

Christmas Story

by
Sean Chipman

Story By Sean Chipman & Robert Chipman

FADE IN:

EXT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

A typical black and white speeds through a heavy snowstorm, lights flashing, siren blaring.

It pulls to a stop in a liquor store parking lot.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR

Three police cars are already there.

Two cops; SILVIA and THOMAS, speak to a crowd of BYSTANDERS.

INT. POLICE CAR

CHRIS DEJESUS (28), clean-cut, watches the officers through his windshield.

SUPER: THE GIFT OF FAMILY

Chris turns the siren off, gets out.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR

Chris walks past several of the police cars to another police officer, JAMES ANDERSON (41), rugged, burly.

CHRIS
What'd I miss?

Chris peeks in the back of James' police car at RANDALL EDWARDS (47), haggard, in a Santa Claus outfit.

JAMES
Well, we got the perp, Randall Edwards. Clerk is Heather Harrington. She's DOA. Ambulance is en route. We recovered a .22 caliber revolver with Ruger loads but we've yet to find the money. A silent alarm call went out and this place has no working cameras and so far, no reliable witnesses.

CHRIS
The dick here already?

JAMES
He's waitin' on ya, chief.

CHRIS
That was fast. He pissed?

JAMES
I'll give ya three guesses.

CHRIS
Fuck.

INT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR - MOMENTS LATER

Chris strides in, glances at the cash register.

Blood splatter lines the wall behind it.

Chris spots AMBROZIK (52), plainclothes officer, stocky, balding, inspects a beer cooler.

The glass door has a bullet hole in it.

CHRIS
Ambrozik?

Ambrozik faces Chris.

CHRIS
Dispatch said you wanted to see me.

AMBROZIK
Didn't you call in your break?

AMBROZIK
That was for when you got back.

CHRIS
Yeah, but maybe I could stay and--

Ambrozik glares at Chris with disdain.

Chris gets the message.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR - MOMENTS LATER

Chris walks to his police car.

James' police car is gone.

INT. POLICE CAR

Chris gets in, slams the door.

EXT. POLICE CAR

The car backs up, leaves the liquor store behind.

INT. POLICE CAR

Chris admires the decorated houses.

His eyes shift between the rearview mirror and the road.

Chris stops at a red light, gazes in the mirror.

The light turns green but he's oblivious.

Chris pulls a quarter from his pocket.

CHRIS

Heads, you do it. Tails, you don't.

Chris flips the quarter on the passenger's seat. Heads. He glares at the quarter.

CHRIS

Two outta three.

Chris flips the quarter. Heads.

CHRIS

Shit.

Chris makes a left at the intersection, comes upon a '50s-style diner, appropriately decorated for Christmas.

He parks out front, next to a red 1990 Chrysler LeBaron.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT

Chris sees a Salvation Army Santa, JASON HOUSTON (26), in front of the diner.

A donation canister next to Jason.

Jason stops ringing his bell when Chris looks at him.

Chris tips his hat at Jason who returns a cautious wave.

CHRIS
Merry Christmas.

JASON
You too.

Chris pulls out a \$5 bill, puts it inside the cannister.

JASON
Thanks.

CHRIS
Yep.

Chris smiles at Jason then walks up the steps to the front door, slips on them.

He catches himself, looks down at a bit of ice on the steps.

In front of Chris, a man in a short sleeve shirt, DAVID CARLISLE (26), bursts through the front door.

David crashes into Chris, falls to the ground.

Chris looks down at David.

David lays flat on his back with a purse at his side.

DAVID
Shit.

Chris walks down the steps, holds his hand out.

CHRIS
You okay, man?

David takes his hand, gets up.

DAVID
Yeah.

CHRIS
Take it easy next time, all right?

David regains his composure.

DAVID
Will do.

David bends down, grabs the purse, starts to walk away.

CHRIS
Hey.

David stops, glances at Chris.

CHRIS
Aren't you cold without a jacket?

DAVID
It's not that cold.

Chris shrugs, walks in the diner.

INT. DAVE'S

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

The diner is empty except for an aged woman in a green and red apron, MAGGIE DEJESUS (62) and a MOTHER and DAUGHTER sitting in a booth by the window.

Maggie writes in a little flipbook.

Chris walks to the counter, steps on a crumpled up piece of paper on the ground. He picks it up, throws it in the trash.

He takes his hat off, hangs it atop a coat rack next to the front door then sits at the counter.

Maggie, immersed in her writing, doesn't see Chris.

MAGGIE
'Evening, hon. What can I get--

Maggie looks up, sees Chris staring back at her.

The sight of him stops Maggie completely.

MAGGIE
Christopher?

Chris gives an apprehensive smile.

CHRIS
Hi, Mom.

Maggie finishes writing, sets the notepad on the counter.

MAGGIE
What are you doing here?

CHRIS
I was on my break and I figured I'd come and see how you were doin'.

MAGGIE

I'm doing good these days.

The roar of an engine gets Chris' attention.

Chris turns, looks out the window.

A black 1987 Chevy Camaro IROC-Z leaves the diner.

Chris turns to Maggie.

MAGGIE

When did you decide to be a cop?

CHRIS

(Thinks)

I've been one... going on four years, now.

MAGGIE

That's wonderful, Christopher. But you didn't come here to tell me that you became a cop.

CHRIS

Maybe I did.

MAGGIE

Did you?

Chris looks away, embarrassed. He clears his throat.

CHRIS

So, how are you? I mean, really?

MAGGIE

Things have been pretty much the same since you left.

CHRIS

(Clarifies)

Moved out.

Maggie looks away from Chris, exhales deeply.

Chris glances over at a small, green piece of construction paper, shaped like a tree, on the wall.

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

CHRIS

You didn't wanna go with a real tree?

Maggie admires the paper tree.

MAGGIE

This is a real tree.

CHRIS

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

ABBY (O.S.)

I want chicken fingers.

KASEY (O.S.)

Wait your turn, Abby.

Chris turns, looks at the mother and daughter in the booth behind him.

The mother; KASEY EDWARDS (47), tall, brunette and the daughter; ABBY EDWARDS (8), bald, wears a head scarf.

Kasey makes eye contact with Chris.

They share a nod.

Chris turns his attention back to Maggie.

MAGGIE

Be honest. Why are you really here?

CHRIS

I guess I just wanted to say Merry Christmas.

MAGGIE

Thank you, Christopher. Merry Christmas to you, too. Now that you've said it, you want me to fix you something to eat?

CHRIS

No, that's cool. I ought to get going soon anyway.

MAGGIE

Well, it was nice to see you again. That is, unless you have something you'd like to say to me.

Chris glares at Maggie, visibly upset.

CHRIS

Is this about dad?

MAGGIE
It's about everything.

CHRIS
I can't take it back, Mom. What's done is done.

MAGGIE
Is that an apology?

CHRIS
He had cancer. I mean, what did you expect me to do about it?

MAGGIE
I didn't expect you to just walk out on us, that's for sure.

CHRIS
Did I give him cancer? Did I kill him? Was it my fault?

MAGGIE
No, Christopher, it wasn't your fault. It wasn't anybody's. In the end, your father just wanted to see you.

Maggie sighs, puts her hand on Chris' shoulder.

MAGGIE
You didn't even come back for his funeral.

CHRIS
Yeah, I know. I couldn't.

MAGGIE
He wanted you to, you know.

A tear rolls down Maggie's cheek which she wipes off.

MAGGIE
You just walked out one day. So, why? Why come back?

CHRIS
Because I'm your son.

MAGGIE
You are my son and I will always love you. But, I can't do this. Christopher, I don't want to see you again.

Chris looks away, heartbroken. He pulls a yellow envelope from the inside of his jacket.

Written on the front is "MOM".

Chris sets the envelope on the counter, eases it towards her then walks to the coat rack.

Maggie looks inside the envelope.

A Christmas card with a picture of a snowman next to a Christmas tree. The words "Merry Christmas".

Chris grabs his hat off the rack, glances at Maggie.

Maggie opens the Christmas card.

Inside is an old Polaroid of a younger Chris and his parents standing behind a birthday cake.

At the bottom reads "2000. Me, mom and dad at my 16th".

Maggie flips the picture over, reads the back.

In better handwriting, "My favorite picture. We were all so happy back then. Merry Christmas - Chris."

Maggie looks up but Chris is already gone.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT

Chris hurries down the stairs.

Neither Jason nor the cannister is there anymore but Chris doesn't care to notice.

INT. POLICE CAR

Chris pulls out onto the street, stops at a red light. He slams his fist on the steering wheel.

CHRIS

Stupid, stupid. Why didn't you apologize?

Chris looks at Dave's in the rearview mirror.

The light turns green.

Chris nods; his mind made up. He begins a U-turn as the IROC-Z speeds through the intersection.

He slams on the brakes, his eyes follow the IROC-Z down the street then he checks back to the diner.

His finger taps rapidly on the steering wheel as he decides what to do.

Chris grabs the CB radio, puts it to his mouth.

CHRIS
This is Unit 20. I'm currently in
pursuit of a black Camaro on
Palmetto. Over.

Chris turns on the siren, chases after the IROC-Z.

After a block, the IROC-Z eases to a stop.

Chris turns the lights and siren off. He grabs the CB radio.

CHRIS
I got the plates on that Camaro. 7-
4-7-9-K-R.

DISPATCH
(Over CB)
Ten-four, Unit 20.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE

Chris gets out, approaches the IROC-Z. He turns on his flashlight, peers in the driver's side window.

David, who smiles nervously, sits in the driver's seat.

CHRIS
License and registration?

DAVID
Hey officer. Long time, no see.

Chris shines the flashlight in David's face.

DAVID
We, uh, ran into each other outside
Dave's.

Chris looks at David with a stone-faced glare.

CHRIS
Twice. Apparently.

DAVID
Right, yeah.

Chris sports an impatient look.

DAVID
Oh, right. My license and, uh...
other thing.

David hands the license and registration to Chris.

Chris takes them, uses the flashlight to read.

DAVID
(Under his breath)
Shut up.

Chris shines the flashlight in David's face.

CHRIS
What was that?

DAVID
I'm sorry, officer. Not you. There
was this thing at work and, um...
I'll hang up.

CHRIS
I'd appreciate it.

David grabs the phone off the passenger's seat, pushes "End".

CHRIS
It's gotta be tough, workin' on
Christmas Eve.

DAVID
Must be twice as hard on you.

Chris shoots David a "touché" look. He shines the flashlight throughout the car.

The light shines upon a miniature shovel in the back seat.

CHRIS
So, you wanna tell me why you ran
that light?

DAVID
I, um... my girlfriend was in an
accident... and I was going to see
her at the hospital. To see her.

CHRIS
So, why were you coming from that
direction?

David pauses, tries to devise an answer.

DAVID
Why was I what?

CHRIS
When you left the diner, you went
away from the hospital. Why didn't
you just go straight there?

David shakes his head.

DAVID
The--I got the call after I got
home. They left me a message. The
hospital. So, I'm going there now.

CHRIS
Mmm.

Chris shuts the flashlight off.

CHRIS
Stay here. This'll take a minute.

DAVID
Sure thing.

Chris proceeds back to the police car when something in the snow catches his eye.

He bends down behind the trunk of the IROC-Z, spots several droplets of blood in the snow.

Blood drips off the bumper.

Just then, David pops around the driver's side.

Chris draws his sidearm.

David fires two shots before Chris can.

Chris falls, bleeds from the chest and throat. He clutches his neck wound.

With his other hand, Chris reaches for his gun but can't.

David stands over Chris, a look of sorrow in his eyes as he raises the gun up, aims it at Chris' head.

DAVID
Sorry.

David shoots Chris in the head.

The slide on the gun pulls back.

David hangs his head in shame, the gun still pointed at Chris' corpse.

He comes to his senses, reaches down, grabs his license and registration from the snow, runs to his car.

The IROC-Z speeds away as the blood around Chris' corpse changes the snow from white to red.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. IROC-Z - NIGHT

David stares at himself in the rearview mirror; a Bluetooth earpiece in his right ear.

A wrapped Christmas present rests in the passenger's seat.

David glances at it, smiles, gets out.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK

David slams the door then blows into his hands, looks around.

SUPER: NOTHING IMPORTANT HAPPENED TODAY

David puts his hands in his pockets, shuffles through the snow when his foot kicks a black object.

He bends down to pick it up, inspects it closer. He checks to see if anyone's looking, puts the object in his jacket.

He walks around the side of the diner when he sees a group of CAROLERS (ages 6-10) approaching Dave's.

LENA (27), kind face, tall, brunette, leads the carolers.

David pays no attention to them as he makes a bee line for the front door.

DAVE'S - FRONT

David ascends the steps, opens the front door.

INT. DAVE'S

David looks around, for someone specific. He spots SASHA HARRINGTON (25), blonde, petite, teary-eyed in the corner.

Sasha coyly waves at David which brings him to her.

SASHA
Hey.

DAVID
Hey.

David bends down, kisses her cheek. He takes his jacket off, sets it next to him in the booth.

DAVID
You order yet?

SASHA
(Sniffles)
Just coffee while I was waiting.

DAVID
You all right?

SASHA
Yeah. It's fine.

David stares at Sasha with disbelief.

SASHA
It's nothing.

Maggie walks to their table.

Outside, the carolers sing "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing".

MAGGIE
(To David)
Can I get you started with
something to drink tonight?

DAVID
I'll take a coffee, too.

MAGGIE
(To Sasha)
And, can I re-fill yours while I'm
at it?

SASHA
I'm fine, thanks.

Maggie walks away.

DAVID
So, what did you do today?

SASHA
I kinda wanted to invite my sister
over for Christmas. Are you cool
with that?

DAVID
Yeah, why not? I like her. Is she
working tonight or what?

SASHA
Probably.

DAVID
I think liquor stores are open
everyday.

David grabs a handful of sugar packets from the dispenser.

DAVID
I got you a present.

SASHA
You did?

DAVID
It's in the car.

Maggie walks over, sets a cup of coffee in front of David.

DAVID
Thank you.

David tears open a sugar packet, dumps it in the cup.

MAGGIE
How about some food for you two?

The carolers finish their song.

David pours another sugar packet into the cup.

DAVID
I was hoping to be able to make a
Christmas dinner at home.

MAGGIE
That should be lovely.

DAVID
I don't know yet.
(To Sasha)
You wanna?

Sasha shrugs, shakes her head.

David dumps a third packet into the coffee, stirs it. He takes a sip.

Sasha sets her arms on the table, puts her head in her hands.

Maggie notices the diamond ring on Sasha's ring finger.

MAGGIE
That's a lovely ring.

Sasha looks down at the ring.

SASHA
(Smiles)
Oh, thank you.

MAGGIE
When's the wedding?

SASHA
March.

MAGGIE
Do you have a honeymoon planned?

SASHA
We're gonna take a cruise.

MAGGIE
Oh, that's really nice.

Sasha smiles at David who looks dismayed.

DAVID
You know, I think we are gonna eat
at home.

MAGGIE
That's fine.

DAVID
(To Sasha)
You wanna go now?

SASHA
Yeah, let's go.

DAVID
How much do I owe you for the
coffees?

Maggie looks to Sasha who makes direct eye contact with her.

MAGGIE
(To David)
Two coffees, two dollars.

DAVID
Simple enough.

David hands Maggie a \$5 bill.

DAVID
Keep it.

MAGGIE
Well, thank you both very much and
you have a Merry Christmas.

DAVID
Thank you. You, as well.

David and Sasha slide out from the booth.

Sasha makes her way to the door, leans into Maggie's ear as she passes.

SASHA
(Whispers)
Thank you.

David keeps his eye on Sasha the whole way. He puts his coat on, feels his cell phone vibrate. He answers it.

DAVID
Hello?

VINCENT (O.S.)
David, what the hell are you doing?

Sasha watches David from the door.

David waves to her.

DAVID
Not now, Vincent. We'll talk later.

VINCENT (O.S.)
But, you know what you gotta--

David hangs up, walks to Sasha.

They leave the diner together.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT

They walk down the steps with caution.

SASHA
So, who was that?

DAVID
Wrong number.

DAVE'S - BACK - MOMENTS LATER

They come upon David's IROC-Z.

Sasha looks at David.

SASHA
The old white trash Corvette.

DAVID
You always hate on my car. It's a classic.

SASHA
Yeah. A classic piece of shit.

Sasha hums the beginning of "Sweet Home Alabama". She walks to the passenger's side, reaches for the door.

DAVID
Wait. My present's in there.

SASHA
Yeah, you told me.

DAVID
But, I want you to open it here.

SASHA
David, it's, like, twenty degrees out here.

DAVID
I promise it'll be worth it.

SASHA
Why can't we just open it at home?
We're only, like, a block away.

DAVID
Just trust me. I'll bring it over
to the trunk.

SASHA
Fine.

Sasha stops at the trunk, blows in her hands. She glances at David's bumper sticker "We All Go A Little Mad Sometimes".

David opens the passenger's side door, grabs the present. He walks to the trunk, sets it on top.

DAVID
Okay, go for it.

Sasha looks at David before picking the present up. She shakes it, hears a muffled glass sound.

David raises his eyebrows in anticipation.

Sasha tears through the wrapping paper. Underneath is a white cardboard box.

David casually looks around, sees no one in sight.

Sasha lifts off the top of the box, looks at David, puzzled.

SASHA
I don't get it.

DAVID
You know, I didn't get it, either.
Not at first anyway.

David reaches in the box, pulls out a pair of men's underwear and an empty beer bottle. He holds one in each hand.

DAVID
I found these stashed under our
bed. How anyone can forget their
underwear is beyond me, even if
you're in a hurry.

David tosses the underwear back at Sasha who catches it.

DAVID
Oh, don't worry. I washed them so
you can get them back to your
little fucktoy in mint condition.

David drops the beer bottle into the box.

DAVID

You've never been one to hit the bottle, Sasha.

SASHA

It is mine. I was celebrating, all right?

DAVID

I bet you were. You wanna tell me how long ago you started wearing guy's underwear?

SASHA

Look, David, I know what you're thinking and it's not that.

DAVID

Tell me, then. What am I thinking?

SASHA

David, I don't know what you want me to say.

DAVID

I want to hear the truth.

David reaches into his jacket, pulls out a silenced handgun, points it at her chest.

DAVID

I want you to be honest with me for once.

Sasha looks horrified as her focus remains on the gun.

SASHA

Okay, it's true. I found another guy and it was this one-time thing.

The gun starts to quake in David's hand.

SASHA

You came home from work early so he had to slip out in a hurry and I tried to hide the stuff from you. But, I-I-I've broken it off with him, I swear to you. I decided I'd rather be with you.

David slowly lowers the gun to his side.

SASHA

I love you, David.

David steps forward, hugs Sasha.

Tears roll down each of their cheeks.

DAVID
God, I love you so much.
(Whispers)
I just wish I could trust you.

Sasha gasps as David fires a shot into her side.

David holds her tight as more tears stream down his cheek. He lowers her body to the ground as she stops breathing.

His cell phone vibrates which he answers after several rings.

DAVID
Hello?

VINCENT (O.S.)
Smooth move.

David stares down at Sasha's lifeless body.

VINCENT (O.S.)
You okay, pal?

DAVID
Do I sound okay?

VINCENT (O.S.)
You sound like you just killed
somebody.

David doesn't respond.

VINCENT (O.S.)
I know this probably isn't what you
want to hear right now, but you've
got to get going.

DAVID
I know.

David reaches under Sasha's arms, lifts her up.

DAVID
Wait. No.

VINCENT (O.S.)
No what?

DAVID
Her purse. She didn't have it.

VINCENT (O.S.)
You gotta get it. Make it snappy.
Just try and stay calm.

DAVID
Do my best.

David runs from the car.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Red light, David.

DAVID
What's wrong?

VINCENT (O.S.)
Aside from the pint of blood on the
front of your jacket?

DAVID
Shit.

David whips the jacket off, throws it atop Sasha's corpse.

DAVE'S - FRONT

David runs up the stairs, stops at the front door, composes himself, casually opens the door.

INT. DAVE'S

Maggie stands behind the counter, cleans a glass. She watches David with a simple grin.

David checks the coat rack.

MAGGIE
Forget something?

David turns to Maggie, smiles as he makes his way to her.

Maggie reaches under the counter, pulls out a black purse.

DAVID
Oh, you're a life saver.

MAGGIE
I'm just glad you hadn't left yet.

DAVID
Me too.

Maggie chuckles.

DAVID
Thank you so much.

David glances at Abby and Kasey at a booth to David's right.

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

VINCENT (O.S.)
Tick tock, David.

DAVID
(To Maggie)
Merry Christmas.

MAGGIE
Thank you. You, too.

David turns, bursts through the front door.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT

David collides with Chris. He slips on the stairs, falls to the pavement.

DAVID
Shit.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Two points.

Chris walks down the steps, holds out his hand.

CHRIS
You okay, man?

David takes his hand, stands up.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Of all the people in the fucking
world...

DAVID
Yeah.

CHRIS
Take it easy next time, all right?

David regains his composure.

DAVID

Will do.

David bends down, grabs the purse, starts to walk away.

CHRIS

Hey.

David stops, glances at Chris.

CHRIS

Aren't you cold without a jacket?

DAVID

It's not that cold.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Yeah, you see I'm not wearing a jacket because it's covered in my ex-fiancé's blood, officer.

Chris shrugs, walks up the steps.

David spots Jason giving him an icy stare.

DAVID

What?

Jason looks away, continues to ring the bell.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Not now, man.

DAVE'S - BACK

David runs to the back of the car, hastily unlocks the trunk. He bends down, grabs Sasha's shoulders, lifts her body up.

Just then, David hears a loud bang, like sheet metal.

David freezes, looks in the direction of the sound, sees nothing. He heaves Sasha's body into the trunk.

Sasha's foot hangs out over the edge.

David fits it in then reaches down, picks up his jacket, throws it atop her corpse. He stops, stares at her corpse.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Now what?

DAVID

I'm saying a silent prayer for her.

VINCENT (O.S.)
For her? She cheated on you, David.

DAVID
This was wrong.

VINCENT (O.S.)
This is wrong? I got some bad news for ya, David, but there's no going back now. You made your decision. Live with it.

DAVID
I should've just left her.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Now is not the time to regret. Now's the time to worry about going to jail.

DAVID
Why is it every time you and I talk, I end up hating you?

VINCENT (O.S.)
I'm not here to be your fuckin' friend, David. I'm here to make sure you stay safe and preferably outta jail.

DAVID
Fuck you, Vincent.

David slams the trunk, gets in the car. He pulls out from behind the diner, turns onto the street.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE

The car turns left at an intersection, drives for two blocks before turning left onto a side street.

It pulls into the third house on the right.

INT. IROC-Z

David leans his head back on the seat.

VINCENT (O.S.)
C'mon, buddy. You're only halfway there.

DAVID

I know that. I'm taking a moment to think. Is that okay with you?

VINCENT (O.S.)

David, I'm sorry to tell you but that time has long since passed. Now, your job is to get rid of her.

David hides the handgun under the passenger's side seat. He steps out of the car, leaves it running.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE

David opens a chain link fence gate, into the backyard, opens the door to a large shed.

INT. SHED

David searches for something specific.

DAVID

I don't even have a shovel.

VINCENT (O.S.)

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

DAVID

Well, I don't fuckin' see one.

David throws assorted gardening equipment out of the way.

VINCENT (O.S.)

It's there. Focus.

Under a dusty shelf unit, David spots a utility shovel sticking out, grabs it.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

David runs back to the car, hops inside.

INT. IROC-Z

David throws the shovel in the back, puts his seatbelt on.

He looks at himself in the rearview mirror then angles it away so he can't see himself.

DAVID
She can't even get a proper burial.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Well, she can. You just wouldn't be able to attend because you'd be in jail.

DAVID
Just leave me alone.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE

The IROC-Z backs out of the driveway, stops at the end of the street, ready to turn right.

INT. IROC-Z

David rests his hands on the steering wheel, puts his chin down on top of them.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Why are you so upset? It's not that big a deal.

DAVID
Why am I so upset? After what you made me do?

VINCENT (O.S.)
Me? I didn't tell you to kill her. I merely gave it as a viable option. You're the one who took my advice to heart.

David finally takes his head off his hands, turns onto the main road, cruises at the speed limit.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Did I ever tell you to kill that bitch? Name one time.

David doesn't respond.

VINCENT (O.S.)
See? You know I didn't. I really did want it to work out.

DAVID
(To himself)
I wonder who the other guy was. What he has that I don't.

VINCENT (O.S.)
I could think of a couple things.

DAVID
Don't even say it's money, because
I have money. It's gotta be
something else.

VINCENT (O.S.)
If you wanna know who, check her
phone. I'm sure the guy's in there.

DAVID
Finally, you suggest something of
any discernible value.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE

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

Chris' police car is waiting as the IROC-Z approaches.

INT. IROC-Z

David angles the rearview mirror so he can see himself,
doesn't notice the red light.

He checks over at the police car once in the intersection.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE

Chris' police car slams on its brakes in the middle of its U-
turn, just misses the IROC-Z.

INT. IROC-Z

David eases off the gas, checks in the rearview mirror.

DAVID
Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck. Fuck!

VINCENT (O.S.)
Relax, buddy. Just take it easy.

Chris turns his lights and siren on, chases David.

DAVID
Oh, my god. This cannot be
happening to me.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Just play it cool and you'll get
outta this.

David slams his hand down on the steering wheel, pulls over
to the side of the road.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Just stay calm, David. You're not
gonna go to jail.

DAVID
I ran a red light in front of a
fucking cop!

VINCENT (O.S.)
Let me make this a little simpler
for you. You are not going to jail.

David rolls his window down, reaches in his pocket, pulls out
his cell phone and wallet. He sets the phone on the seat.

He takes his license out, reaches in the glove compartment,
grabs his registration.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Just relax. Big deep breaths.

David does as he's told, forces a nervous smile.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Remember, it's Christmas and you
have nothing to hide.

DAVID
Besides running a light and killing
my fiancé?

VINCENT (O.S.)
Just relax.

DAVID
I am relaxing, okay? Just let me
take care of this.

Chris walks up to the driver's side window, shines his
flashlight in the car.

CHRIS
License and registration.

DAVID
Hey officer. Long time, no see.

VINCENT (O.S.)
This is all standard stuff. In and
out. No big deal.

Chris shines the flashlight in David's face.

DAVID
We, uh, ran into each other outside
Dave's.

Chris looks at David with a stone-faced glare.

CHRIS
Twice. Apparently.

DAVID
Right, yeah.

Chris sports an impatient look.

DAVID
Oh, right. My license and, uh...
other thing.

David hands the license and registration to Chris.

Chris takes them, uses the flashlight to read.

VINCENT (O.S.)
"Other thing?"

DAVID
(Under his breath)
Shut up.

Chris shines the flashlight in David's face.

CHRIS
What was that?

DAVID
I'm sorry, officer. Not you. There
was this thing at work and, um...
I'll hang up.

CHRIS
I'd appreciate it.

David grabs the phone off the passenger's seat, pushes "End".

CHRIS
It's gotta be tough, workin' on
Christmas Eve.

DAVID
Must be twice as hard on you.

Chris shoots David a "touché" look. He shines the flashlight throughout the car.

The light shines upon a miniature shovel in the back seat.

CHRIS
So, you wanna tell me why you ran that light?

DAVID
I, um... my girlfriend was in an accident... and I was going to see her at the hospital. To see her.

CHRIS
So, why were you coming from that direction?

David pauses, tries to devise an answer.

DAVID
Why was I what?

CHRIS
When you left the diner, you went away from the hospital. Why didn't you just go straight there?

DAVID
The--I got the call after I got home. They left me a message. The hospital. So, I'm going there now.

CHRIS
Mmm.

Chris shuts the flashlight off.

CHRIS
Stay here. This'll take a minute.

DAVID
Sure thing.

Chris walks away from the car.

David watches him in the rearview mirror.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Did you chit chat long enough?

DAVID
Well, if you would've left me
alone, I could've handled it
better.

David sees Chris turns his attention to the trunk.

DAVID
Vincent, he's checking the trunk.

VINCENT (O.S.)
You think he knows?

DAVID
(Whispers)
I know he does.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Then, you know what you have to do.

David pulls the silenced handgun out from under the
passenger's side seat.

He opens the driver's side door, enough to slip out.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE

David stays close to the car, to avoid detection. He pops up
with his gun drawn.

Chris draws his sidearm.

David fires two shots before Chris can.

Chris falls, bleeds from the chest and throat. He clutches
his neck wound.

With his other hand, Chris reaches for his gun but can't.

David stands over Chris, a look of sorrow in his eyes as he
raises the gun up, aims it at Chris' head.

DAVID
Sorry.

David shoots Chris in the head.

The slide on the gun pulls back.

David hangs his head in shame, the gun still pointed at
Chris' corpse.

He comes to his senses, reaches down, grabs his license and registration from the snow, runs to his car.

INT. IROC-Z

David starts the car, pulls away at a slow pace.

VINCENT (O.S.)
If you would have listened to me,
everything would've been fine.

DAVID
I was listening to you.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Without me, you were nothing, all
right? Can we agree on that?

DAVID
Maybe. But is that worse than being
a murderer?

VINCENT (O.S.)
At least you're your own man, now.
You should be thanking me.

DAVID
This is the last time we speak, you
understand me? I don't wanna hear
from you again.

VINCENT (O.S.)
You won't survive a day without me.
I hope you're prepared for that.

DAVID
I guess we'll see, won't we?

David takes the Bluetooth out of his ear, holds it close to his mouth.

DAVID
Goodbye, Vincent.

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE

David drops the Bluetooth out the window.

It lands in a patch of snow in the middle of an intersection.

The IROC-Z cruises away, leaves the Bluetooth behind.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT - NIGHT

Sasha strides along the sidewalk, a purse slung over her shoulder, without a care in the world.

SUPER: DOWN PAYMENT

Sasha sends a quick text message on her phone then pockets it. She grips the railing as she ascends the icy steps.

At the top of the steps, Randall holds the door open for her.

Sasha breezes past him.

RANDALL
(Under his breath)
Bitch.

INT. DAVE'S

Sasha looks around, spots a distinguished African-American man in the far left booth.

The man is MATTHEW WINSLOW (37), dressed in a black designer suit, sports a very impatient look.

Matthew holds a silver pocket watch in his hand which is his primary focus.

SASHA
Are you him?

Sasha looks around, sees no one besides Maggie.

SASHA
Yeah, you gotta be him. I'm Sasha
Ha--

MATTHEW
(Interrupts)
Harrington, yeah, I got that.

Sasha offers a handshake.

SASHA
I didn't catch your name.

Matthew's gaze shifts to her hand, back to Sasha's eyes.

MATTHEW

My mother taught me you should
never shake the Devil's hand.

Sasha pulls her hand away, confused.

SASHA

What?

MATTHEW

You heard me.

Sasha takes her seat at the booth, opposite Matthew.

SASHA

Wow. This isn't going well at all.

MATTHEW

You're late.

SASHA

I had some last minute shit I
needed to take care of.

Matthew closes the pocket watch, sets it on the table.

MATTHEW

My mother also said that if you
didn't have anything nice to say,
that you shouldn't say anything.

Matthew clears his throat.

MATTHEW

I believe the same holds true for
lying.

SASHA

Is there anything she didn't teach
you?

MATTHEW

Nothing I couldn't live without.
She was wonderful.

SASHA

Yet, you grew up a hitman.

Matthew glances in Maggie's direction.

Maggie isn't paying attention.

SASHA

I hated my mom. I didn't even bother going to her funeral.

MATTHEW

Good for you.

Sasha reaches in her purse. She pulls an 8x11 manila folder out, slips it to Matthew under the table.

Matthew takes the folder, drops it on the table.

MATTHEW

This isn't a Goddamn spy movie.

SASHA

Whatever.

Matthew undoes the clips on the folder. He sets a series of papers atop the table.

SASHA

Now, about your asking price. How much is it gonna set me back?

MATTHEW

Thirty-eight thousand.

Sasha coughs, taken aback by the sum.

SASHA

That's kinda more than I was hoping to spend. I was thinking somewhere closer to ten grand, at the most. You know, five or ten.

MATTHEW

Were you?

SASHA

Why not? I mean, it's like you just picked a random number out of--

MATTHEW

(Interrupts)

Twenty-five thousand plus a fifty percent mark-up for special circumstances. I rounded up.

SASHA

How about this? You get ten this time and on the next one, I make up the difference?

MATTHEW
We're not negotiating.

SASHA
Be reasonable. I'll get you your
damn money.

MATTHEW
I know I will.

Maggie walks to their booth, pulls out a notepad.

Matthew and Sasha look to Maggie.

MAGGIE
(To Sasha)
May I get you started off with
something to drink?

SASHA
I'll have a coffee.

MAGGIE
Regular or decaf?

SASHA
Regular's good.

MAGGIE
(To Matthew)
And, are you finally ready to
order?

MATTHEW
Orange juice, please.

MAGGIE
We only have pulp-free. Is that
okay?

MATTHEW
That's perfect, Maggie, thank you.

Matthew watches as Maggie walks away.

MATTHEW
So, where is my money? What am I
waiting for?

SASHA
It's coming.

MATTHEW

You didn't bring it? Tell me you're not serious.

SASHA

I've got somebody taking care of it. Relax.

Matthew checks the pocket watch. 6:06PM.

MATTHEW

I'm giving you nine minutes to get my money or I walk.

Sasha runs her hands through her hair.

SASHA

You need to catch a train or something?

MATTHEW

You were half an hour late just walking in the door. Patience is only a virtue if it's deserved.

Sasha looks deep into Matthew's eyes.

SASHA

Do you like what you do?

Matthew glares at Sasha then pauses, reflects.

MATTHEW

No.

SASHA

What I mean is, you could have been anything but you chose this.

Matthew's face stays like stone.

SASHA

So, what does it feel like to kill someone?

Maggie walks over carrying their drinks. She sets them down on the table.

Matthew's demeanor shifts.

MATTHEW

Thank you.

MAGGIE
You're very welcome.

Maggie walks away.

Matthew takes a sip of his orange juice then flashes Sasha a look of disdain.

MATTHEW
Four minutes.

SASHA
You in a hurry?

MATTHEW
I don't know about you, but it's Christmas Eve and I'd really prefer to get home before New Year's.

SASHA
It's coming.

MATTHEW
So you've said.

Sasha checks an analog clock over the front door. 6:11PM.

SASHA
You know, it just occurred to me that you didn't tell me your name.

Sasha hints a smile as the subject shifts.

MATTHEW
(Sarcastic)
You're very astute.

Sasha waits for Matthew to elaborate.

SASHA
So, what do I call you?

MATTHEW
Call me whatever you want.

SASHA
How about "asshole"?

MATTHEW
(Disinterested)
Whatever you want.

Matthew glances at his pocket watch.

Maggie pulls out a pack of cigarettes.

MAGGIE

Y'all mind if I head out for a
smoke real quick?

Matthew shakes his head.

SASHA

No.

MAGGIE

Okay. If you need somethin', just
holler. I'll be around.

Maggie leaves.

SASHA

There's something I've been wanting
to ask you.

MATTHEW

Once again, congratulations.

SASHA

Where do you go to learn how to be
a professional killer?

Matthew glares at Sasha as if to say, "Did you really just
ask me that?"

SASHA

I mean, it's not like they have
some hitman colleges around here.

MATTHEW

I didn't bother with college.

SASHA

I did. That's probably why you work
for me.

MATTHEW

What did you learn?

SASHA

That there's two ways to a guy's
heart. Through his wallet... and
through his pants.

MATTHEW

That's what I figured.

Sasha scoffs angrily at Matthew.

SASHA
What's your fuckin' problem?

MATTHEW
What, honestly?

SASHA
(Sarcastic)
No. Lie to me.

MATTHEW
It's you. You as a generalization.
All you people who hire me are
exactly the same. They can't see
beyond their own blind hatred and
petty insecurities.

SASHA
Don't pretend like you know
anything about me.

MATTHEW
I know everything about you.
Everything worth knowing, anyway.

Sasha looks out the window at Maggie who takes another drag of her cigarette.

SASHA
I'm not the one who kills people
for a living.

MATTHEW
No. You're the one who pays me to
do it for you.

Sasha's cell phone vibrates. She reaches down, checks it, puts it back in her purse.

SASHA
Your money's here.

MATTHEW
Finally.

Matthew looks down at the papers.

A bell above the front door rings.

Sasha looks at Jason, dressed in his Santa Claus outfit.

Jason walks in, holds a brown paper bag. He spots them in the corner booth.

He stops at their table, throws the bag down; his face just a few inches from Matthew's.

JASON
We need to talk.

Matthew eyes Jason up and down.

MATTHEW
What's with--

JASON
Save it.

MATTHEW
You mind taking a step back?

Jason stands straight, cracks his neck.

MATTHEW
Appreciate it.

Matthew peeks inside the bag.

A mess of assorted denominations of money.

MATTHEW
You couldn't tidy it up?

JASON
Fuck you.

MATTHEW
You like to cut right to the chase,
huh? Get down to brass tacks?

Jason sits next to Sasha.

MATTHEW
Don't sit.

Jason glares at Matthew.

Matthew pulls a lottery ticket from the bag, holds it out towards Jason.

JASON
(Shrugs)
I just took what was there.

MATTHEW
Pity.

Matthew slides the ticket to Jason.

Jason glances at the ticket then back to Matthew.

MATTHEW

Go on.

Jason scratches the ticket, stares down at it.

JASON

Nothing.

MATTHEW

Surprise, surprise.

Jason pockets the ticket.

MATTHEW

Well, now that you've made yourself
useful, you can go ahead and
disappear again. We don't need you.

Jason glances at Sasha who gives him the slightest of nods.
He stands, eyes Matthew with utter distaste.

JASON

I hope that's worth it to you.

Jason leaves the diner as Maggie walks in.

SASHA

Don't mind him. Sometimes he can be
a really moody bastard.

Matthew takes a sip of his orange juice.

SASHA

So, what about the money?

MATTHEW

What about it?

Matthew glances over at Maggie, notices she walks into the
kitchen area.

SASHA

Well, does that get deducted from
your fee or somethin'?

MATTHEW

Are you serious?

Sasha shrugs.

Matthew stands, places the papers in his coat. He picks up
the bag of money in his left hand.

SASHA
Where are you going?

MATTHEW
Home. We're done.

SASHA
What do you mean, "done"?

MATTHEW
I quit.

SASHA
Are you fu--I paid you. You got
your money.

MATTHEW
It's not worth it to be tied to an
annoying, incompetent bitch like
you for the next six months.

SASHA
Well, then give me my fucking money
back!

MATTHEW
It's not your money.

SASHA
You know, I was right about you.
You are such an asshole.

MATTHEW
Better than being you.

SASHA
And, what am I?

MATTHEW
You're an insecure little gold
digger, too fucking lazy to get a
job so you spend all day in a
salon, getting your hair and nails
done 'cause your looks are the only
thing you've got going for you. You
try and hide behind this façade
that you're smart and important and
you know it all but you know no one
gives a damn about you.

Sasha's face turns to sorrow at being berated.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

You want to act big and tough but you have no power and no one who respects you so your petty hunger for money dictates that you're going to kill the only person on this planet who can actually stand being around your worthless ass. My guess is that whatever money you get from his death, you'll burn through in less than two years and you'll die a single, lonely, used-up whore.

Matthew drop two \$1 bills on the table.

MATTHEW

And, you want to know what it feels like to kill a person? It feels wrong. Like you lose a piece of your soul you can never replace.

Matthew strides out of the diner.

Sasha stares at the orange juice, awestruck. A tear rolls down her cheek.

Her hands quake as she picks up her coffee, takes a sip.

Maggie walks into the diner from the kitchen, goes to Sasha.

MAGGIE

Hon, are you okay?

Sasha sniffles, wipes away the tears.

SASHA

Yeah, I'm fine.

Maggie pulls a package of tissues from her apron, offers them to Sasha who grabs them.

SASHA

Thank you.

MAGGIE

You're very welcome, dear.

Sasha takes a tissue, wipes her eyes.

MAGGIE

Did you want me to get you fixed up with something to eat?

SASHA
No, thank you. But, if you wouldn't
mind re-filling my coffee.

MAGGIE
Sure thing.

Maggie walks away.

Sasha looks out the window, sees Matthew in the distance.

She reaches in her pocket, slips a diamond-encrusted platinum
ring on her finger.

Maggie walks to Sasha, sets the new coffee cup down.

SASHA
Thank you.

MAGGIE
'Welcome, dear.

SASHA
One other thing.

Sasha holds out a \$20 bill to Maggie.

SASHA
Can you please not mention that
anyone was here with me when my
fianc--

MAGGIE
(Interrupts)
Shh... It's okay.

Maggie eases Sasha's hand away.

MAGGIE
It's none of my business.

SASHA
You're a life saver.

Maggie grabs Matthew's orange juice and Sasha's old coffee
cup, walks away.

Sasha takes a sip then checks her cell phone.

The front door bell rings.

Sasha looks at the door.

David walks in, looks around.

RANDALL

Did you hear the news story a few months back where seventy-eight people stood in line all day to apply as a dishwasher in a fast food joint?

Barrett stares at Randall, stoic.

RANDALL

What chance do you think someone like me has out there?

BARRETT

I don't know what else to tell you. It's the Recession, man. You're lucky I could get you the Santa job. I had eight other people applying but you and I go way back.

RANDALL

What do you want me to do? What, should I knock over a bank? Spend the rest of my life praying I don't end up doing twenty-five to life?

BARRETT

That's enough, Randall.

RANDALL

Maybe it should be a liquor store. At least I'd have enough to make it back around until I find a legit day job.

BARRETT

All right, stop. You're my friend, Randall, but this was it. Maybe when Easter rolls around...

Randall stands, about to lose it.

RANDALL

That's not 'til April, Barrett.

Barrett stands, looks Randall in the eye.

BARRETT

That's all I got.

Randall takes a deep breath, tries to compose himself.

Barrett's office phone rings.

BARRETT
Excuse me a moment.

Barrett answers the phone.

BARRETT
Hello?... Hey, honey.

RANDALL
Please, just--

Barrett motions to Randall to be quiet.

BARRETT
It's nothing important. I'll be
heading home in a bit.

Randall balls his hand into a fist until his knuckles turn white. He turns, opens the door.

Barrett covers the receiver.

BARRETT
Drop off the Santa suit whenever
you get a chance. No rush.

Randall leaves, slams the door behind him.

MALL - LOBBY

Randall shuffles through the mall, head hung low.

Many of the stores' lights are off.

The last EMPLOYEES file out to the parking lot.

EXT. MALL - PARKING LOT

The few cars in it are covered in a light coating of snow.

Randall stops, watches the fluffy snow fall.

Employees file out of the store behind him, make their way to their respective cars.

Randall stops at his car; a blue 1986 Renault Alliance, unlocks the door, gets in.

INT. ALLIANCE

Randall starts the car, reaches for the ice scraper on the passenger's side floor.

EXT. MALL - PARKING LOT

Randall brushes the snow off his windshield with his sleeves.

Barrett walks out of the store, watches Randall.

BARRETT

Hey, Randy! Don't get that suit
dirty!

Randall ignores Barrett.

RANDALL

(To himself)
I said, don't call me Randy.

Barrett walks up to Randall.

BARRETT

I'm serious, man. I'll have to
charge you if you mess that suit
up.

Randall turns, holds up the scraper as if to swing it.

RANDALL

I'll tell you what. You don't like
what I'm doing to your precious
suit, bill me. Otherwise, get the
hell away from me!

Barrett eyes Randall with disappointment.

BARRETT

Merry Christmas, Randall.

Barrett tightens his collar, walks away.

Randall finishes, gets in the car.

INT. ALLIANCE

Randall sets the ice scraper on the passenger's seat, reaches into his pocket

He pulls out a sobriety coin chip, clenches it tight in his fist, drives away.

EXT. ALLIANCE

The car struggles through the snow-covered parking lot.

INT. ALLIANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Randall stops at a red light, plays with the chip.

David's IROC-Z pulls up next to him.

They lock eyes for a moment.

David turns his attention back to the red light.

The light turns green.

Randall drives straight while David turns left.

INT. ALLIANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Randall parks his car in front of Dave's, shuts it off. He clutches the coin.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT

Randall gets out, shuts the door.

INT. DAVE'S - MOMENTS LATER

Randall sits at the counter.

Maggie converses with Matthew at the far left booth.

Randall can't help but overhear.

MAGGIE

Your lady friend's running late,
huh?

MATTHEW

(Sarcastic)
Just a little.

MAGGIE

You sure you don't want something
to drink or eat while you're
waiting?

Matthew looks at Randall.

MATTHEW

No, but it looks like you got yourself a customer over there.

Maggie turns, sees Randall. She walks behind the counter, checks out Randall's outfit.

MAGGIE

Hey Santa, you're a little bit early, aren't ya?

Randall doesn't react to the joke; a sour look on his face.

RANDALL

Can I have an application?

MAGGIE

Sure can.

Maggie reaches under the counter.

MAGGIE

We're not hiring right now, though.

Randall nods, forces a smile.

RANDALL

Any chance a spot opens up?

MAGGIE

I wouldn't say it's out of the realm of possibility.

RANDALL

Got a pen?

Maggie pulls one from her apron, sets it on the counter.

MAGGIE

I'm a waitress, Mr. Kringle. That's somethin' I got plenty of.

RANDALL

Thanks.

MAGGIE

Don't be running off with that pen, now. It's one of my good ones.

Maggie turns to the kitchen.

Randall turns his attention towards the application.

He sets the coin down on the counter, starts to fill it out.

His cell phone rings. He answers it.

RANDALL
Hey, Kase.

INT. RANDALL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The room is small, cluttered with assorted knick knacks.

Kasey paces about the room.

KASEY
Hey. You comin' home?

INTERCUT BETWEEN RANDALL AND KASEY

RANDALL
In a bit. Just making a stop real quick.

KASEY
You're not at the...

A brief silence.

RANDALL
'Course not.

KASEY
You promise?

RANDALL
Always.

KASEY
I just need to hear you--

RANDALL
(Interrupts)
I promise.

KASEY
Okay. All right.

Kasey stops by the fireplace, her hands rests in front of a framed picture of Kasey, Abby and Randall.

KASEY
Did you talk to Barrett?

RANDALL

Oh, yeah.

(Sarcastic)

He had plenty of good news for me.

KASEY

What?

RANDALL

Easter.

Kasey stops, frozen, her eyes begin to tear up.

KASEY

Easter?

RANDALL

I know.

KASEY

Easter isn't for four months,
Randy.

RANDALL

Thank you for reminding me.

KASEY

Please don't speak to me like that.

Randall tries to calm his voice.

RANDALL

I'm sorry, it's just frustrating.

KASEY

We're all frustrated. But that
doesn't solve anything.

Randall pulls the phone away from his ear, looks away.

RANDALL

I'm working, okay? I'm doing what I
can with what I got.

KASEY

It's not enough!

Randall puts the phone back to his ear.

RANDALL

Kasey, I'll be home soon, okay? I
love--

KASEY
(Interrupts)
Call you back.

Kasey hangs up.

END INTERCUT

Randall hangs up, looks down at the application.

Only half is filled out.

Randall puts the phone in his pocket, stands up. He sets the pen on the counter next to his coin.

He crumples the application into a ball, tosses it in the trash barrel as he walks past.

The application misses, falls to the ground.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT

Randall holds the door as Sasha walks up the stairs.

Sasha breezes past him.

RANDALL
(Under his breath)
Bitch.

INT. ALLIANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Randall gets in, puts his hands on the steering wheel, lays his head down on his hands.

His cell phone rings. He answers it.

RANDALL
Hello?

KASEY (O.S.)
Hey, it's me.

EXT. ALLIANCE

The car backs into the street, stops at a red light.

INT. ALLIANCE - MOMENTS LATER

KASEY (O.S.)
Sorry about that. Abby woke up.

RANDALL
How's she doin'?

KASEY (O.S.)
Good. She wants to talk to you.

RANDALL
Well, tell her I'll be home in five
or ten minutes.

The light turns green.

Randall drives through the intersection. He comes upon
another red light, stops.

RANDALL
Hello?

ABBY (O.S.)
Hey, Daddy.

RANDALL
Oh, hey, kiddo. Merry almost
Christmas.

ABBY (O.S.)
Merry almost Christmas, Daddy.

The light turns green.

The Alliance struggles against the snow on the road.

RANDALL
Abby, can you hang on a minute?

ABBY (O.S.)
Okay.

Randall pulls into the Magnolia Liquor parking lot, parks on
the far right side of the lot.

RANDALL
Sorry about that. So, you excited
for Christmas?

ABBY (O.S.)
Yeah.

RANDALL
Do you think Santa's gonna bring
you some good stuff?

ABBY (O.S.)
Yeah.

Randall looks up, sees several ads for alcohol in the window.
He reaches in his pocket for his chip, can't find it.

ABBY (O.S.)
We're gonna go out for dinner
tonight, Daddy.

Randall searches his other pocket. Nothing.

RANDALL
We are? Where are we gonna go?
(To himself)
Where is it?

ABBY (O.S.)
Where's what?

Randall feels next to the seat, checks the floor.

RANDALL
Nothing, sweetie. Where do you want
to go tonight?

ABBY (O.S.)
The Silver Twinkie.

RANDALL
That's sounds...
(Realizes)
That's where I left it.

ABBY (O.S.)
Left what?

RANDALL
Nothing. Can you put your mother
back on, please?

ABBY (O.S.)
Okay. Bye, Daddy. I love you.

RANDALL
I love you, too, Abby.

KASEY (O.S.)
Randy?

RANDALL
She wants to eat at Dave's tonight?

KASEY (O.S.)
Yeah, she has her heart set on it.
And, I'm sorry. I know we're short
on money but--

RANDALL
No, it's fine. I was actually just
in there so I'll go back and meet
you there.

The sound of a gunshot.

Randall looks around, startled. He scans the area, wonders if
he heard right.

KASEY (O.S.)
All right. I love you.

RANDALL
Yeah, love you, too.

Randall tosses the phone in the passenger's seat. He opens
the door, puts his leg out.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR

Randall looks around.

In the distance, the wail of a police siren.

Randall leans on the car door, about to get back in.

Jason emerges from the liquor store, carries a brown paper
bag. He tosses a revolver in the snow.

RANDALL
Hey!

Randall chases after Jason.

On instinct, Jason turns, fires two shots from the silenced
handgun in the snow near Randall.

Randall drops to his knees to avoid the shots.

Jason continues around the side of the store.

The police siren is really close now.

Randall sees the .22 caliber revolver in the snow.

Jason backs out of the parking lot, speeds away.

A police car approaches Randall, kneeling in the snow.

The police car pulls to a stop; its tires squeal.

James gets out of the police car, sees the revolver in the snow next to Randall. He draws his gun on Randall.

JAMES

Freeze!

Randall stays put, throws his hands up.

JAMES

On your stomach!

Randall stays on his knees, completely frozen.

RANDALL

He's leav--

JAMES

(Forceful)

On your stomach!

Randall does what he's told.

RANDALL

It wasn't me.

James approaches, cautious. He kicks the gun away from Randall, places a knee on Randall's back.

JAMES

Gimme your hands!

James handcuffs Randall.

Two more police cars arrive; their sirens equally loud.

James stands Randall up, walks him to his police car.

RANDALL

Listen, officer, it wasn't me.
There was another guy.

Thomas and Silvia exit one police car.

Ambrozik gets out of an unmarked police car. He goes directly inside the liquor store.

JAMES
(To Silvia)
There's a gun in the snow.

Silvia retrieves the gun.

James places Randall in the back of his police car.

INT. POLICE CAR

Randall hangs his head in shame.

JAMES
What's your name?

RANDALL
Randall. Edwards.

Thomas and Silvia inspect the front of the parking lot.

RANDALL
Officer, listen to me. I wasn't
here robbing this place. There was
some other guy here.

JAMES
What's your name?

RANDALL
Randall. Randall Edwards.

Thomas goes inside the liquor store.

JAMES
All right, Randall. Can you
describe this guy? Can you tell me
anything useful about him?

RANDALL
He was...

Randall pauses, chuckles as he shakes his head.

JAMES
What?

Randall looks James dead in the eye.

RANDALL
He was dressed like Santa Claus.

Randall looks down, ashamed.

Thomas walks out of the liquor store.

THOMAS

James, the clerk's down. She's
already gone. I put the call in.

JAMES

All right.

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 claiming there's another
guy out there dressed like Santa
and you just happened to be here
when we arrived? Just tell me
something I can believe.

RANDALL

Don't call me Randy.

James nods ever-so slightly, slams the door.

Randall looks down at the floor.

Just then, Chris walks up to the side of the police car,
converses with James.

Randall pays no attention to the cops outside the window.

MOMENTS LATER

James gets in the car, looks at Randall in the mirror.

JAMES

Randall, I want you to be straight
with me, all right?

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR

The police car pulls onto the street, stops at a red light.

INT. POLICE CAR

James glances at Randall in the back seat.

RANDALL
Would you believe me if I said I
didn't do it?

JAMES
That's not my call.

RANDALL
Humor me.

The light turns green.

The police car drives through the intersection, takes a left
in front of Dave's, eases to a stop.

Matthew crosses at the crosswalk in front of the police car.

JAMES
I guess I'd have to say no.

RANDALL
Then, does it matter?

James considers this.

Randall looks out the window, watches as Jason rings his bell
in front of Dave's.

Jason and Randall lock eyes.

Randall scoffs, lays his head down on the window.

The police car cruises past Dave's.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR - NIGHT

A gray 1986 Chevy Cavalier is parked on the side of the lot.

INT. CAVALIER

Jason blows into his hands, to keep warm.

The Santa hat and beard rest in the passenger's seat.

Jason's cell phone dings. He reaches in his coat, checks the
new text message.

ON JASON'S CELL PHONE

The text reads:

"Stick to the plan."

BACK TO SCENE

Jason takes a deep breath, puts the cell phone in his pocket, grabs the hat and beard, puts them on.

He takes a pair of black gloves off the passenger's seat, slips them on before grabbing the silenced handgun from the glove compartment.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR

Jason steps out of the car in his Santa Claus outfit.

SUPER: MY LUCKY DAY

Jason looks around, nervous then opens the front door.

INT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR

The clerk, HEATHER HARRINGTON (23), petite, brunette, leans on the counter, reads a magazine.

Jason glances at Heather on his way to the coolers. He opens the door, grabs a 24-pack of beer, brings it on the counter.

Heather looks up from her magazine, offers a friendly smile.

Jason glances down at her nametag.

HEATHER

That all?

Jason looks past Heather to the lottery tickets.

JASON

A scratch ticket.

HEATHER

Which one?

JASON

Whatever's cheapest.

Jason looks out the front window.

Heather turns, looks through the tickets.

Jason pulls the silenced handgun from his jacket, points it at her back.

Heather grabs a ticket, turns, sees the gun. She puts her hands up, drops the ticket on the ground.

JASON

Relax. I don't want to hurt you. I just want the money.

Heather nods, understands.

JASON

Open the register.

Heather moves towards the register.

Jason follows her movements with the gun.

Heather grabs a paper bag, opens the register. She fills the bag with money, hands it over to Jason.

Jason shakes his head.

JASON

I need the safe money, too.

Heather shrugs, bends down to the safe. She spins the dial, opens it, stares at the money and a revolver behind it.

She grabs the stacks of money, puts them in the bag.

Jason's hand shakes as he checks out the front window.

JASON

Let's go, Heather.

Heather pauses at hearing her name. She looks up, sees Jason look out the front window. She hits the silent alarm.

Jason looks down at Heather.

Heather puts the bag on top of the counter.

Jason reaches for the bag.

As he does, Heather pops out with the revolver.

Jason grabs the gun with his free hand as they struggle.

In the struggle, the bag of money falls on the ground behind the counter.

Jason pushes Heather's arm away as the revolver fires.

The bullet shatters one of the cooler doors.

JASON

Let go of the fucking gun!

Jason pushes her arm away, fires two shots into her chest.

Heather drops her gun on the counter, clutches her chest.

Jason's face changes to shock as Heather falls down. He hops over the counter, bends down at her side, holds her hand.

Heather's breaths become shallow.

JASON

It's okay. They'll--Fuck! Don't you die on me, please! Come on, Heather. Come on back... COME ON!

Heather's body relaxes. Her breaths stop.

Jason puts his ear to her chest, checks for a pulse.

JASON

No.

Jason sits down at her side with his head in his hands.

JASON

(Quiet, to himself)
Oh, my god.

Jason looks again at Heather's corpse.

JASON

(To Heather)
Why did you pull a gun? I only wanted the fucking money!

In the distance, Jason hears an approaching police siren.

Jason puts the gun back in his coat, scrambles to his feet, gathers the money into the bag.

He runs around the counter, grabs her revolver.

EXT. MAGNOLIA LIQUOR

Jason runs outside, tosses the revolver in the snow.

RANDALL (O.S.)

Hey!

On instinct, Jason turns his head. He pulls the handgun from his jacket, fires two shots at Randall.

Randall drops to the ground.

Jason hurries to his car.

INT. CAVALIER

Jason sets the bag of money and handgun in the passenger's seat, peels out of the parking lot.

He pulls out his cell phone, hastily texts a message. He checks the road between typing.

The car speeds through a red light without any hesitation.

Jason slows down as he approaches Dave's, parks around back.

EXT. DAVE'S - BACK

Jason gets out of the car, sets the bag on the roof. He takes the handgun from his coat, throws it into the air.

The handgun lands on the other end of the parking lot.

Jason takes the bag of money, walks away from the car.

DAVE'S - FRONT

Maggie takes a drag from her cigarette as Jason approaches.

Jason pays her no mind.

MAGGIE

'Evening, hon. Take a seat anywhere
you like. I'll be in...

Jason breezes past Maggie.

MAGGIE

...in a... minute.

Jason hurries up the steps, swings the front door open.

INT. DAVE'S

Jason spots Matthew and Sasha at their booth.

Jason stops at their table, throws the bag down; his face just a few inches from Matthew's.

JASON
We need to talk.

Matthew eyes Jason up and down.

MATTHEW
What's with--

JASON
Save it.

MATTHEW
You mind taking a step back?

Jason stands straight, cracks his neck.

MATTHEW
Appreciate it.

Matthew peeks inside the bag.

MATTHEW
You couldn't tidy it up?

JASON
Fuck you.

MATTHEW
You like to cut right to the chase,
huh? Get down to brass tacks?

Jason sits next to Sasha.

MATTHEW
Don't sit.

Jason glares at Matthew.

Matthew pulls a lottery ticket from the bag, holds it out towards Jason.

JASON
(Shrugs)
I just took what was there.

MATTHEW
Pity.

Matthew slides the ticket to Jason.

Jason glances at the ticket then back to Matthew.

MATTHEW

Go on.

Jason scratches the ticket, stares down at it.

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

JASON

Nothing.

MATTHEW

Surprise, surprise.

Jason pockets the ticket.

MATTHEW

Well, now that you've made yourself useful, you can go ahead and disappear again. We don't need you.

Jason glances at Sasha who gives him the slightest of nods. He stands, eyes Matthew with utter distaste.

JASON

I hope that's worth it to you.

Jason walks away, opens the front door as Maggie makes her way up the stairs. He holds the door for her.

JASON

(Soft, to Maggie)
Sorry I was rude.

Maggie offers a sincere smile to Jason.

MAGGIE

No harm done.

EXT. DAVE'S - FRONT

Jason shuffles down the steps; his feet drag in the snow.

DAVE'S - BACK

Jason opens the back door of his car, grabs the Salvation Army donation cannister, slams the back door.

DAVE'S - FRONT

Jason sets up the cannister on the sidewalk. He lifts off the top, grabs a small bell from inside.

He rings the bell with one hand while pulling out the lottery ticket with his other hand.

He looks at the ticket, awestruck but melancholy.

JASON

Two-hundred and fifty thousand...

Jason puts the ticket in his pocket, grabs his cell phone.

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

Jason recognizes the car immediately. He sets the bell down on the cannister, begins to text a message.

ON JASON'S CELL PHONE

"Call it off."

BACK TO SCENE

Jason hears a bell chime, watches Matthew leave the diner.

Matthew makes his way over to Jason.

Jason nonchalantly hides the cell phone in his pocket.

JASON

What do you want?

MATTHEW

Maybe, one day, I'll understand why I'm doing this.

JASON

Doing what?

Matthew offers the bag of money to Jason.

MATTHEW

Just take it, all right?

Jason takes the bag of money.

MATTHEW

Watch your back, kid. That girl's bad news.

Matthew walks away, leaves Jason dumbfounded.

Jason puts the bag of money in the cannister.

A police car slows to a stop as Matthew crosses the street in front of it.

JASON

What do you mean, watch my back?

Matthew doesn't acknowledge Jason.

Jason gets a good look at Randall Edwards in the back seat as they make eye contact.

JASON

That's him.

Jason ponders that but goes back to what Matthew told him.

He pulls his cell phone out, erases the message he had. He types a new one, sends it then puts the phone away.

David pops out from behind the diner, approaches Jason.

Jason eyes David before he goes into Dave's.

The carolers and Lena approach, stop in front of the diner.

Jason turns his attention to them.

The carolers lift up their papers, ready to recite a song.

LENA

On 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 keeps his eye on Lena, specifically; an adoring gaze.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)

(In unison)

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

The sound of their voices fades away.

Lena acknowledges Jason, shoots him a quick smile before returning to the carol.

On Jason's face, the sadness disappears for a moment.

Jason turns, looks through the window of the diner. He sees Sasha sitting with David then checks his cell phone.

He hears bits and pieces of the song but he's more curious about Sasha at the moment.

JASON
(To himself, whispers)
What the hell's taking so long?

A couple of the carolers look over at Jason while singing.

Jason meets their gaze, smiles at them.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)
(In unison)
Hark! The herald angels sing/"Glory
to the newborn King!"

The kids lower their papers.

LENA
Very good, guys. Very, very good.

Jason nods, smiles at them.

The carolers walk past Jason towards the street corner.

Lena stops in front of Jason.

JASON
Hey, are all these kids with you?

LENA
Yeah. They're from the Miller Home.

JASON
What is that, like an orphanage?

LENA
Like.

Jason gives a slight nod; the sadness returns.

LENA
I like to volunteer during the
holidays with the underprivileged.

JASON
They don't react to me. Do any of
them even believe in Santa?

LENA
Would you?

Jason looks away.

LENA
What's your name?

JASON
Jason.

LENA
I'm Lena.

JASON
What are you doing for Christmas?
Besides this?

LENA
I'm Jewish.

JASON
Sorry.

LENA
I'm not. It's nice to do good for
others. Who says I can't just
'cause I'm Jewish?

JASON
I see.

LENA
Well, I gotta go. It was nice to
meet you.

JASON
Yeah, you too.

Lena begins to catch up to the carolers.

JASON
Lena?

Lena stops, turns to Jason.

JASON
Can I ask your opinion on
something?

LENA
Probably.

JASON

If you thought you liked someone
but didn't know how to tell them...

Jason pauses, unsure of how to finish the sentence.

Lena catches this, smiles at Jason.

LENA

I'd give it to her straight. You
never know. She could feel the same
way about you...

They freeze, wait for the other to speak.

LENA

Well, I gotta get going. You take
care of yourself, Jason.

Lena catches up to the group of carolers.

Jason watches Lena the entire way, smiles.

JASON

(Whispers, to himself)
I think I like you.

The front door to the diner opens.

David and Sasha walk cautiously down the stairs.

SASHA

So, who was that?

DAVID

Wrong number.

Just then, a red 1990 Chrysler LeBaron pulls into a parking
spot directly in front of Jason.

Abby and Kasey get out of the car.

Kasey walks towards the diner.

Abby walks towards Jason.

Kasey turns back, stands by Abby.

ABBY

Hi, Santa.

JASON

(In character)
Hey, kiddo. Merry Christmas.
(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
(To Kasey)
Merry Christmas.

KASEY
Merry Christmas.

ABBY
Mommy, he called me kiddo, too.

KASEY
I heard him.

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

JASON
No. I'm not the real Santa.

Abby's face turns sad as she looks to Kasey.

Kasey looks at Jason, upset.

Jason shoots Kasey a subtle smile.

Abby looks back at Jason.

JASON
You see, Santa's preparing to
deliver toys all night. I'm a kind
of helper so he doesn't have to be
in so many places at once.

ABBY
(Smiles)
You're just fibbing.

JASON
No, really.

Jason kneels to Abby's height.

JASON
You've probably seen lots of Santas
around, in parades or working in
department stores and malls. We're
Santa's helpers.

Abby begins to buy into it.

ABBY
Do you know what I want for
Christmas?

JASON
No, but if you tell me, I'll make
sure Santa Claus knows.

ABBY
You promise?

JASON
Of course...

Jason's eyes shift up to Kasey who mouths the word "Abby".

JASON
...Abby.

Abby's face turns to complete surprise as she turns to Kasey.

ABBY
Mommy, he knows my name!

Abby pulls Jason closer, whispers in his ear.

Jason looks to Abby with confusion, not sure what he heard.

Abby backs away, stands by Kasey.

JASON
(To Abby)
I'll be sure Santa gets the
message.

KASEY
Abby, why don't you go inside and
get something to drink? I want to
talk to Santa's helper for a bit.

ABBY
Ok, Mommy.

Abby walks up the steps, waves at Jason before going inside.

Kasey walks closer to Jason.

JASON
I'm sorry if I was getting too
close. I just don't want you to
think I'm some kinda creep.

KASEY
I don't. You seem to be good with
children. That's good for a man who
does this in his spare time.

JASON

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

KASEY

Going on four months, now.
(Nervous smile)
The doctors got it into remission, but it just... It didn't take.

Kasey begins to sob, turns away.

JASON

How much does all that treatment stuff cost?

KASEY

Too much.

Kasey turns back to Jason, wipes away her tears.

JASON

I'm sorry...

KASEY

Kasey.

JASON

Kasey. I'm Jason.

KASEY

I ought to get inside. She's probably wondering where I am.

Kasey begins to walk back to the diner, looks back at Jason.

KASEY

Merry Christmas, Jason.

Jason feels his coat pocket, recalls the lottery ticket.

JASON

Wait.

Kasey stops, glances at Jason.

Jason walks closer to Kasey, pulls the lottery ticket out, places it in her hand.

Kasey looks at the ticket, perplexed.

KASEY

I don't understand.

JASON

Take it.

Kasey looks at the ticket, realizes it's a winner. She puts the ticket back in Jason's hand.

KASEY

I can't accept that.

JASON

Please. You need it a lot more than I do.

In the background, Abby opens the front door of the diner, stares at them from the doorway.

Jason and Kasey look at her.

ABBY

Mom, are you coming?!

KASEY

Yeah, sweetie. I'll be right there.

Abby goes back inside.

Kasey turns back to Jason.

JASON

No strings attached. Please just take it, for your daughter.

Jason places the ticket back in Kasey's hand.

Kasey begins to sob as she grips the ticket hard in her hand. She gives Jason a big hug.

KASEY

Thank you so much.

JASON

No, it's okay. You're welcome.

Kasey steps back from Jason, wipes her eyes.

KASEY

You don't know how much this means to me.

JASON

I can imagine.

They share a gaze.

Neither knows what to do.

JASON
You should probably get back
inside. Abby's getting impatient.

KASEY
(Smiles)
I know. It's just that this...
Thank you.

JASON
Merry Christmas.

KASEY
Merry Christmas, Jason.

Kasey turns, walks to the diner.

JASON
Do you wanna know what your
daughter wants for Christmas?

Kasey stops, her attention gotten. She looks back at Jason.

JASON
She said she just wants to be
normal. Like all the other kids.

Another tear rolls down Kasey's cheek as she walks inside the
diner, leaves Jason by himself.

Jason picks up the bell, goes back into his routine.

David runs around the side of the diner, hurries inside.

Chris' police car pulls next to the LeBaron.

Jason stops ringing the bell as Chris gets out of the car,
walks over to him.

CHRIS
Merry Christmas.

JASON
You too.

CHRIS
Chris pulls out a \$5 bill, puts it inside the cannister.

JASON
Thanks.

CHRIS

Yep.

Chris smiles at Jason then walks up the steps to the front door, slips on them.

He catches himself, looks down at a bit of ice on the steps.

David bursts through the door, slams into Chris, falls down the steps.

Chris saves himself by grabbing of the railing. He looks down at David who's flat on his back.

DAVID

Shit.

Chris holds his hand out.

CHRIS

You okay, man?

David takes Chris' hand, stands up.

DAVID

Yeah.

CHRIS

Take it easy next time, all right?

DAVID

Will do.

David bends down, grabs the purse, starts to walk away.

CHRIS

Hey.

David stops, glances at Chris.

CHRIS

Aren't you cold without a jacket?

DAVID

It's not that cold.

Chris shrugs, walks up the steps.

David checks over to Jason who was watching the entire thing.

DAVID

What?

Jason looks away, continues to ring the bell.

David runs around the back of the diner.

Jason sets the bell down on the cannister, walks to the back of the diner.

DAVE'S - BACK

Jason shuffles through the snow, stays against the diner, uses his hand for balance, peeks around the back.

David drags Sasha's body towards the trunk.

Jason watches close, a look of horror overcomes him as his hand slips.

He tries to regain his balance but his foot kicks a rusted piece of sheet metal.

The sound gets David's attention.

David looks in Jason's direction as Jason leans against the diner, unseen.

After a few seconds of hiding, Jason peeks around the corner as David continues to load Sasha's body into the trunk.

Jason's expression turns furious. He reaches inside his coat for his gun when he realizes that he doesn't have it.

He hurries to the front of the diner.

DAVE'S - FRONT

Jason scoops up the cannister as David's IROC-Z pulls around the back. He watches the car disappear around a corner.

A tear rolls down Jason's face.

Jason runs to the back of the diner.

DAVE'S - BACK

Jason opens the back door, throws the cannister inside. He slams the door, opens the driver's side door.

INT. CAVALIER

Jason fumbles around with papers in the center console until he finds a small torn-off piece of paper.

The paper reads "SASHA'S FRIEND - 555-0134".

Jason takes out his phone, dials.

The line rings a couple times before someone answers.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

Whoever this is, I don't know how
the hell you got this number.

JASON

It's me.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

Not helpful.

JASON

I was with Sasha in the diner,
asshole.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

You like to cut right to the chase,
don't you?

(Chuckles)

So, what do you want?

JASON

I'm looking for a Christmas
present.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

Where's the one I gave you?

JASON

I need another one. I'll be there
in three minutes. You know where.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

Not a second longer.

Matthew hangs up.

Jason drops the phone in the passenger's seat.

The nearby police siren gets Jason's attention until he
realizes it has nothing to do with him.

INT. CAVALIER - MOMENTS LATER

Jason brings the car to a stop near a mailbox. He puts the
phone in his pocket, gets out, carrying the bag of money.

EXT. LAKE DRIVE

Jason looks around, apprehensive, walks to a mailbox next to a large oak tree. He bends down, reaches under the mailbox.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

What do you think you're doing?

Jason pauses, unsure of how to react. He turns, sees Matthew leaning against the tree behind him.

JASON

I'm getting what I asked for.

MATTHEW

The way it usually works is you pay first.

Jason stands, stares Matthew down. He holds the bag out to Matthew who snatches it away from him.

MATTHEW

When you go to get it, you wait 'til I'm a memory.

JASON

Fine.

MATTHEW

And, let me see your phone.

JASON

What for?

MATTHEW

Gimme the Goddamn phone.

Jason begrudgingly tosses his phone to Matthew.

Matthew removes the SIM card then breaks the phone in half.

JASON

What the fuck?

MATTHEW

I can't have you wandering around out there with my number in your phone.

Matthew drops the broken phone in a garbage can.

MATTHEW

Listen, you do whatever you've
gotta do as long as I'm left out of
it, you hear me?

Matthew leaves without giving Jason a chance to respond but
freezes then turns back to Jason.

MATTHEW

There's something I need to know.
Did you kill for this money?

Jason looks down, ashamed. His head turns towards the bottom
of the mailbox.

Matthew sighs, shakes his head.

MATTHEW

I sincerely hope she's worth it.

Matthew walks away from Jason.

Jason kneels, pulls a folded cloth from under the mailbox. He
looks around to make sure no one's watching.

A blonde GIRL (7), watches Jason through the front curtains
of a single-story cottage.

Jason spots the girl, stares back; a distant, icy stare.

The girl smiles, waves at him.

Jason looks down, unwraps the cloth, pulls out a Sigma SW40
pistol and accompanying clip.

He loads the clip into the gun, cocks it, looks back at the
girl in the window.

The girl sees the gun, hastily shuts the curtains.

Jason calmly places the gun inside his coat, walks back to
his Cavalier, disappears into the heavy snowfall.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DAVE'S - NIGHT

Maggie stares at Chris' birthday picture.

Tears obscure her makeup.

Maggie tapes the picture to her paper tree. She grabs a napkin, wipes her tears, walks to Kasey and Abby's table.

MAGGIE

Hello, ladies. I'm sorry it took so long.

KASEY

It's fine.

(To Maggie)

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

MAGGIE

As memory serves, I've had a few.

KASEY

He's mid-40s, a little rough-looking.

MAGGIE

I had someone like that a little bit ago. He was in a Santa Claus outfit.

KASEY

That sounds like Randall.

MAGGIE

He asked me for a job application then left while I was away.

Maggie pulls Randall's sobriety coin from her apron, sets it on the counter.

MAGGIE

He left this behind. I figured maybe he'd come back for it but he hasn't yet.

KASEY

He just left it?

MAGGIE

I believe so.

Maggie offers the chip to Kasey who clutches it tight.

FADE TO:

EXT. PALMETTO DRIVE - NIGHT

Chris' motionless corpse rests in the street.

Two carolers run to Chris' body. They are joined by the rest of the carolers as well as Lena.

Lena bends down at Chris' side, checks his pulse. She pulls out her cell phone, dials 911.

FADE TO:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

David's IROC-Z is parked in the woods with its trunk open.

Its brake lights illuminate the surrounding trees.

David sits on the edge of the trunk. He looks down at Sasha's body in the trunk.

A two-foot deep hole has been dug in the dirt behind the car.

David reaches in Sasha's purse, takes her cell phone. He pockets it, lifts her body out of the trunk.

He gently lays her body in the hole, takes the shovel, fills the grave with two shovelfuls then stops.

He reaches in the trunk, grabs the present, sets it atop her body, continues to fill in the grave.

FADE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Randall stands in front of a gray backdrop, not wearing his hat or beard with a camera tripod in front of him.

James takes Randall's picture.

JAMES

Left.

Randall turns ninety-degrees to his left.

James takes another picture.

FADE TO:

INT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Matthew stands in front of a crackling fireplace, holds Sasha's manila folder.

He drops the folder into the fire, watches it burn.

When the folder fully dissolves, Matthew sits in a chair directly behind him, takes a sip of a glass of orange juice.

Just then, two CHILDREN run into the room.

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

She is followed by SON (5), in light blue pajamas, who runs to the fully decorated Christmas tree on Matthew's left.

MATTHEW

Merry Christmas, guys.

SON/DAUGHTER

Merry Christmas.

Daughter runs to the Christmas tree, sits in front of it.

Matthew walks to the tree with his kids, sits down on the floor between them.

Each child grabs a present.

Matthew watches them with a grin on his face.

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.

There's wrapping paper debris all over the floor and all assortments of candy in front of Abby.

The doorbell rings.

They turn their attention to the front door.

Kasey rushes to the door, opens it.

James waits there in his police uniform.

Kasey looks puzzled, didn't expect him.

James takes off his hat.

JAMES

I'm sorry, ma'am.

KASEY

Wha... What happened? Was there an accident? Is he okay?

JAMES

(Solemn)

No, ma'am.

Kasey's eyes well up as she drops to her knees.

James, to comfort her, drops to his knees, holds her close.

Abby sits by herself, by the tree, unsure of what happened.

ABBY

Mommy?

Kasey bursts into tears, cries in his arms.

FADE TO:

INT. CAVALIER - DAWN

Jason sits in the driver's seat, dressed in a black T-shirt and black pants. He takes a sip from a half-full beer bottle.

He sets the bottle in the cup holder, pulls the gun from the glove compartment, stares at it with cold, dead eyes.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A modest house; well-furnished and very clean.

A wrap-around sofa rests in the middle of the room.

In front of the sofa, a small coffee table and a flat screen TV on a glass entertainment center.

A fireplace crackles in the corner with a sound system on a wall unit above the fireplace.

A lit-up Christmas tree shines in the other corner. Presents are neatly stacked under it.

The TV plays a muted news program.

SUPER: DECEMBER 25TH

The sound of a pan being scraped.

From the kitchen, David whistles a Christmas tune.

KITCHEN

David stands at the stove, whistles. He scrapes scrambled eggs from a pan into a plate.

A microwave timer beeps.

David looks at it. He sets the pan down, walks to the microwave with his plate, opens it.

He lifts off a paper towel, reveals a couple sausage patties and some bacon. He grabs a patty but burns his hand.

DAVID

Ow, shit.

David grabs the sausage plate, dumps it on top of his eggs. He straightens the bacon, licks his fingers clean.

LIVING ROOM

David sets the plate on the table, flops on the sofa.

He grabs Sasha's cell phone next to his plate. He goes into the phone's text message list, selects the most recent.

INSERT - SASHA'S CELL PHONE

"JASON"

"Call it off."

BACK TO SCENE

David auto-dials Jason's cell phone number. It rings twice.

OPERATOR

We're sorry but the number you are trying to reach is currently unavailable. Please try again later.

David hangs up, walks to the fireplace. He tosses the phone into the fire.

David takes a seat on the sofa, unmutes the TV.

INSERT - DAVID'S TV

Video footage of Magnolia Liquor and a FEMALE NEWSCASTER (42), dressed in heavy winter clothes.

A chyron at the bottom identifies her as "ANNE WEISS".

ANNE

--tragic scene as you can see
behind me.

MALE ANCHOR (O.S.)

Have any details been released yet?

Anne shakes her head, points to the store.

ANNE

Not much as of yet. All we know was
that this appears to be a botched
liquor store robbery.

Ambrozik walks out of the store.

ANNE

Oh, here he is. Detective?

This gets Ambrozik's attention.

ANNE

Detective, could we get a word,
please?

Ambrozik walks over to Anne.

ANNE

Can you shed any new details in
light of this robbery?

AMBROZIK

All I can say is that during the
evening hours last night, the store
was held and the clerk was fatally
wounded. We're not releasing the
victim's name until we contact her
family. Beyond that, I have no
other comment at this time.

Ambrozik breezes past her.

ANNE

Thank you very much. That was
Detective Ambrozik--

BACK TO SCENE

David looks awestruck by the news.

DAVID

"Her"? That's gotta be Sasha's
sister.

David changes the channel to a different news program.

INSERT - DAVID'S TV

A news anchor, JACK (55), white hair, plump, sits at a desk.

An inserted picture of Randall is next to Jack's head.

JACK

Here's a bizarre story that's still
developing. A local mall Santa has
reportedly committed suicide in a
police station holding cell early
this morning. Details are scarce in
this case, but the man, Randall
Edwards, was held in connection to
armed robbery and murder of the
clerk at the Magnolia Liquor
package store, late last night.

BACK TO SCENE

David turns the TV off, reclines in the sofa, in thought.

He gets up, walks to the Christmas tree, picks out a square
present with baby blue wrapping paper.

The tag reads "To David From Sasha".

David rips through the package, holds up a CD, "Christmas
Tunes Edition III".

He takes the CD, puts it in the sound system.

The CD plays a classic Christmas song.

David walks to the plate, grabs a piece of bacon.

The doorbell rings.

David pauses, stares at the door. He hesitantly goes to the door, opens it.

Jason waits for him with his gun drawn. He fires a shot into David's abdomen before he can react.

David falls to the ground, clutches his wound.

Jason stands over David, gazes down on him.

David gasps for air, clings to his life.

Jason fires a point blank shot at David's head.

David's body goes limp.

Jason watches the blood pool around David's corpse. He walks around David's body, careful not to disturb the blood as he makes his way to the sofa.

He sits on the sofa, very straight, as if waiting then ejects the clip from the gun.

The clip falls to the ground.

Jason grabs the clip, lays it on the table next to the gun.

He settles into the sofa, lays his head back, waits for the police to arrive.

FADE OUT.

THE END.