

KATIE CARTWRIGHT WASN'T NAUGHTY THIS YEAR

A Short Script
by
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WHITE

A harsh wind whips up a storm, limiting the visibility.

EXT. NORTH POLE - SNOWY

Through the white, we begin to make out a vague structure.

SANTA'S WORKSHOP

SUPER: DEC. 24 - 2:04 UTC - coordinated universal time-code.

OS we hear a light ringing, bells perhaps.

CUT TO:

TWO PAIRS OF BLACK SHOES

Cross a red and green tiled floor. Each shoe, curled at the toes, adorned with tiny bells.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

TWO ELVES rush down a corridor.

MENKIN, the senior elf, checks his watch.

MR. MENKIN

I don't understand the delay? Has
Jitters ever been this late before?

His subordinate, ROLO, checks his clipboard.

ROLO

But, it's not Jitters, sir.

Menkin comes to an abrupt halt.

MR. MENKIN

What was that?

ROLO

Mr. Jitters retired last spring.

(beat)

Remember the party we had... I made
marshmallow muffins.

MR. MENKIN

Right, right, I remember. So, who
was awarded the position?

ROLO

Ummm, Cole, sir.

MR. MENKIN
 (twirls beard)
 I see.

INT. LIST PROCESSING CENTER - SECTION 21

In a spacious, hangar sized room sits a large machine. A tall, clear, cylindrical tube attached.

WE MOVE down the empty tube, marked, "Letters For Santa", until we reach the very bottom where the remaining letters currently rest.

Working the machine is COLE. Goofy looking, even for an elf. He sits at his station. Picks up a letter. You might describe his pace as relaxed.

Cole scans the letter. The bottom is stamped with a red X.

COLE
 Oh dear, oh dear. Well better luck
 next year, Billy Macintosh.

Cole inserts the letter into a mail slot marked, "Naughty".

The letter ignites, lighting up the slot like a tiny furnace.

Cole picks up another letter.

COLE (CONT'D)
 And who's this from? Jimmy
 Blankenship! Well, let's see if
 Jimmy had a good year or not?

The bottom is stamped with a green check mark.

COLE (CONT'D)
 That'a'boy! Good job, Jimmy.

Cole inserts this letter into an alternate slot marked, "Nice". This time the letter is automatically rolled tight and shot through an elaborate pneumatic tube system.

Cole reaches for the next letter.

COLE (CONT'D)
 Let's see, who's next.

A booming voice echoes through the room.

MR. MENKIN (O.S.)
 Cole!

Cole jumps. Swings his chair around, to see --

-- Menkin and Rolo march across the room. Their shoes click on the hard tile.

MR. MENKIN (CONT'D)
 Why isn't the next time zone
 finished? Can't you see, Santa is
 going to return at any moment?

Cole jumps out of his chair. It slides back into the desk.
 The minor collision knocks a single letter off the desk.
 It wafts down to the ground, wedged between desk and floor.
 Cole nervously pulls his collar, stammering...

COLE
 I, but, just, I...

Menkin meets Cole, elf nose to elf nose.

MR. MENKIN
 Don't you realize that if Santa
 leaves on his next trip, and we
 haven't processed every letter, the
 warehouse won't have enough time to
 fill the sled.

(inches closer)
 Which means that some unlucky boy
 or girl, who has been trying so
 very hard to be nice all year long,
 waiting for this one special day,
 won't be getting a gift this year.
 Now, tell me, do you think that's
 fair?

(beat)
 Well!

COLE
 I only have a few left.

MR. MENKIN
 (sputtering)
 Why didn't you say that!

Cole raises his eyebrow, pondering the question.

MR. MENKIN (CONT'D)
 Finish it!

COLE
 Yes, sir!

Cole sits back in his chair. Picks up the next letter.
 Smiles. Places it into the "Nice" slot.

Cole reaches for the next one. A single letter remains. He
 gives a quizzical look - Wasn't there one more? He continues.
 Checks the last letter -- Another green mark.

He inserts it into the, "Nice", slot. It fires up the tube.

Cole turns to Menkin.

COLE (CONT'D)
Finished, sir.

MR. MENKIN
Then proceed with the shutdown.

Rolo unveils a SILVER KEY which hangs from his necklace.

Cole removes a duplicate key from his necklace.

Like something out of NORAD they simultaneously insert their keys into the machine.

A giant screen flashes - TZ Section 21 - Complete.

They breathe a sigh of relief.

Menkin looks at his watch.

MR. MENKIN (CONT'D)
Eight minutes to spare.
(to Cole)
A little close for comfort don't you think? I expect a lot better from you next year.

Cole's eyes widen.

COLE
Next year! Then that means I passed? I get to stay?

MR. MENKIN
Settle down now.

Cole composes himself.

MR. MENKIN (CONT'D)
Yes, you passed. See you at the party, Cole.

Menkin strolls to the exit, Rolo trailing behind. The moment the doors close. Cole unleashes his excitement, doing some weird dance movements.

COLE
Oh yeah, I'm cool, I'm the iceman. This is just the start. After this, things are going to be looking up. Soon, I'll be -

Moonwalking past the desk, he spots the discarded letter.

COLE (CONT'D)
No!

He lands on his knees. Clutches the letter.

COLE (CONT'D)
Please be naughty, please be
naughty!

The letter is from one, Katie Cartwright. Stamped with a green check mark.

COLE (CONT'D)
No!

He inserts the list into the, "Nice Slot". It spits it back out. He picks up the emergency phone line. It recites an automated message...

AUTOMATED MESSAGE
I'm sorry, this line is now closed.
Seasons greetings, Happy holidays,
and Merry Christmas.

Cole slams down the phone. He looks across the space.

There, parked on the far side of the room sits a small, motorized cart, (like one you'd see in an airport).

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

SEVERAL ELVES mull about, exhausted, but happy.

At the end of the hall, two doors burst open!

Cole, atop the speedy cart, drives down the hallway, beeping his horn as he goes.

COLE
Out of the way! Coming through!

Elves leap out of the way. They yell as he passes by them.

ELF
Hey! Slow down, buddy, it's
Christmas!
(to the others)
What's his problem?

They hunch their shoulders -- As

WE MOVE out the window -- Through the whipping snow.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

In a small mid-western town, half a world away, a young girl stares out her bedroom window.

INT. BEDROOM

KATIE CARTWRIGHT, (5), looks through her window up at the night sky.

Her MOTHER enters.

MOTHER
Katie Cartwright, what are you
still doing up?

Katie hops back into bed. The Mother pulls the sheets up tight.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I told you, Santa won't come unless
you're fast asleep.

KATIE
Okay, mommy.

Katie shuts her eyes as tight as possible.

MOTHER
That's a good girl.

Mother clicks the light off.

FADE TO:

EXT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Overhead shot of the massive factory. We pan across the building, hearing plenty of honking, and Cole pleading...

COLE (O.S.)
Out of the way! Coming through!

We stop on a hangar sized building at the far end.

INT. WAREHOUSE

There is a frenzy of activity. LARGER ELVES scurry about moving packages to and fro.

Cole, atop the cart, BURSTS THROUGH THE DOORS -- SWERVES THE WHEEL to avoid an oncoming fork-lift -- CRASHING into a stack of palettes.

Cole is THROWN FROM THE CART -- LANDS NEXT TO A PAIR OF FEET.

Cole looks up at a tough looking, no nonsense, burly elf. Four feet high. His badge reads, SUPERVISOR CANE. He looks down at him.

SUPERVISOR CANE
You need something?

Cole hands him Katie's letter.

COLE
You have to help me! There's been a
terrible mistake.

Cane rubs his face, while he reads it over.

SUPERVISOR CANE
Oh, no, this ain't no good. That
zone's all shutdown already.

Beside them -- An enormous sleigh, full to the brim, is
carried by giant hydraulics, moving it to another area.

SUPERVISOR CANE (CONT'D)
See.
(points)
That sled is on its way to hangar
one. We're onto the next zone now.

COLE
But, what about the letter?

SUPERVISOR CANE
Sorry, pal. Not my problemo. See
that?

Cane points inside the warehouse, where another enormous, but
empty sled is parked.

SUPERVISOR CANE (CONT'D)
I've got to fill that entire sled
before Mr. C gets back, an' my men
don't have time to worry about a
single, measly letter.

A horn blares out across the warehouse.

SUPERVISOR CANE (CONT'D)
Speak of the devil. Here comes the
big guy now.

All the elves stop their work to yell out a massive "Cheer".

Cole begins to tear up. Cane can't help but feel sympathy.

He walks toward a computer console. Punches some numbers on
the keyboard in stupefying speed. The machine spits out a
inventory reference slip.

He turns to Cole. Hands him the slip.

SUPERVISOR CANE (CONT'D)

Here's the location for the primary item. You want the kid's gift in the sleigh before it lifts...

(checks time)

I'd say you got about five minutes.

Cole looks up at the warehouse.

It is a zig-zag maze of conveyer belts and pulleys. HUNDREDS OF ELVES buzz about, snagging items off of the thousands of shelves, shooting them down stainless steel slides, which drop them right into the empty Sleigh.

Cole jumps onto a small platform, large enough for only a single elf. It speedily carries him into the air. He gulps from the alarming height.

CUT TO

INT. HANGAR THREE - CONTINUOUS

SANTA lands his sled into the arrival hangar. Jumps down from the sleigh. Yells over to DONNER.

SANTA

Take ten, Donner. You and the boys get some food and drink.

The lead Reindeer turns his head from the pack.

DONNER

Yes, sir.

Behind Santa, we hear a kind, gentle voice.

MRS. CLAUSE (O.S.)

You might listen to your own advice sometime.

Santa turns to see MRS. CLAUSE approaching with a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

SANTA

Come, come, you know I can never eat when I'm working.

Santa does some stretching exercises to loosen up.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Caught some rough air around Sumatra.

MRS. CLAUSE

Nothing the boys can't handle I'm sure.

SANTA

You should see all the snow that's disappeared. Every year it's a little worse.

MRS. CLAUSE

Well, that is just not your problem, Mister Kringle.

SANTA

I know, I know, but it is concerning.

MRS. CLAUSE

Please, eat.

INT. WAREHOUSE

Cole scrambles about the warehouse, searching the endless shelves for Katie's gift. He checks the reference slip again. Moving down row from row. Finally, he finds the right place.

FORTY SHELVES UP

He looks about. Every ladder is being used. Cole looks up. Begins to climb. Forty shelves up, he finds Katie's gift --

A PRETTY DOLLY.

Cole snags it from the shelf. He climbs back down with the gift under his arm. Halfway down -- Another Bell sounds the next departure -- Cole, distracted, slips --

COLE FALLS TWENTY FEET

Right into a large box of those pink package peanuts.

Cole climbs out of the box -- Runs toward one of the many GIFT WRAPPING MACHINES located around the warehouse --

Not looking, Cole trips on some discarded ribbon -- He flies through the air, right onto the machine's conveyer belt.

Cole, and Katie's gift, are passed through the machine.

On the other end -- The gift and Cole come through, both beautifully wrapped with ribbon and bow.

Cole rips himself from his paper bonds. Picks up Katie's gift.

He runs toward the closest elevator -- the doors shut before he gets there -- He spots the closest conveyer going down -- He LEAPS FROM THE PLATFORM -- SNAGS THE LINE and HOLDS TIGHT.

The line carries him toward the ground.

COLE
Come on, come on!

CUT TO:

INT. HANGAR ONE - CONTINUOUS

Santa and Mrs. Clause enter the departure hangar, towards the sleigh. Santa looks at his watch, while wolfing down a sandwich.

SANTA
Better push ahead. Have to keep
ahead of the morning.

Mrs. Clause gives him a kiss on the cheek.

MRS. CLAUSE
Be careful, now.

SANTA
Oh, come now.

Santa climbs up on the sled. Shoots Mrs. Clause a wink. He yells up ahead to his lead reindeer.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Okay, Donner - gear up!

Donner nods. Cuffs his hooves against the tarmac. And then, in unison, the mighty reindeer begin to pull the sled.

COLE

Atop the cart again, rounds a tight corner, entering the hangar -- just in time to see the sled pulling out.

COLE
No!

He hits the gas -- the cart tears across the tarmac -- races behind the sled...

But it's too late. The sleigh pulls ahead of him, and begins to take flight.

Cole looks defeated. And then it happens... A Christmas miracle. The cart picks up speed -- it lifts up into the air -- Cole can't believe it -- He turns around to see --

Supervisor Cane behind the wheel of a speedy forklift. The forked teeth wedged around the cart -- He throws a switch. It lifts the cart up toward the sleigh -- Cane waves up to him.

CANE
Go get'em, kid!

Cole grabs Katie's present.

He leaps from the cart -- Clings to the bottom of the sleigh rail -- Swings up his feet clutching the back of the rail -- Just as the sled departs the hangar.

SANTA

Pulls the reigns of the sleigh.

SANTA

Faster, Donner, faster!

Over Santa shoulder, near the back of the sleigh, we see Cole's head pop up.

Santa turns -- just as Cole ducks.

ON THE BACK END OF THE SLEIGH

Cole positions himself. He looks down into the sleigh. Each section divided into designated areas. Cole searches his coat for the reference slip. Finds it --

Through the wind and snow, he can barely read it. Brushes a bit of snow away. He reads the number marked Section: 421. The moment Cole reads it, the slip is blown out of his hand.

Cole looks back into the sleigh -- Goes down the row of sections, until he finds #421.

He tosses the gift -- It bounces between sections, back and forth -- finally it lands in the correct spot.

Cole smiles -- As the sleigh takes a sharp turn, throwing him from the sled -- HE FALLS A HUNDRED FEET right into a giant snow bank -- Poof!

Cole, flat on his back, looks up, as Santa's sleigh kicks into high gear. It races across the sky like a comet.

FADE TO:

INT. CARTWRIGHT RESIDENCE - MORNING

Father, Mother, and little Katie, are huddled around the tree. Katie picks up her gift. She opens the gift with childlike wonder. Hugs the present tight.

Her parents give each other a look - "Did you buy that?"

WE MOVE toward the tree. CLOSE ON on single ornament. A reflective RED BALL.

DISSOLVE TO:

A BIG SCREEN MONITOR

Where we see Katie opening her gift.

IN AN EMPTY OBSERVATION ROOM

Cole watches with pride.

Rolo peeks his head into the room.

ROLO

There you are. The party's still hopping. Are you coming or what?

Cole, lost in thought, doesn't answer.

ROLO (CONT'D)

Hey, something wrong?

Cole smiles. Turns off the monitor. He walks over to Rolo. Pats him on the shoulder.

COLE

Nope. Everything's perfect.

They exit the room. The lights click off.

CUT TO BLACK

The End & Merry Christmas!