

THERE IS NO SANTA

by
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INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - CHRISTMAS EVE

CAMCORDER RECORDING:

Facing the mirror is a little girl in pajamas, SYDNEY (10). Brushing her teeth with vigor... she's ready for bed.

A knock on the door. Sydney looks up.

It's her MOM (30s) in a robe with a glass of wine.

MOM

Status check young lady. Teeth brushed?

Sydney snaps to attention, she grins big and wide baring both rows of teeth.

MOM

Face washed?

SYDNEY

Check.

MOM

Good girl. Don't forget bunny.

SYDNEY

Good to go!

Sydney grabs a bunny doll off the bathroom counter. As favorite dolls go, she holds this one close to her chest.

Mom leaves.

Sydney grabs a small hidden hand held camcorder that has been recording her. She points it at the mirror.

SYDNEY

I'm Sydney McAllister, it's the night before Christmas and I'm going to prove there is no Santa Claus.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Under the blanket, the camcorder captures Sydney scribbling into a pink notebook lit by a flashlight.

MOM (O.C.)

Sydney it's 9:30, lights out or else Santa might just miss our house tonight.

Sydney lies still then boasts an obnoxious snore. A laugh from Mom.

MOM (O.C.)

Night kiddo, mommy loves you.

Sydney turns off the flashlight and pops her head out from under the blanket.

SYDNEY

G'night mommy.

A kiss on the forehead, then Mom turns off the light and shuts the bedroom door.

Eyes closed, Sydney lies still, motionless.

The flash light clicks back on, illuminating her face. She sits up and speaks directly to the camera.

SYDNEY

Mom's off to bed.

Sydney checks her watch.

SYDNEY

Right on schedule.

She gives a thumbs up and smile to the camera.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sydney tiptoes past her Mom's bedroom. She points the camera into the crack of the door revealing Mom passed out with her empty wine glass.

The television is on, playing an old wedding video --

Mom is the bride and the GROOM is a soldier dressed in his service uniform cutting the cake -- younger, laughing, happy.

Sydney reaches for the door knob. Mom stirs in her bed. Sydney freezes holding her breath.

Mom belts out a snore and rolls away from the door. Relieved, Sydney pulls the door closed and tiptoes toward the stairwell.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney pans the camera around the room to reveal modestly festive decorations.

The Christmas tree lights on the small artificial tree provide most of the room's illumination, some moonlight spills in through the window blinds.

A few ornaments hang on the tree, one in particular is homemade -- a picture of Mom, the Soldier (wearing an Army Desert Combat uniform) and Sydney holding her bunny, all smiling.

No fire place in the room but TWO STOCKINGS, one for Mom, one for Sydney, hang from a bookshelf. A couple of Christmas theme statues, folded American flag and snow globe find their place amongst the books.

A coffee table next to a couch has the traditional milk and cookies waiting. Sydney zooms in on the milk and cookies.

SYDNEY (O.C.)

Santa bait, check.

Sydney makes her way to a space behind the couch.

SYDNEY (O.C.)

Arrived at home base... approximately twenty-one forty-five hours.

BEHIND THE COUCH - NIGHT

With her back to the couch, Sydney sets the camera down still pointed at herself. She takes inventory of her gear -- flashlight, blanket and pillow, bunny doll, pink notepad and pencil.

SYDNEY

The time is now twenty-one fifty-five hours and I've setup my operations center.

She scribbles an entry into her notebook.

LATER

From behind the couch, Sydney pans the camera around the living room.

SYDNEY (O.C.)

Twenty-two fifteen hours, no evidence of Santa.

LATER

Scribbling on her notebook, Sydney makes a funny face and shows the notebook to the camera.

At the top of the page is a kid's drawing of Santa Claus with the header "Santa Log." Written below are a few line items that include the time and the event... nothing ground breaking.

Written near the bottom of the page is "*What I want for Christmas*" next to a drawing of a stick figure family representing a Mom and Dad holding hands with a little girl.

LATER

Sydney pans the camera around the living room. The internal clock of the camera displays "11:59 PM."

The room is completely silent, almost too silent. The internal clock changes to "12:00 AM."

Sydney freezes, holding as still as possible. Some noises echo from the home's water pipes, she points the camera to the living room archway.

SYDNEY (O.C.)

Oh wow this could be it.

The house creaks from the wind outside. Sydney shakes from nerves, struggling to keep the camera still.

From the kitchen, the DISHWASHER kicks on, startling her. A deep disappointing exhale from Sydney.

The living room remains empty. Still no Santa.

LATER

With no remorse, Sydney eats the cookies and drinks the milk.

LATER

The camera captures part of Sydney, part of the couch which fills most of the frame with the exception of a slight view of the living room in the background.

Laying on her back, Sydney twirls bunny doll around. She yawns then brings the doll's ear close to her mouth.

SYDNEY

(whispering)

I miss daddy.

The clock in the camera is "12:47 AM."

Sydney fights it but she slowly drifts to sleep.

The next ninety minutes of footage fast forwards. During that time, Sydney tosses and turns in several sleeping positions finally kicking off her blanket.

The clock in the camera displays "2:10 AM" and the footage returns to normal speed. Sydney remains sound asleep.

First silence... then the creepy sound of a squeaky door opening and closing somewhere in the back of the house.

On the camcorder display, the LOW BATTERY light blinks.

The sound of a large bag dropped on the ground then heavy boots stamping off snow and then clomp across the floor. A hint of sleigh bells ring or maybe it's a jingle of keys... it stops.

Labored breathing grows as an out of focus FIGURE lurks across the background... in and out of the camera frame.

The sound of paper wrapped packages placed onto the ground.

Breathing and footsteps grow closer to a sleeping Sydney.

A shadow appears over her... waiting, watching.

Sydney's eyelids flutter open. She looks up... struggles to focus... awake yet still in a dreamlike state.

Still groggy, she rubs her eyes.

SYDNEY

Santa?

Sydney closes her eyes... back asleep in an instant as a set of HANDS enter the camera frame and lift her off the ground.

A spit-shined polished black combat boot steps into the foreground, encompassing the entire frame.

The camera loses power --

CUT TO: BLACK