATTHEW
That, I can work with.

Sasha suspiciously looks to the side to make sure no one is
watching them.

SASHA
So, are we doing this?

MATTHEW
If I get my money. So long as we're
clear on that fact.

SASHA
That's not clear for a second.
Look, we haven't discussed a price
yet. Just your startup cash.

MATTHEW
And?

SASHA
And... how much is it?

MATTHEW
Does it matter? If I told you it
were a million bucks right now,
you'd figure out a way.

SASHA

If it was a million dollars, I may have to sleep on it.

MATTHEW

But, you wouldn't. You'd make a snap judgment. "Sure, do it," you'd say.

SASHA

I don't know where I'd find a million.

MATTHEW

The same place you're going to find thirty-eight grand.

SASHA

That's a... little higher than I expected. I was thinking... five... Maybe ten?

MATTHEW

Gs? You thought wrong. My usual fee -- twenty-five -- plus a fifty percent mark-up for a specialty job. I rounded up just 'cause I just don't like you. Total's thirty-eight.

SASHA

I don't know if I can swing that.

MATTHEW

You'll find a way. You wouldn't wanna waste my time or anything.

SASHA

Not if I can help it.

MATTHEW

See? You're lying again. Trust me, dishonesty doesn't suit you. When you figure out what the truth is, you'll find it's easier to tell it.

Matthew checks his watch.

MATTHEW

Nine minutes.

SASHA

I don't know what's keeping him.

MATTHEW

Him?

SASHA

Yeah, my... contact.

MATTHEW

(Scoffs)

Okay, well, your nebulous "contact" knows you're on the clock, right?

SASHA

He's gonna get you your money.

MATTHEW

I'm a patient person. Tolerant, even. But, there's a big difference between patience with a first-timer and a client who's a disorganized, deceptive gold digger.

SASHA

Gold digger?

MATTHEW

No gal pays someone else to off their spouse 'less there's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Just pointing that out.

SASHA

Still doesn't matter. I'm your client and you work for me.

MATTHEW

Not 'til I take your money, I don't. This meeting didn't have to be longer than thirty seconds.

SASHA

It's Christmas.

MATTHEW

And, I'd prefer not to spend it in this shit hole diner. I'm walking at 6:30, money or not. Got me?

Matthew spins the watch for Sasha to see. 6:22.

SASHA

(Nervous smile)

Plenty of time.

Maggie makes her way to the booth as Matthew sets the papers down on the table.

MAGGIE
Sorry 'bout the delay. I was a bit tied up. You ready to order?

MATTHEW
Not hungry.

MAGGIE
Well, we're open for a bit, 'case you change your mind.

MATTHEW
It's okay. I suspect I'll be leaving pretty soon.

MAGGIE
(To Sasha)
For you?

SASHA
Maybe later.

MAGGIE
Maybe later, then.

Maggie walks away.

SASHA
I'm gonna head to the little girls' room, 'kay?

MATTHEW
Good. Get lost.

SASHA
You'll be here when I get back?

MATTHEW
How long you gonna take?

Sasha gets out of the booth. She heads to the --

WOMEN'S RESTROOM

With two stalls and a messy sink, there's hardly room for anything else in that cramped space.

Sasha sets her purse on the sink and pulls out her phone. She quickly texts a message:

where r u?

Sasha takes a deep breath and stares down the mirror.

SASHA

You got this. You're fronting the money. You're taking the risk. You deserve a say.

Sasha shakes her head. She takes a revolver out of her purse and aims it straight at her reflection.

SASHA

We're doing things my way. You're not gonna push me around. My money, my plan. I want a better deal...

(Thinks)

I'm getting a better deal.

Sasha seems content with the result. She checks the cylinder.

The revolver is fully loaded. Sasha smiles at herself.

SASHA

It's not up for negotiation.
Period.

Sasha places the revolver back in her purse.

INT. DAVE'S - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha takes her seat at the booth as --

Matthew spins the watch on the table, clearly bored.

MATTHEW

Thought you fell in.

SASHA

And I kicked the sewer gator's ass on the way out. Wanna see?

MATTHEW

Rather see somethin' with more green and less scales.

SASHA

I told you, he's gonna be here by your precious, little deadline. Oh, and there's something else we need to talk about.

MATTHEW

I'm sure you think so.

SASHA

I'm getting a better deal. Since I'm the only one taking a risk, the price is gonna get lowered.

MATTHEW

Is it? Wow, that's news to me. When, exactly, did we discuss this?

SASHA

Now. And, it's not up for discussion. Ten grand.

MATTHEW

(Points to the bathroom)
There a phone booth in there? Huh? You go in, come out and all of a sudden, you're Superbitch?

SASHA

I gave you a chance to do the right thing. You didn't. Now, I gotta.

MATTHEW

(Chuckles)
You wouldn't know the right thing if some fella stuck a Benjamin in your G-string.

SASHA

Cute.

MATTHEW

I try. So, what was that you were saying about ten large?

SASHA

New price. I think it's fair.

MATTHEW

That's great. And, this is your expert opinion in these matters?

SASHA

I know that what's right is right.

MATTHEW

There you go again, waving that word around like it means somethin' to you. I don't think you've earned the right to act morally superior.

SASHA

Who's acting? I pay. You leave and do your job.

MATTHEW

I'm leaving, that's for sure.

SASHA

What do you do with the money, anyway? You stack it in a safe or somethin'? Hmm? Hang onto it for a rainy day?

MATTHEW

Why do you care?

SASHA

I just wanna know who I'm dealing with.

MATTHEW

Well, since you don't mind me asking, why are you having me waste your beloved?

SASHA

Why do you care?

MATTHEW

Fair point.

SASHA

Between you and me? The dude's fuckin' cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs.

MATTHEW

You know they got pills for that...

SASHA

And, I like the money. That's a small piece of the puzzle.

MATTHEW

Sounds like it is the puzzle.

SASHA

Call it whatever you want.

Matthew checks his watch.

MATTHEW

Yeah, we got time. You know, I have this theory about all the chicks who've ever hired me for a job.

SASHA
"Chicks"? Seriously?

MATTHEW
When it comes to emotion, ladies are like glass bottles while guys are like water balloons. You poke glass with a needle, needle's gonna break. You poke a water balloon...

SASHA
It pops.

Matthew takes a sip of his coffee.

MATTHEW
Seems to be a recurring theme amongst the gals. Guys, not so much, but their sample size is a lot bigger. See, guys are simple. They got some floozie on the side, they're "just not that into you".

Sasha rolls her eyes.

MATTHEW
You gals are different. You may be taking loads from a couple dozen guys, but it's 'cause you want something from each of 'em and you'll do whatever it takes. Most times, it's all about the green.

SASHA
Anybody ever called you out on how much of a fucking pig you are?

MATTHEW
Sure, lots of times. Sticks and stones.

Matthew finishes his coffee.

MATTHEW
I had a job, a couple years back. Guy wanted me to take out his wife, you know, whatever. Standard job, get it all the time. Nine outta ten, it's 'cause he's got some twentysomething on the side. Like I said, guys are simple. Anyway, the dude was a fuckin' deadbeat if I ever saw one.

(MORE)

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

He'd been collectin' disability for depression since H.W. was in office. This bald, lanky, Coke bottle glasses-wearing mother fucker would spend his whole day, sittin' on his ass, playing computer games, I shit you not. His wife, God bless her, was an obstetrician. Pretty girl. She'd never make the runway but, from what I hear, her IQ put her in the fourth percentile. She would've been goin' places if not for that lug. What can I say? She loved him. I dunno, apparently, they were high school lovers. He was a jock 'til he got injured. Doesn't matter. Anyway, the guy hated having other people around, especially her. He cared about two things: his games and stayin' on the dole. So, one day, they have an argument. One thing led to another and she puts the metaphorical gun to his head and says, "You got two choices: get a job or get out." Remember how I said he liked getting his check? Turns out he loved that a lot more than he loved her. So, he gave me a call.

SASHA

Did you do it?

MATTHEW

Didn't have to. Guy up and keeled over the day 'fore we were supposed to meet. Heart attack, thank God. I still keep tabs on the wife from time to time. She's doin' better.

SASHA

Would you have done it?

MATTHEW

I think about that, sometimes. You know what I realized?

SASHA

No, but I bet you're still gonna tell me.

MATTHEW

Most people hate their job... but
they still do it. I'm no different.

Sasha glances outside as a beige 1992 Toyota Tercel pulls
around the back of the diner.

Matthew checks his watch again. 6:29PM.

SASHA

He's here.

MATTHEW

He's not here 'til he's here.

SASHA

What's your family think of what
you do? They must be so proud.

MATTHEW

Funny, I was just gonna say the
same thing. Great minds, right?

Matthew doesn't take his gaze off the watch.

Ten seconds. Nine. Eight.

A bell above the front door rings. They look over.

Jason enters, holding a brown paper bag. He heads to their
booth and slams the bag down.

MATTHEW

You guys... Either you've got the
best timing in history or the worst
timing in history.

Matthew notices Jason's Santa Claus outfit.

MATTHEW

Why?... No, you know what? I'm not
even gonna ask. I don't care.

Matthew looks inside the bag --

Several thousand dollars worth of assorted bills with a
single scratch ticket on top.

Matthew pulls the ticket out and slides it to Jason.

MATTHEW

Go ahead, Romeo. Scratch away.

Jason glares at Matthew, infuriated. He sighs as he scratches the ticket with his nail.

JASON

Nothin'.

Jason casually pockets the ticket.

MATTHEW

Well, knock me over with a feather.

Matthew closes up the bag.

MATTHEW

I was really hoping for two stacks of neatly-arranged bills, but, you know... Best laid plans and all, I'm gonna consider this a victory.

(To Jason)

It's been a pleasure.

(To Sasha)

It hasn't.

Matthew eases out of the booth.

SASHA

We're not done yet.

Matthew stops and glances back to Sasha.

MATTHEW

You're entitled to your opinion.

SASHA

Thank you, Jason.

Translation: "Get lost."

Jason takes the hint and leaves the diner.

Matthew slides back into the booth.

MATTHEW

I like your lapdog. He knows when to keep his mouth shut.

SASHA

Sometimes he can be a real pain in the ass.

MATTHEW

Well, he's your problem, not mine.

Sasha pulls out a cigarette and puts it in her mouth.

MATTHEW

Can't smoke in here, Chiclet.

Sasha lights up and takes an obnoxiously-long drag. She blows the smoke right in Matthew's face.

SASHA

Says who?

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Me.

Sasha turns to see Maggie standing by their booth.

Maggie snatches the cigarette from her mouth and stubs it out on a napkin.

MAGGIE

You want to do that shit, you do it outside like a civilized person.

SASHA

If we want you, we'll call you.

MAGGIE

Don't give me any lip. It demeans you and I don't deserve to be treated like that.

Matthew nods, in agreement.

MAGGIE

I'm gonna go out for a smoke. You need me, just call.

MATTHEW

We will. Thank you.

Maggie leaves the diner.

MATTHEW

(Chuckles)

You got smoked by a blue-hair...
How's it feel?

Sasha glares at Matthew, thoroughly unimpressed.

SASHA

You never agreed to my condition.

MATTHEW

Still sore over that?

SASHA

If you're not doin' it, hand over my bag.

MATTHEW

Yours? Shit, you are delusional. What constitutes yours? "I want this, so it's mine"?

SASHA

Who are you to judge?

MATTHEW

What'd your boy knock over to get it, anyway? 'Cause he, sure as fuck, didn't scrape this together by his lonesome.

SASHA

Couldn't tell ya.

MATTHEW

Sure. Just like you don't know whether or not you're gonna dump your little boy toy the second you get all your dead beau's money.

Sasha seems confused by the accusation.

MATTHEW

What, you think you're special? Guess what? You're not.

SASHA

You're so clever, aren't ya?

Matthew can't help but smirk. He grabs the bag of money.

MATTHEW

See ya in hell. I'll bring croissants.

Matthew eases out of the booth.

Sasha pulls the gun from her purse and trains it on Matthew's chest. Matthew freezes.

SASHA

The bag stays.

MATTHEW

If you renege on our deal...

Sasha pulls back the hammer.

SASHA
Change your price or there is no deal. Get it?

MATTHEW
You realize there's no going back, now?

SASHA
Fully aware.

MATTHEW
All right. Ten grand.

SASHA
Good. I'd ask you to shake on it, but I know how you feel about that.

Matthew slowly eases out of the booth. He keeps his eye on Sasha as he puts on his topcoat.

SASHA
Here's hoping we don't speak again.

MATTHEW
(Shakes his head)
Dei gratia.

Matthew leaves the diner in no particular hurry.

Sasha slips on her engagement ring as she puts the revolver back in her purse. She stares off into space as --

The front door bell rings.

David walks in and looks around.

Sasha waves to him.

David walks over and forces a smile.

DAVID
Hey.

SASHA
Hey.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. MALL - OFFICE - NIGHT

Randall sits at a large desk in his Santa Claus outfit. The fake beard hangs around his neck.

SUPER: NO GOOD DEED...

A gold nameplate on the desk reads "BARRETT HILL".

Opposite Randall, sits a black man in a simple, tan suit, BARRETT HILL (44), who rests his hands on the desk.

HILL

I don't know what to tell ya,
Randy. We don't exactly need Santas
in July.

RANDALL

Don't call me Randy and, yeah, I
get it, but come on.

HILL

Look, I like you. Always have. But
revenue's down. You know if I had
something, it'd be yours. You know
that. But, there's no money. No
money, no jobs.

RANDALL

I can appreciate that, but --

HILL

No "buts". That's it. If something
opens up, you'll be at the top of
the list. Until then...

RANDALL

So, where does that leave me?

HILL

(Sighs)
Somewhere else.

RANDALL

(Shakes his head)
I don't accept that. I will do
anything. Anything. I'll pick up
garbage with a pointy stick.

HILL

I had to let three maintenance men go last week. I'm sorry. Really.

RANDALL

You remember that story on the news a while back about the 78 people who stood in line all day for a temp job washing dishes?

HILL

Sure.

RANDALL

Guys with degrees got passed over for it.

Hill shrugs.

RANDALL

What -- I mean, what kind of chance do I have out there when things like that are going on?

HILL

Couldn't tell ya. But, you're resourceful. I have faith in you.

RANDALL

I can't buy food with faith, Barrett.

HILL

You're absolutely right.

RANDALL

Fine. Maybe I'll just go take down a bank or something. At least that'll keep my family fed for a couple weeks.

HILL

Don't talk like that. You don't mean it and it's counter-productive. You're a good man and you work hard. You can find a job.

RANDALL

We'll see.

HILL

If you'd like, we'll revisit this issue in the spring.

Randall looks completely dejected.

RANDALL
Winter. Just. Started.

HILL
I know.

Hill's phone rings. He answers it.

HILL
Yeah, this is Barrett... Hey,
hon... No, no, no, it's fine...
Yeah, no, it's nothing important...
Can you hang on a sec?

Hill covers the receiver with two fingers.

HILL
Drop off the outfit whenever you
get a chance, Randy. No rush.

Hill uncovers the phone.

Randall leaves the office calmly.

INT. MALL - MOMENTS LATER

Randall trudges through the mall with his head hung low.

All the stores' lights are out. The last EMPLOYEES file out.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

The few remaining cars are coated in snow.

Randall holds his hand out and catches a couple flurries in his palm.

A blue 1986 Renault Alliance awaits him.

INT. ALLIANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Randall starts the car and grabs his ice scraper.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Randall scrapes the snow and ice off his hood then rubs the snow off the driver's side windows with his sleeve.

Hill watches Randall from afar.

HILL

Hey, Randy. Don't mess up that suit, man. We gotta dry clean it.

Randall hears Hill but ignores him.

RANDALL

(Mumbles, to himself)
Don't call me "Randy".

Hill comes up behind Randall.

HILL

I'm serious, man. If you mess it up, I'm gonna have to send you the bill, all right?

Randall grips the scraper so hard, it shakes in his hand. He turns to face Hill and gets right in his face.

RANDALL

You know what? You don't like what I'm doing to your precious, little outfit, you go ahead and fucking bill me in your cheap, I-bought-it-on-clearance-at-Sears beige suit!

Hill eyes Randall with disappointment.

RANDALL

Don't you look at me like that.

Hill straightens his collar, upset by Randall's rant.

HILL

Merry Christmas.

Hill walks away.

Randall watches him leave then gets in his car.

INT. ALLIANCE - NIGHT

Randall throws the ice scraper in the back seat. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a sobriety coin.

He clenches it tight and drives away.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Randall stops at an intersection as the light turns red.

David's IROC-Z is stopped to his left.

A beige 1992 Toyota Tercel goes through the intersection.

INT. ALLIANCE - NIGHT

Randall taps the coin on the steering wheel. He glances over into David's IROC-Z.

David is in the middle of a conversation. Nobody else is in his car.

Randall glances into David's window. They lock eyes.

David stops talking. He gives Randall a look, "What the hell are you staring at?"

Randall minds his own business as the light turns green. He drives straight as David turns left.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - MOMENTS LATER

Randall parks the Alliance out front.

INT. DAVE'S - MOMENTS LATER

Randall takes a seat the counter.

Maggie converses with Matthew at his booth.

Randall can't help but overhear.

MAGGIE

Your lady friend's running late,
huh?

MATTHEW

Yeah. I don't mind, though.

MAGGIE

Well, if you want something to eat
or drink...

MATTHEW

I don't. Thank you.

MAGGIE
(Clicks her tongue)
I read ya.

Maggie walks around the counter and stops by Randall.

MAGGIE
You're a little early, Santa.

Randall doesn't react, a sour look on his face.

RANDALL
You hiring?

Maggie shakes her head.

RANDALL
Ever?

MAGGIE
(Sighs)
I'll see what I can do.

Maggie grabs a job application from under the counter and slides it and a pen to Randall.

MAGGIE
Don't go runnin' off with that,
now. It's one of my best pens.

Randall jots his name on the top then stops. He slowly begins to reflect.

MAGGIE
Are you okay? I mean, for real?

Randall looks her in the eye.

RANDALL
Yeah. Just been a tough couple
weeks.

MAGGIE
I understand. Take your time, you
know? No rush.

RANDALL
Thanks.

Maggie grabs a coffee cup and fills it for Randall.

MAGGIE

It's on me. I'll be damned if any Santa's gonna walk into my place on Christmas Eve like he just got a lump a' coal in his stocking.

RANDALL

That's really not necessary.

MAGGIE

Maybe it is. I'll let you get to it.

Maggie heads into the kitchen.

Randall spins the coin on the counter. His cell phone rings. He answers it.

RANDALL

Yeah?

INT. RANDALL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is small and cluttered. A file with MEDICAL RECORDS is spread across a coffee table.

KASEY (O.S.)

Where are you?

Kasey paces into frame, fidgeting with her silver cross necklace. A nervous look in her eye.

INTERCUT BETWEEN RANDALL AND KASEY

RANDALL

I just had to make a quick stop.

KASEY

You're not at the...?

Randall spins the coin again. It comes up "Heads".

It is a "6 Month" sobriety coin.

Kasey stops pacing and becomes worried.

KASEY

Randy?

RANDALL

No. 'Course not.

KASEY
You swear?

RANDALL
I'm not drinking. I'll swear on my
Goddamn life. On Abby's life.

KASEY
Randy, please, don't blaspheme.

Kasey sits on the sofa.

RANDALL
I know. I'm sorry.

Kasey looks over the records. A few keywords stick out.

-- AGGRESSIVE NEUROBLASTOMA

-- STAGE 4

-- BONE MARROW

-- ABIGAIL EDWARDS

KASEY
So, how'd things go with Barrett?

RANDALL
About how you'd expect.

Randall spins the coin again. It falls "Tails".

A quote on the back reads, "To thine own self be true."

RANDALL
Hey, good news. If I'm lucky, I'll
get to spend spring as the Easter
Bunny.

Kasey puts her hand over her mouth and shakes her head.

KASEY
April?

RANDALL
(Sarcastic, upset)
Yep. Last time I checked.

KASEY
So?...

RANDALL
I'm trying, baby. It's gonna take
some time.

Kasey tries to hold back tears.

KASEY
Try harder.

RANDALL
Kasey, I know. Look, I'll be home
soon, okay?

KASEY
All right. Bye.

RANDALL
Bye...

Kasey hangs up.

RANDALL
(Soft)
I love you.

END INTERCUT

Randall drops the cell phone on the counter. He stares down
at the partially-filled out application.

MATTHEW (O.S.)
My condolences.

Randall looks over his shoulder at Matthew.

Matthew nods to him from the far booth.

MATTHEW
That sounded rough.

RANDALL
A bit.

MATTHEW
Hey, it's Christmas. Nobody's happy
at Christmas.

RANDALL
Tell me about it.

Randall snatches the application and cell phone off the
counter. He accidentally leaves the coin behind.

He crumples the application into a ball and tosses it at the trash barrel.

It misses and falls to the ground.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

Randall holds the door open as Sasha breezes in past him.

RANDALL
(Scoffs)
You're welcome.

INT. ALLIANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Randall hops inside his car. He places his hands on the steering wheel and rests his head on his hands.

His cell phone rings. He answers it slowly.

RANDALL
Yeah?

KASEY
It's me.

RANDALL
What's up?

Randall lifts his head up and starts the car.

KASEY
Abby's awake. She wants to talk to you.

RANDALL
Tell her I'll be home in a few.

Randall pulls out onto the street.

ABBY
Hey, Daddy.

RANDALL
Oh, hey, kiddo. Merry almost Christmas.

ABBY
When are you coming home?

RANDALL
In a little bit.

The Alliance skids on the ice.

Randall grabs the wheel tight.

RANDALL
Baby, can you hold on a second?

ABBY
Yeah.

Randall pulls to a stop in the Magnolia Liquor parking lot.

RANDALL
Sorry, kiddo. So, you ready for
Santa to come?

ABBY
Yeah.

RANDALL
Yeah? You think he's gonna bring
you something good?

A long pause.

ABBY
I don't think so.

Randall looks upset by this. He looks up and sees various
liquor ads in the windows.

RANDALL
Why not? You've been a good girl
all year, haven't you?

ABBY
Does Santa bring kids money?

RANDALL
Money? You want money instead of
some awesome toys? That's just
nonsense, baby.

ABBY
If Santa brought me money, we could
pay the doctors so they could make
me all better.

Randall's eyes start to water up.

RANDALL
Abby, I want you to listen to me
very carefully, okay? Mommy and me
have that under control.
(MORE)

RANDALL (CONT'D)

You don't ever need to worry about that. Whatever it takes, we'll make sure that you're taken care of.

Randall searches his pockets, but can't find his chip.

RANDALL

Now, what do you wanna do for supper tonight?

(Mumbles)

Where is it?

ABBY

Where's what?

RANDALL

Nothing. We can go anywhere you want.

ABBY

The Silver Twinkie?

RANDALL

Then, that's where we'll... That's it. Baby, can you put your mother back on, please?

ABBY

Okay. Bye, Daddy.

RANDALL

Bye, baby. I love you.

A brief pause.

KASEY (V.O.)

Randy?

RANDALL

What was that about?

KASEY (V.O.)

She must've overheard us at her appointment today.

RANDALL

Must have? But, you reassured her, right?

KASEY (V.O.)

Yep. I lied.

RANDALL
It's not lying. Everything is going
to be okay.

KASEY (V.O.)
How can you even say that?

Randall looks up at the liquor store. He sees Heather and Jason inside.

RANDALL
I may have an idea. But, let's just
get through Christmas and we'll
talk about it later, okay?

KASEY (V.O.)
Are you gonna meet us there?

RANDALL
At Dave's? Yeah.

KASEY (V.O.)
All right. I love you. Bye.

Randall hangs up the phone as a gunshot rings out. His eyes
dart towards the store.

Two more shots ring out.

Randall ducks down in his car as he grabs the cell phone. He
dials 911 then stops.

The faint sound of a police siren gets louder.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Randall gets out of the car as he watches Jason burst through
the front door.

Jason throws something silver in the snow.

Randall chases after Jason.

RANDALL
Hey!

On instinct, Jason spins and fires two shots from his black
pistol at Randall who drops to the ground to avoid them.

Randall's hand grips the revolver as he falls.

Jason takes off around the side of the store.

Randall kneels in the snow.

RANDALL

Shit.

Randall carefully picks up the revolver and tries to wipe off his fingerprints.

James' police car pulls up. As he gets out, he draws his gun.

Randall drops the revolver into the snow.

JAMES

You! Put your hands up!

Randall looks petrified. He doesn't move.

JAMES

Up!

Randall puts his hands up as his hands shake.

James approaches Randall and lays him flat on his stomach as he cuffs Randall's hands. He lifts Randall to his feet.

RANDALL

It wasn't me.

Another police car pulls up. Thomas and Sylvia get out.

JAMES

There's a gun in the snow.

RANDALL

But, it's not mine. There was --

JAMES

Shut it.

RANDALL

There was a guy. He was robbing the store.

JAMES

Yes, there is and yes, there was.

Thomas bags up the revolver.

THOMAS

It's a Ruger with .22 shells.

James opens the back door of his police car. He fits Randall into the back of it.

JAMES
What's your name?

RANDALL
Randall. Randall Edwards and you
got the wrong guy. I wasn't robbing
the Goddamn store!

JAMES
Just like that wasn't your gun?

RANDALL
It's not. I don't own one. There
was another guy who tear-assed
outta here, okay? There were three
shots. One, then two of 'em back-to-
back. The guy shot at me, I fell
and that's when you guys showed up.

Thomas heads inside the store.

Sylvia canvases the small crowd of onlookers that has formed.

JAMES
Could you describe him for me?

RANDALL
Um, white guy, kinda young. He was
in a Santa Claus suit...
(Realizes)
...also.

JAMES
You're not makin' this easy for me,
you know that? You're saying that
two guys in Santa outfits just
happened to be at the same store at
the same time?

RANDALL
It's Christmas...

JAMES
Randy, when we dust that gun down,
whose prints are gonna come back?

RANDALL
Mine, but I can explain. I ducked
when he shot at me and my hand
accidentally touched --

JAMES
"Accidentally touched". Get the
hell outta here, man.
(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

The sooner you make this easy for me, I'll make it easy for you.

Thomas emerges from the store.

THOMAS

James, the clerk's down. She's already gone. I called it in.

JAMES

You get a name?

THOMAS

Heather Harrington.

JAMES

(Sighs, to Randall)
Was that you?

Randall refuses to answer. He looks away.

JAMES

Look, Randy, we got an alarm, a gun, a dead woman... and you -- Look at me.

Randall looks James in the eye.

JAMES

And you're telling me that this was some other Santa Claus and the stars aligned or whatever astrological bullshit that is. Think about that a second. You wanna try me again, Randy?

Chris' police car pulls up.

RANDALL

Don't call me Randy.

James slams the door in Randall's face.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Jason's Tercel pulls into the parking lot.

SUPER: WITHDRAWAL

INT. TERCEL - NIGHT

Jason sits in the driver's seat. He reaches for the glove compartment, but his hand freezes.

His cell phone dings. A text message.

Jason grabs the phone and reads the message:

SASHA 6:16PM
u there yet?

Jason sends a message of his own:

i dont know if i
can do this

His phone dings almost immediately:

SASHA 6:17PM
u have 2. just
stick 2 the plan.

Jason takes a deep breath as he grabs the Santa hat and beard on the passenger's seat and puts them on.

He reaches into the glove compartment and grabs a large black pistol which he conceals in his coat.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Jason gets out of the car and looks around.

A little GIRL (6) peeks out at him from a small ranch house across the street.

Jason turns to see the Girl looking at him.

The Girl waves, so excited to see Santa.

Jason returns the smallest of waves.

INT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Jason steps inside.

The only person inside is the clerk, Heather, playing a game on her cell phone.

Jason shuffles to the back of the store and grabs a 12-pack from the cooler. He brings it up front to Heather.

Heather puts her phone down. She looks up at Jason.

HEATHER

Bad day?

JASON

Huh?

HEATHER

Normally, I don't get guys stoppin' in here on Christmas if they had a good day, know what I mean?

JASON

Yeah. One a' those days.

HEATHER

Maybe you're lookin' for a little pick-me-up?

Jason looks confused.

JASON

What'd you have in mind?

HEATHER

Not like that, you perv.

Heather chuckles as she pulls a bottle of Jack from under the counter. She grabs two shot glasses and sets them up.

JASON

Nah, I'm not... Really.

HEATHER

Oh, come on. It's on me. 'Less you wanna keep bein' a sad sack. And, to tell ya the truth, I don't wanna polish this bottle off, myself.

Jason clears his throat as he points up at the video camera.

Heather looks back at the camera.

HEATHER

Don't worry 'bout it. Hasn't worked in years.

(Smiles)

Still wards off predators, though.

Heather pours them each a drink.

Jason sips his as Heather downs hers.

HEATHER
Not a drinker?

JASON
Not really.

HEATHER
That's cool. The second one always
goes down easier, anyway.

Heather pours them another round.

They finish their shots together.

Jason's cell phone dings. He quickly checks the message then
puts the phone away.

Heather's expression turns sour.

HEATHER
Girlfriend?

JASON
How'd you guess?

HEATHER
Didn't you know? We got intuition
about these things.

JASON
She told me something similar.

Heather chuckles.

HEATHER
The ship's sinking, though, isn't
it?

JASON
What makes you say that?

HEATHER
Well, you're here.

JASON
Yeah, but she kinda... asked me to.

HEATHER
Hmm. Sounds like my kind a' girl.

Jason gives a fake smile and chuckles.

JASON

Do you ever... I mean, if you love someone, but you hate how they make you feel...

HEATHER

Why stay with them?

JASON

Basically.

HEATHER

I'm the worst person you should talk to for advice, man. My last BF, serial cheater. No family 'cept for my sister and we ain't talked in years.

JASON

Say, for argument's sake, that that's all moot.

Heather downs another shot.

HEATHER

If she's a ball and chain instead of a magnet, dump her. 'Less you're a Hindu, you only get one go-around in life. Why spend it with someone who makes you feel like shit?

JASON

Because I love her.

HEATHER

Hey, you don't have to tell me. If you love her, show her how to feel. Don't just recite the words. Just don't become a slave to her.

Jason nods, understanding what he must do.

JASON

Thanks for the pep talk...

HEATHER

Heather.

JASON

Yeah, I got that from the nametag. I'm Jason.

HEATHER

Good to meet ya.

Heather smiles as she scans the 12-pack.

HEATHER

Now, don't be a stranger. \$13.95.

Jason looks past Heather to the scratch tickets.

JASON

One a' them, too.

HEATHER

Which one?

JASON

Whatever's cheapest.

Heather turns and scans the tickets.

Jason pulls the pistol from his coat and aims it at her.

Heather faces Jason, holding the ticket. She sees him and drops the ticket to the ground.

JASON

I'm sorry. I need the money.

HEATHER

Jason, what are you...?

JASON

Don't call me by my name.

HEATHER

I'm sorry. But, you don't have to do this. I swear, you put the gun away and we'll both pretend like this never happened. Okay?

JASON

I can't. Gimme the money.

HEATHER

Please...

JASON

Relax. I'm not gonna hurt you. Soon as I get it, I'm gone.

Heather grabs a paper bag and fills it with the cash from the register then offers it to Jason.

Jason shakes his head as he motions with the gun.

JASON

That's not enough. I need at least three grand from the safe.

HEATHER

We don't have that much in there.

JASON

Then, gimme what you do have.

Heather won't budge. She tries staring Jason down.

JASON

Do I look like I'm fucking playing?
Are you calling the shots right now
'cause I'm pretty sure I'm the one
who's got the fucking gun!

HEATHER

All right. Just... I'll do it.

Heather kneels down and trips the silent alarm. She opens the safe and starts filling the bag one stack at a time.

HEATHER

Why are you doing this?

JASON

Doesn't matter.

HEATHER

It does matter. You could just walk away.

JASON

No, I can't. Because I love her.

Heather peeks up from the counter.

HEATHER

She's making you do this?

JASON

Hey, quit fuckin' stalling.

Heather returns to the money. In the back of the safe, behind the stacks of money, there's a revolver.

HEATHER

Why don't you just go to the cops?
I mean, she's blackmailing you,
right?...

(re: Jason's silence)

Right?

In the distance, a faint police siren.

Jason looks nervously out the window. As he does, Heather pops up with the revolver pointed at Jason.

He turns back and pushes the gun away.

They fight for control of the revolver.

JASON

Let go of the fucking gun!

HEATHER

No!

A single shot is fired from the revolver and shatters the glass on one of the coolers.

On instinct, Jason fires two shots, from his gun, at Heather. Both hit her square in the chest.

Heather steps backwards, clutching her chest, as she falls to the ground.

Jason looks horrified.

JASON

No. No, no, no, no, fuck, no!

Jason hops over the counter to check on Heather. He puts his ear to her chest and feels her neck for a pulse.

JASON

Oh, my god. I'm so sorry, Heather.
Please. Come on. Stay with me.

Heather's breathing stops. She dies.

The siren grows louder.

Jason gathers the money together and, in the confusion, takes the scratch ticket with him.

He gathers Heather's gun and his own as he hops back over the counter and rushes outside.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Jason tosses the revolver in the snow.

RANDALL (O.S.)

Hey!

Startled, Jason reaches into his coat and fires two unaimed shots at Randall.

Jason dashes towards his car and hops in.

The Tercel peels out of the parking lot and speeds away.

INT. TERCEL - NIGHT

Jason slams his hands on the steering wheel.

JASON
Fuck, fuck... FUCK!

Jason quickly texts a message.

JASON
(To himself)
The hell are you thinking?

Jason flips on his blinker and pulls around back of Dave's.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - NIGHT

Jason gets out of the car and looks around. He throws the pistol as far as he can.

The pistol lands on the far side of the parking lot.

Jason takes the paper bag off the passenger's seat.

INT. DAVE'S - MOMENTS LATER

Jason forcefully pushes the door open.

The bell dings.

Jason slams the bag of money on their table.

MATTHEW
You guys... Either you have the best timing in history or the worst timing in history.

Matthew notices Jason's Santa Claus outfit.

MATTHEW
Why?... No, you know what? I'm not even gonna ask. I don't care.

Matthew checks out the bag --

Several thousand dollars in messy, assorted bills. The scratch ticket rests on top.

MATTHEW

Go ahead, Romeo. Scratch away.

Jason glares at Matthew, infuriated. He sighs as he scratches the ticket with his nail.

The numbers he scratched read 12, 7 and 19, same as on the top of the ticket, signifying he won \$250,000.

JASON

Nothin'.

Jason casually slips the ticket in his pocket.

MATTHEW

Well, knock me over with a feather.

Matthew rolls up the bag.

MATTHEW

I was really hoping for two stacks of neatly-arranged bills, but, you know... Best laid plans and all, I'm gonna consider this a victory.

(To Jason)

It's been a pleasure.

(To Sasha)

It hasn't.

Matthew eases out of the booth.

SASHA

We're not done yet.

Matthew stops and glances back to Sasha.

MATTHEW

You're entitled to your opinion.

SASHA

Thank you, Jason.

Translation: "Get lost."

Jason takes the hint and leaves the diner.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - MOMENTS LATER

Jason opens the Tercel's back door and grabs a Salvation Army canister and a small bell.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - MOMENTS LATER

Jason sets the canister up and starts ringing the bell.

The bell above the front door chimes.

Maggie heads down the steps as she pulls a pack of cigarettes from her apron.

Jason can't help but keep his eye on her.

Maggie offers. He declines.

MAGGIE

I know whatcha mean.

JASON

You can quit. You just have to want to.

MAGGIE

I did quit. Years ago. But, you never really quit.

Maggie sighs as she takes a long drag.

JASON

Bad day?

MAGGIE

Christmas always takes a toll.

JASON

No family?

MAGGIE

(Shakes her head)

Not anymore. Lemme tell ya -- You got family?

JASON

Yeah, but I don't really talk to them. Bad memories.

MAGGIE

Screw the bad memories. You go back and talk to them and love 'em while they're there. 'Cause one day, they won't be there anymore and you'll be praying for the chance to see 'em one more time but you won't be able to.

JASON

That what happened to you?

The front door bell rings.

Matthew briskly walks down the steps. He pulls a cell phone from his jacket. He stops and stares Jason right in the eye.

MATTHEW

Walk away from her, kid. She's bad news and she's gonna drag you down with her. You get one warning.

Matthew doesn't give Jason the chance to respond before briskly walking away.

James' police car pulls to a stop as Matthew crosses the street in front of it.

Jason looks utterly confused by the response.

Slowly, Jason recognizes Randall in the back of James' car. He turns away so Randall can't see his face.

MAGGIE

What was that all about?

Jason covers his face until the police car pulls away.

JASON

No clue.

MAGGIE

Well, you want my three cents? He's not wrong. She's disrespectful and you can't build a solid foundation with someone like that. My son was like that. Disrespectful and very stubborn. He wanted everyone to be at his beck and call.

JASON

You're talking about him in the past tense.

MAGGIE

We haven't talked in years. That's just how it goes.

JASON

Sorry.

David comes around the side of the diner.

MAGGIE
 'Evening, sir. Grab a seat
 wherever. I'll be in, in a sec.

DAVID
 Yep.

David heads inside the diner.

MAGGIE
 Some people...

JASON
 Huh?

MAGGIE
 Instead of wearing his coat, he's
 just carrying it.

JASON
 Hyperthyroidism, maybe? Or, hypo.
 One of the two.

MAGGIE
 Hey, if Santa Claus wears a coat
 all the time, he's got no excuse.

Jason chuckles.

A group of CAROLING KIDS, with their chaperone, LENA (29),
 come down the sidewalk.

They set up shop in front of the diner.

JASON
 You got any plans to see your kid
 or talk to him?

MAGGIE
 I'd like to. But, ...
 (Scoffs)
 I don't even know where he is. No
 phone number, no forwarding
 address. He just vanished.

JASON
 That's rough.

MAGGIE
 You're tellin' me. Then, with my
 husband gone...

JASON
 Dead?

MAGGIE

(Nods)

Pancreatic cancer. We were told he had a year, but he only got five months.

(Sighs)

Sometimes, it's hard not to hate God.

JASON

But, you don't?

MAGGIE

(Shakes her head)

He's always got a plan. He's got to. I know it.

LENA

Three, two, one and...

CAROLERS

(In unison)

Hark the herald angels sing/"Glory to the newborn King!/Peace on earth and mercy mild/God and sinners reconciled"...

Jason's eyes drift over to Lena.

Lena catches him and gives a slight nod back.

Maggie glances over at Jason with a sly grin.

MAGGIE

Careful of that wandering eye, cowboy. You're lady friend's liable to get downright jealous.

CAROLERS

(In unison)

Joyful, all ye nations rise/Join the triumph of the skies...

JASON

Maybe.

MAGGIE

Don't look now, but I think she's got something going on, on the side.

Jason looks over his shoulder, through the window of the diner as David and Sasha sit together.

JASON

Huh. Maybe not.

CAROLERS

(In unison, overlaps)
 With the angelic host
 proclaim:/"Christ is born in
 Bethlehem"/Hark! The herald angels
 sing/"Glory to the newborn
 King!"...

JASON

It's not like that. He's just a...
 friend.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry. My mistake.

Maggie stubs out her cigarette.

MAGGIE

I've got to head back. Nice
 chattin' with ya.

Maggie heads back inside the diner.

CAROLERS

(In unison)
 Christ by highest heav'n
 adored/Christ the everlasting
 Lord!/Late in time behold Him
 come/Offspring of a Virgin's
 womb...

The sounds of their singing fades out as Jason pulls the
 ticket from his pocket.

JASON

(To himself)
 I don't believe it.

Jason pulls out his cell phone and texts a message:

call it off

CAROLERS

(In unison)
 Born to raise the sons of
 earth/Born to give them second
 birth/Hark! The herald angels
 sing/"Glory to the newborn King!"

The Carolers lower their papers.

LENA

Good stuff, guys. Anyone up for hot cocoa?

CAROLERS

Me!/Yeah!/I want cocoa!

LENA

Yeah, I thought so. Let's get a move on.

The Carolers walk past Jason. Lena stops by him.

LENA

I caught ya sneakin' a peek. What would Mrs. Claus think about that?

JASON

Well, she's the jealous type, so...

LENA

Gotcha by the balls?

JASON

(Smirks)

Vice grip.

Lena chuckles.

JASON

All these kids with you?

LENA

Oh, yeah. Yep, I'm a kind of broodmare for the downtrodden.

Jason doesn't seem to know how to respond to that.

LENA

It's a joke. They're actually a group of kids from down the way.

JASON

You're watching them?

LENA

Just trying to give 'em something nice. Most of 'em don't have too much of that in their lives.

Lena holds her hand out.

Jason shakes it.

LENA
I'm Lena.

JASON
Jason Houston.

LENA
Pleasure.

JASON
So, uh, what are you doing for
Christmas? Besides this?

LENA
Very little.

Lena points to herself with both thumbs.

LENA
Full-blown Heeb. Thought you could
tell by my Pinocchio-sized beak.

JASON
Now that you mention it, I was
wondering why I suddenly thought of
Toucan Sam when you came over...

LENA
Okay, that's just messed up.

They both chuckle.

LENA
It's cool, though. Just 'cause I'm
into the Tanakh doesn't mean I
can't give you New Testament boys
some love.

Jason gives a nod, almost inspired.

JASON
I'm not into the whole "man
upstairs" thing.

LENA
Meh. Nobody's perfect.

JASON
So, you doing anything after?

Lena flashes Jason her wedding band.

LENA
Just him.

Jason chuckles.

Lena drops a dollar into the canister and smiles.

LENA

Nice meeting you, Jason. Good luck
with the collection.

Lena walks away and catches up to the Carolers.

Just then, the bell rings as the front door opens.

David and Sasha walk down the stairs with their arms wrapped
around each other's backs.

Sasha flashes Jason a thumbs up.

They go around the corner of the diner.

A red 1990 Chrysler LeBaron parks in front of Jason.

Abby and Kasey get out of the car.

Kasey heads for the diner.

Abby wanders over to Jason.

Kasey turns back and stands by Abby.

Jason notes Abby's headscarf.

ABBY

Santa!

JASON

(In character)

Oh, hey, kiddo. Merry Christmas.

ABBY

(To Kasey)

Mommy, he called me "kiddo", just
like Daddy does.

KASEY

I heard him.

ABBY

Are you really Santa? You don't
look like him.

JASON

I don't? How do you know?

ABBY
You just don't.

JASON
Hmm. I like that. Well, ya got me.
I'm not Santa.

Abby's face turns sad as she looks back at Kasey who looks upset at Jason.

Jason shoots Kasey a subtle smile.

Abby looks back to Jason.

JASON
You've seen other Santas around, I know you have. At the mall or, you know, stores? Things like that?

ABBY
My Daddy does that!

JASON
See? He's helping out Santa, too. Santa may be awesome and magical and shi--stuff, but he still can't be in all places at all times. He needs helpers. Like your daddy and like me.

ABBY
Well, do you know what I want for Christmas?

JASON
Couldn't tell ya. But, if you tell me, I promise I'll make sure the big man gets the memo,...

Jason looks up to Kasey.

Kasey mouths the word "Abby".

JASON
...Abby.

Abby looks completely shocked. She turns to Kasey.

ABBY
Did you hear him, Mommy? He knows my name!

Abby turns back to Jason and whispers in his ear.

JASON

Huh. Well, Santa's got his work cut out for him. But, I'll make he knows to do his best.

KASEY

Abby, why don't you go inside and get us a table? I wanna have a word with Santa's helper.

ABBY

Okay, Mommy.

Abby runs towards the stairs.

JASON

Careful, kiddo. It's slippery.

Abby waves to Jason as she heads inside the diner.

JASON

Look, I'm sorry if I got too close. I just didn't want you to think I was some kind a' creep.

KASEY

No, you seem good with kids.

JASON

If you don't mind me asking, how long has your daughter been...?

KASEY

Sick?

(re: Jason's nod)

Four months. This time.

Kasey turns away and quietly sobs.

JASON

You don't have to be ashamed. I understand.

Kasey faces Jason as she wipes away her tears.

KASEY

No. You don't. And, I'll praise God every day for every person who doesn't understand.

JASON

How much does all that treatment stuff cost?

KASEY

Too much.

They stand, briefly, in silence.

KASEY

I should go. She's probably wondering where I am.

Kasey turns back to the diner.

Jason feels around his pocket.

JASON

Wait.

Kasey turns back to Jason who holds out the ticket.

JASON

Take it.

KASEY

What?

JASON

Just... take it.

Kasey reads at the ticket. She realizes it's a winner.

KASEY

I'm not taking that from you.

JASON

You should.

Jason gently takes Kasey's hand and gives her the ticket.

JASON

I don't want it.

KASEY

Why?

JASON

Doesn't matter. Just use it to help your kid.

Kasey's ticket hand starts to shake.

The front door bell rings.

ABBY (O.S.)

Mom, are you coming?

They turn to see Abby peeking out from the diner.

KASEY
(Sniffles)
Yeah, baby, I'll be right there.

Abby heads back inside.

Kasey turns back to Jason.

KASEY
I, I don't know what to --

JASON
Then, don't. Don't say anything.

Kasey removes her cross necklace. She offers it to him.

KASEY
Here.

JASON
Thank you, no. It won't do me any
good, anyway.

Kasey looks confused by the response. She slaps the necklace
down in his hand.

KASEY
It's only right. Merry Christmas.

JASON
Thanks.

Kasey heads for the diner.

JASON
You know what your daughter wants
for Christmas?

Kasey stops. She looks over her shoulder.

JASON
She said she just wanted to be
normal like all the other kids.

KASEY
(Sighs)
Thank you.

Kasey goes inside the diner.

Jason looks down at the necklace. He puts it on.

David dashes around the side of the diner and goes inside.

Jason's eyes dart over as Chris' police car pulls up and parks next to the LeBaron.

Chris gets out of the car. He drops a quarter in the canister as he heads into the diner. He goes up the steps as --

David bursts through the front door with a winter coat.

Chris and David collide.

David falls down the steps, hitting his head on the pavement.

Chris looks down at David.

DAVID
God... damn.

Chris walks down the steps and holds his hand out.

CHRIS
You hurt?

DAVID
Only on the inside.

Chris hoists David up.

CHRIS
You'll be alright.

David bends down to grab the coat. He walks away.

CHRIS
(Calls out)
How are you not freezing?

David peers over his shoulder.

DAVID
I love winter.

Chris shrugs as he heads into the diner.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - MOMENTS LATER

Jason turns his attention to the back of the diner.

He creeps along the diner and peeks around the corner.

David pulls the gun from his pants and aims it right at his own chest with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth.

DAVID
Shut the fuck up!... All right,
fine. No need to get so testy, man.
Sheesh...

David takes a long drag. He turns his attention to Sasha.

DAVID
Should still be grateful,
though,... dick.

Jason can't take his focus off Sasha's body. He reaches
inside his jacket for his gun as the realization hits him:

His gun is gone.

Jason heads back for the donation canister.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

David's IROC-Z pulls around the back of the diner.

Jason watches it speed away.

As it does, Jason picks up the canister.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - MOMENTS LATER

Jason throws the canister in the back of his car. He gets
inside the car and leans his head on the wheel.

INT. TERCEL - NIGHT

A tear rolls down Jason's cheek.

JASON
(Whispers)
Fuck, Sasha.

Jason lifts his head up and rubs his hands on his face.

His expression turns furious.

JASON
FUUUUUUCK!

Jason punches the wheel as hard as he can. Over and over.

His hand shakes and bleeds from all knuckles.

Jason leans his chin on the wheel.

His focus turns towards the trash cans.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK - NIGHT

Jason gets out and slams the door behind him. He shuffles towards the trash and scrounges through it.

JASON
(To himself)
The hell were you hiding?

Jason throws several cardboard boxes out of the way.

Finally, he sees it --

Sasha's revolver, hidden under a trash bag.

Jason releases the cylinder.

Satisfied, Jason stuffs the gun inside his coat.

Jason turns back to his car with a vengeance.

FADE OUT.

Bing Crosby's "Silent Night" plays.

FADE IN:

INT. DAVE'S - NIGHT

Maggie stares down at the envelope on the counter. She rips into it to find --

A SONOGRAM of a baby girl.

Maggie puts her hand to her mouth.

With a motherly kind of love, Maggie gently runs her finger along the picture, as if touching the baby.

Maggie flips the picture over.

On the back reads --

We're naming her Maggie.

Maggie eyes the picture with love, but also regret.

FADE TO:

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE - NIGHT

Chris' corpse lies in the street.

Two Carolers run to him.

They are joined by the rest of the Carolers and Lena.

Lena bends down at his side to check his pulse. She pulls out her cell phone and dials 911.

FADE TO:

INT. DAVE'S - NIGHT

A bell dings. Maggie picks up two plates at the window.

MAGGIE

Merry Christmas, girls. Chicken fingers?

Abby raises her hand, excited.

Maggie sets each plate down for them.

KASEY

Do you know if a man come in here in the last hour or so?

MAGGIE

Hmm. I've had my share. What's your type?

KASEY

He's mid-40s, gruff...

MAGGIE

Dressed like Santa Claus?

KASEY

That's him.

MAGGIE

He was here just after six. He wanted a job application then left.

Maggie pulls Randall's sobriety coin from her apron and sets it on the table.

MAGGIE

He left this behind.

KASEY
He just left it?

MAGGIE
I believe so.

Kasey takes the coin and clutches it tight.

FADE TO:

EXT. WOODS - LATER

The IROC-Z rests in the woods.

David stands by the trunk in his short-sleeve shirt, holding his gun. He unlocks the trunk.

Sasha pops out, gasping for air.

David pulls her out of the trunk by her hair.

Sasha falls into an shallow grave David dug. She stares up at him with pleading eyes.

David aims his gun at her with cold, dead eyes.

SASHA
David, please...

David shakes his head.

DAVID
You shoulda stayed dead.

David shoots Sasha once in the head. He turns to her purse in the trunk. He grabs her phone and throws the purse on Sasha.

He takes the shovel and starts to fill in the grave.

FADE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Randall stands by a gray backdrop without his hat or beard.

James stands behind a camera tripod. He takes a picture.

Randall turns to his left.

James takes another picture.

FADE TO:

INT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Matthew sits in a chair in front of a fireplace. He picks up a glass of orange juice from an end table and takes a sip.

Two CHILDREN run into the room.

BECCA/MATT JR.

Daddy!

The first, BECCA (8), Caucasian, in polka dot pajamas, hugs Matthew around the back of his chair.

She's followed by MATT JR. (6), African-American, in light blue pajamas, who hops into the chair with Matthew.

Matthew hugs them both so tight. He looks over to the doorway and sees Lena standing there, surprised.

Lena comes over to Matthew and kisses him.

LENA

I thought you were gonna be busy with work?

MATTHEW

Surprise.

The kids run to the Christmas tree.

Lena cuddles up next to Matthew.

Matthew takes a sip of his orange juice.

The fireplace illuminates his DETECTIVE BADGE, resting on the end table, as the kids tear into their presents.

FADE TO:

INT. RANDALL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Kasey is huddled in a ball on the sofa.

Abby casually pulls presents out of her stocking.

The doorbell rings. Their attention turns to the front door.

Kasey rushes to the door and opens it.

James stands there in his police uniform.

Kasey looks puzzled. She wasn't expecting him.

James takes off his hat.

JAMES

Ma'am, I'm afraid I have some news
about your husband.

Kasey shakes her head, looking distraught.

Abby sits by herself, unsure of what's happening.

FADE TO:

INT. TERCEL - DAY

Jason's dressed in a black T-shirt and black pants. He finishes off a can of beer.

He opens the glove compartment and grabs Sasha's gun. He looks out the windshield --

His car is parked down the street from David's house.

FADE OUT.

"Silent Night" ends.

FADE IN:

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Modest. Well-furnished. Very clean. A fireplace crackles in the corner.

SUPER: 12/25

David is flopped down on the sofa, eating from a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon.

The pictures of Sasha and Chris as well as his gun are spread out on the table.

NEWS ANCHOR #1 (O.S.)

--which caps off an extraordinarily
horrific night in the small town of
Middleboro...

David flicks one of the pictures into the fire.

NEWS ANCHOR #1 (O.S.)
...where Officer DeJesus was among
a number of casualties in some kind
of crime spree...

David turns up the volume as he takes another bite.

NEWS ANCHOR #1
...which seems to have originated
with the botched robbery and murder
of a clerk at the Magnolia Liquor
store in Middleboro...

That gets David's attention.

NEWS ANCHOR #1
The clerk, Heather Harrington, was
pronounced dead at the scene.

DAVID
(Mumbles, to himself)
Sasha's sister?

David changes to a different news program.

NEWS ANCHOR #2
--details are being released,
except that the prime suspect in
the Magnolia Liquor robbery,
Randall Edwards, a 47-year-old man
from the Middleboro area, has
reportedly committed suicide while
in police custody. Officials are
releasing no further information at
this time...

A knock at the door.

David looks back to the front door. He stands up and grabs
his gun.

He grabs the remaining pictures and drops them into the fire.

Another knock. Louder, this time.

DAVID
Who is it?

David readies his gun against the door as he opens it.

Jason stands there and stares him down.

DAVID
Yeah?

David looks down and sees the gun in Jason's hand.

Jason lifts the gun and shoots David in the chest.

David steps backwards and drops his gun to the ground. He puts his hand on his chest.

Jason empties the revolver into David's chest.

David falls to the ground, dead.

Jason stares down at his lifeless corpse. He steps over David's body and sits on the sofa.

He empties the cylinder and lines up all the bullets, neatly, on the table, next to the revolver.

He leans his head back on the sofa, as if waiting for the police to arrive.

FADE OUT.

THE END.