The Prince of Coal

by

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FADE IN:

SUPER: Last Christmas Eve

EXT. NORTH WOODS - NIGHT


A clearing contains a log cabin, a wooden shed, and a large workshop.

EXT. REINDEER SHED - NIGHT

Wooden livestock shed with thick shingles.

The REINDEER, eight plus the lead reindeer, kick up the snow, anxious to go.

SANTA CLAUS, sits in the famous red sleigh while waiting for GNARLES GNEDWARD GNOME, an old gnome, to finish his pre-flight checklist.

One of the reindeer kick Gnarles into the snow. Everyone laughs except for Gnarles.

He picks up his red pointed hat to cover his bald head and brushes the snow off his green coat. He wipes his glasses.

    GNARLES
    A gnome of my years and education
    does not enjoy the pranks of walking
    venison.

Santa laughs. The ELVES join in.

The elves tower over the gnome with their thin limbs and pointy ears.

    GNARLES (CONT'D)
    Santa, remember your magic ceases to
    function when the sun comes up.

Gnarles checks off the last item on the list.
MRS. CLAUS (JESSICA) and the elves wave as the reindeer and Santa rumble through the snow and pop into the air.

The reindeer and Santa show off by performing a barrel roll and--

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT - LATER

--into a roller coaster twisting in and out of the skyscrapers.

The team serpentinaes around the Statue of Liberty and Ground Zero.

Santa solemnly acknowledges Ground Zero.

Over the Hudson River, a flock of seagulls fly in the way of the reindeer causing the sleigh to lose altitude and skim the icy, cold river before regaining altitude.

At Times Square, a billboard with a likeness of Santa and his reindeer stands on top of a building.

The reindeer stop and float in front of the billboard.

No doubt about it, Team Santa looks buff.

SANTA
We'll never see dime one of that endorsement deal. Anyway, just one more stop.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santa and his team approach a small, well kept house.

The reindeer land in the yard. Santa heaves out of the sleigh with his almost empty bag of gifts.

SERENA JACOBS, a six year old girl, thin with hair that keeps falling onto her face, peeks through the curtains.
Her big eyes glow with delight.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

With a bit of Santa magic, Santa enters the house and admires the decorations.

Serena watches him from her hiding place. Santa puts the gifts under the tree and in the stockings.

Santa eats the cookies and puts the apples in his pocket.

SANTA
The reindeer will certainly appreciate the apples, Serena.

Serena gasps.

SERENA
How did you know I was here?

SANTA
You peeked.

SERENA
What?

SANTA
Out the window.

Serena giggles.

SANTA (CONT'D)
It was so nice to meet you, Serena, but this is my last stop, and we do have to be back soon.

SERENA
Bye, Santa. I hope the reindeer like the apples.

SANTA
They will.
The Christmas tree rustles as Santa passes by. Santa glances at the tree as if he had knocked it.

He shrugs and exits.

The tree light's electrical wiring sparks into a flame. That tree flame grows into a house fire.

That fire creates smoke which seeps into--

SERENA'S ROOM

--where Serena chokes in her bed.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The reindeer snort as Santa feeds them the apples. He struggles into the sleigh as the reindeer wait.

SANTA
Okay, boys.

The team takes off. A siren WAILS. The team halts in midair.

Santa concentrates on the fire trucks.

Smoke billows. Fire bursts out of the windows.

SANTA (CONT'D)
You know as well as I do, boys, we can't interfere.

The sleigh drops, pulling the reindeer down, hooves thrashing.

The sleigh stops a few feet above the ground. Santa holds his breath. The sleigh jerks up to the same height as before.

The reindeer snort.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Two minute warning. We'll wait as long as we can.

A FIREMAN bursts out of the smoke with Serena cradled in his arms.
Her PARENTS wait as the PARAMEDIC places an oxygen mask over Serena's nose and mouth.

A terrible burn mars the side of her face.

Her eyelids flutter. She moans.

SERENA
Santa.

Santa wipes his tears on the back of his glove. He snaps the reins.

A little more Santa magic and the reindeer and Santa disappear in flash of color just before the sun rise.

EXT. REINDEER SHED - DAY

Christmas morning. Santa tends to the reindeer.

SANTA
Don't worry. Serena will be okay.

Mrs. Claus and Gnarles note Santa's dark mood. Santa notices them noticing him.

SANTA (CONT'D)
The elves asleep?

Gnarles tries to lighten the mood.

GNARLES
Merry Christmas, Santa! This is my favorite night of the year. No silly elf singing.

MRS. CLAUS
What is it, Santa? Santa?

SANTA
Tonight, I watched as a little girl almost died in a house fire.
GNARLES
That's why you had two seconds remaining before the deadline.

Gnarles puts his hand to his mouth.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
I didn't mean to say "dead."

MRS. CLAUS
Gnarles, please.

SANTA
The house was on fire and Serena was inside. I had just talked to her. I must have been too tired to notice...

MRS. CLAUS
Come on, Santa. Get it out.

Santa puts his head down.

SANTA
I was worse than useless. All I had to do was walk into that burning house, magic or no magic, and rescue her.

GNARLES
Easier said then done. You are prohibited--

MRS. CLAUS
--Let's talk about this when you wake up, Santa.

Santa looks at them both with a sad glaze to his eyes. He nods and walks with Mrs. Claus and Gnarles toward the cabin.

INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY

The fireplace glows a warm orange. Mrs. Claus and Gnarles ready Santa for bed.
MRS. CLAUS
Santa, you worry too much.

Gnarles and Mrs. Claus watch Santa as he falls into a fitful sleep.

GNARLES
Anything I can do?

MRS. CLAUS
No, Gnarles, I'll stay up with him. Merry Christmas.

Gnarles gives her a tired nod and smile as he exits.

SUPER: Two weeks before Christmas

A moment later.

SUPER: This year!

EXT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY


INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY

A large stack of letters sits in the middle of the main room.

Santa watches the falling snow. He looks terrible: Dirty hair, beard, and clothing.

An image appears on the window glass of the buff Santa in front of the billboard last Christmas Eve.

Santa no longer looks buff.

MRS. CLAUS
Enough already, Santa! You can sit and count snowflakes from your sleigh. Take the reindeer out.

Santa grunts.
MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
Or, check on the elves. Or, go bashing
with the dwarfs. Find a troll to
wrestle.

Santa grunts twice while shaking his head.

Mrs. Claus grabs a letter from the stack. She spins Santa's
chair towards her. She sticks the letter under Santa's nose.

Santa and Mrs. Claus lock eyes.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
Or, how about you - two weeks before
the big day - start caring about
Christmas and go inspire the troops.
Gnarles, bless him, tries - but he's
not you.

Mrs. Claus swings her fist at the stack of letters, knocking
it down. The letters flutter around the room as she exits.

SANTA
I'm not me.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - SERENA'S SCHOOL - DAY

A drab, public school. Snow banks surround the playground
CHILDREN run to to the building when the bell rings.

INT. SERENA'S SCHOOL - DAY

Serena sits at her desk writing. A scar mars her cheek. The
chalkboard states "English Class" in neat handwriting.

Serena bites on her pencil eraser. She writes:

SERENA (V.O.)
Dear Santa, I am doing okay.
The scar has healed. The house has
finally been repaired--

JACKSON, seven years old, the class troublemaker, walks by
Serena's desk. He lunges at the paper and grabs it.
SERENA (CONT'D)
Jackson, that's mine. Give it back!

Jackson proudly holds up the prize and reads.

JACKSON
"Dear Santa, I want to know why you watched my house burn down. Did you start the fire? Stay away from me. Serena Scar Face."

The children laugh.

SERENA
That's not true. Santa stayed as long as he could. I saw him!

She pushes Jackson and snags her letter back.

JACKSON
There is no Santa Claus!

SERENA
Is so!

Serena turns around in her desk to face SUZY SNODGRASS, the uncomfortable looking girl seated behind her.

SERENA (CONT'D)
And that's the last time I tell you anything, Suzy Snodgrass.

Suzy sticks her tongue out at Serena.

The TEACHER rushes into the room and settles the class down. Serena and Jackson make faces at each other until the teacher gives them each a stern look.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - SERENA'S HOUSE - DAY

The house looks great. No sign of fire damage.

Serena smiles as she exits the house. Her smile is oddly distorted by her scar.
She walks to the mail box and places her letter to Santa inside.

EXT. TOY WORKSHOP - DAY

A large, wooden warehouse.

Gnarles trudges through the snow toward the building.

A snow ball hits Gnarles in the face.

Gnarles looks down at the half smashed snowball -- with a chocolate center.

Reindeer droppings.

His face turns a Merry Christmas red as he puts his hat back on. Gnarles wipes his face and peeks at his handkerchief.

Chocolate skid marks.

The elves giggle from their hiding place. A reindeer circles above, snorting as if in on the joke.

Gnarles hears muffled chanting from inside the workshop.

ELVES (V.O.)
Fight, fight, fight!

INT. TOY WORKSHOP - DAY

Gnarles opens the door and the chant becomes louder.

ELVES
Fight, fight, fight!

A building full of chanting elves surround two young adult elves: BRUCE LI, dark mop of hair, and CHUCK NERVOUS, blond mop of hair with a hint of a beard.

Gnarles stands on his toes then scrambles up on an elf workbench for a better view.
He pulls out his notebook and scribbles.

GNARLES
Two weeks before Christmas Eve and the elves have abandoned their usual shoddy work to fight.

The fighters each have an elf-length bamboo stick. A black bandana adorns each elf opponent showing off their pointy ears.

The skinny elves take off their shirts and boots and hand them to another elf.

Gnarles scribbles again in his notebook.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
The elves have entirely too much free time. They are developing worthless martial art skills.

Bruce and Chuck bow to each other and whirl their sticks with authority.

The two combatants threaten each other in surprisingly deep voices as if poorly overdubbed.

BRUCE
I say, we elves ought to work for ourselves.

Their sticks clash and hold between them.

CHUCK
And, I say, we elves should stick with Santa.

The sticks clash and hold again. The two elves perform a quick series of moves. The elves cheer.

BRUCE
Why would any elf stay with poor, old, depressed Santa?

Chuck jumps as Bruce swings his stick under Chuck's feet.
CHUCK
Santa may be down, but we owe him.

Bruce counters by using his stick to pole vault over Chuck and stand behind him.

BRUCE
We can work for anybody other than that sad, sack of toys.

Chuck turns around and blocks a jab.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
To the highest bidder, I say.

The Chuck head butts Bruce into the crowd. Half the elves shout for Chuck. Half the elves shout for Bruce.

BRIELLE BRAMBLETHORN, a older female elf with long, braided gray hair, notices Gnarles and yells at the elves.

BRIELLE
Enough! Back to work.

The two champions bow to each other. The crowd breaks up.

Gnarles strolls up to Brielle. They walk together.

GNARLES
Remarkable display, Miss Bramblethorn. But why allow distractions?

BRIELLE
Right now, the elves need something to believe in. They may watch a little too much elf tae kwan do on TV but look what happened when they took up basket weaving.

She points at a storage area full of small baskets.

GNARLES
Brielle, that is not what I wanted to hear. As leader, Santa expects more of you.
Brielle stops, looks down, and faces Gnarles.

BRIELLE
Santa should be here, not you.

GNARLES
Santa is not feeling like his old self.

BRIELLE
Any change?

GNARLES
Regretfully, no.

They resume their walk toward the door.

BRIELLE
We're running out of time.

GNARLES
Regretfully, yes.

BRIELLE
The elves might like you more if you lost your notebook.

Gnarles grips his notebook, turns on his heel, and exits.

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY

Rocks. Trees. Snow. Several miles from Santa's cabin.

An old shack stands by the shaft entrance. A rusty rail track winds out of the shaft. A decrepit mining cart rests on the tracks.

Coal dust covers all.

Gnarles sneaks towards the shack.

The sign by the mine entrance reads: "Santa's Coal Mine."

A smaller, handwritten sign taped to the bottom reads: "Gnomes go home."
That means you Gnarly!" accompanied by a crude drawing of
Gnarles and his notebook.

Gnarles lets out his breath and steels himself as he goes into the--

SHAFT ENTRANCE

--where a pair of strong hands grabs him by the arms then
stows him in a mining cart.

Gnarles struggles. He can barely see over the cart's top edge.

Gnarles sees the same pair of hands push his cart. Dwarf
laughter echoes in the shaft. The cart rolls down the rails
gaining speed.

During the rollercoaster ride:

--Gnarles bounces and bangs inside the cart as it hurls down
the rails over bridges and through dimly lit caverns.

--The cart leans from wheel to wheel.

--The wheels jump and land on the tracks.

--Gnarles face flaps back from the heavy G forces.

--The wheels grind to a stop amidst a spray of sparks.

Gnarles face portrays fear, dismay, and motion sickness.

Gnarles loses his balance as he climbs out of the cart and
falls.

A single lantern lights the cavern.

Above him stands TURKIAH STRANGLEHOLD, a stout, old basher of
a dwarf. Turkiah's large muscles look like slabs of stone on
his squat body. He holds a mallet at his side.

Turkiah helps Gnarles to his feet.

TURKIAH

How you be, Gnarly?
GNARLES
Thinking of some possible torment to torture you with until long after I am cold in the ground.

TURKIAH
Don't you mean "torture to torment" you being the big educated gnome and all--

GNARLES
--Never mind, Turkiah. Do not compel me to inform Santa--

TURKIAH
--It wasn't all that bad was it, Gnarly?

GNARLES
I prefer Gnarles.

TURKIAH
So, what can I do for you... Gnarles.

GNARLES
Inspection for Santa.

He pulls out his pencil and notebook.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
Now, do you have the amount of coal required for the naughty list?

Turkiah answers by smashing a pile of coal into dust.

TURKIAH
No! And you tell Santa he's, he's--

GNARLES
--depending on you, as leader of the dwarfs, to get the job done?

TURKIAH
Bash it all! Santa's got to show (MORE)
TURKIAH (CONT'D)
some leadership. I've got dwarfs
playing bashing games all day...

Gnarles scribbles in his notebook.

TURKIAH
Gnarly, you best leave your
notebook in the shack before you get
the shaft, if you take my meaning.

Gnarles grips his notebook.

GNARLES
I'll schedule a meeting with Santa
and you can tell him how you are
progressing. If you take my meaning.

TURKIAH
Gnomes...

Gnarles coughs as he walks toward the exit.

GNARLES
Dwarfs...

TURKIAH
Gnarles?

GNARLES
Yes?

TURKIAH
You have to... you know... to get out.

Turkiah points up.

GNARLES
I am not getting in that cart again.

TURKIAH
Suit yourself, lad. But it's a long
trek in the dark. Especially, on short
legs.
GNARLES
All right. You are going to drive and
take the cautious and slow way up.

TURKIAH
All rails to the top are slow.

A winch pulls the cart as Turkiah and Gnarles return to the
surface.

TURKIAH (CONT'D)
See this rope, Gnarly? We get it from
the trolls. Strong stuff. It has to
be...

Gnarles looks in his notebook as Turkiah talks on.

INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY
Santa stares at a spot on the ceiling.

GNARLES
Santa, Brielle and Turkiah are
present to discuss the status of
Christmas preparations.

Santa continues to stare at the spot.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
Santa, we must expedite our
preparations this week... Santa.
Santa!

Santa loses the spot. Finds it. Stares at it again.

TURKIAH
Gnarly, let me try.

Turkiah strolls over to Santa. Looks him in the eye.

Santa's sunken eyes fail to respond.

Turkiah raises his fist and bashes the table. The table
disappears in a shower of splinters.
Santa gazes at Turkiah with desperation. Then grabs at Turkiah's sleeve.

**SANTA**
Can you do Christmas this year? You and Brielle?

Brielle shoots up from her seat.

**BRIELLE**
No! You are Santa. The "ho, ho, ho" that makes us go. There is nobody else.

**TURKIAH**
All this because of one little girl?

Turkiah shakes his head. His fists drop.

Turkiah and Brielle stand and look sadly at each other.

Mrs. Claus enters. She wipes tears from her eyes.

**TURKIAH (CONT'D)**
I can get another table for you, okay?

**BRIELLE**
The elves ask about you...

**MRS. CLAUS**
Brielle and Turkiah, please stay. You need to see just how hopeless this is. Gnarles, you too.

**GNARLES**
I have tried most of what I can do.

**MRS. CLAUS**
There is one thing I can do.

She glares at Santa.
MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
Santa! Are you going to ignore me the way you do the children? The elves? The dwarfs? The reindeer?

Her finger stabs as punctuation.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
(as Santa)
Serena. Serena. I couldn't save her. Poor, poor pitiful me.

Santa gets out of his chair. He slips on an envelope and falls. He gets up and yells.

SANTA
What should I do? This magic of mine can't save even one little girl.

He stabs his finger at her now.

SANTA (CONT'D)
My magic is good only one night each year! How about the hungry or abused children the rest of the year? No hope at all! So why should I?

Mrs. Claus taps her foot as she contemplates.

MRS. CLAUS
I'm leaving. Call me when the man I love is ready to get back in the sleigh.

Mrs. Claus slams the door on the way out. Santa opens the door and slams it again.

Gnarles avoids Santa's eyes and scribbles in his notebook. Brielle and Turkiah look for Santa's spot on the ceiling.

SANTA
You three. Out.

He opens the door.
SANTA (CONT'D)
And you three keep out of my hair!

The door slams a third time.

EXT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Gnarles, Brielle and Turkiah stand outside on the icy porch.

BRIELLE
Gnarles, did you say you had done most of what you could do? What does that mean?

TURKIAH
Speak up, Gnarly. Now's not the time to be keeping secrets.

GNARLES
I will keep Santa informed of his options. You will know when he does.

Gnarles leaves.

TURKIAH
You're up to something, ain't you Gnarly?

BRIELLE
Sometimes, he makes me so angry. I want to stick that number two pencil of his up his...

TURKIAH
Number two? I like the way you talk, girl. Would you care to count reindeer antlers with me?

Brielle and Turkiah leave arm in arm. One stout, one thin.

EXT. NORTH WOODS - TROLL CAMP - DAY

The trolls live in a heavily forested part of the North Woods.
Gnarles strides up on his snowshoes to a small clearing and whistles.

Gnarles hears the trolls before they emerge from the forest.

A group of FOUR TREE TROLLS - furry, tall, and strong-armed adults - surround him.

They carry clubs and thick rope. They stand and shift their weight from side to side.

One of the four, CLUMSY TROLL, drops his club on his foot.

The larger of the four, MONGER, picks Gnarles up by the back of his jacket.

Gnarles' little snowshoes flail in the air.

Gnarles grimaces at the trolls, their large clubs, and their large feet.

GNARLES
I am Gnarles, Santa's assistant.
His little helper--

MONGER
--I Monger, leader of tree trolls. What you want?

Up close, Monger reeks of furry troll. Gnarles nose quivers. Monger sets him down.

GNARLES
I was hoping you and your trolls could assist Santa.

MONGER
Santa, need help? Brothers, hurry!

The trolls grab their clubs and shout but the posse goes in the wrong direction.

GNARLES
No, no, no. Santa might, might need your help, if we can not prepare (MORE)
GNARLES (CONT'D)
adequately for Christmas.

Clumsy Troll drops his club on his foot. Again.

    CLUMSY TROLL
    Ouch!

Monger hits the clumsy troll with his big-knuckled fist.

    CLUMSY TROLL (CONT'D)
    Double ouch!

GNARLES' VISION OF TROLL TROUBLE

COAL MINE

The trolls help the dwarfs.

Monger and the other trolls smash the coal and only have dust to put in the mining cart.

    TURKIAH
    Get those lousy trolls out of my shaft before it caves in!

Turkiah reflects a moment.

    TURKIAH (CONT'D)
    Hey, Monger, old buddy, old pal, how about you and all the trolls go in the shaft now?

DWARF CAVE

The trolls play a bashing game with the dwarfs using elves as coal piles.

Trembling with fear, Chuck awaits Monger's club to smash him. Bruce awaits Turkiah's mallet to smash him.

    TURKIAH
    Monger, old buddy, old pal. I love this game. How about we call it "Smash Goes the Elf?"
Monger pounds Chuck into the ground. Chuck grows a lump on his head and his eyes go blank.

**CHUCK**

Elves stick with Santa...

Turkiah pounds Bruce into the ground. Bruce grows a lump on his head and his eyes go blank.

**BRUCE**

Elves work for themselves...

Turkiah and Monger laugh.

**TOY WORKSHOP**

The trolls assist in the toy workshop and scale ten times bigger than the elves.

Their large hands and feet destroy every toy they touch.

Chuck and Bruce fail at their tae kwan do moves to stem the trolls running amuck.

Both Chuck and Bruce bow in defeat and offer up their sticks. The trolls use their bamboo sticks as large toothpicks.

**BRIELLE**

Enough! Trolls go home. Now!

**REINDEER SHED**

The trolls help tend the reindeer and dump a bucket of water on Gnarles.

**END OF VISION**

Gnarles shakes himself off as if the water had actually splashed him.

**GNARLES**

Time to return that phone call.

Gnarles eyes Monger.
GNARLES (CONT'D)
Mr. Monger? Can you come help Santa if, if we need you. Stay here until I send for you, okay? Just, stay here.

MONGER
Okay. You send for trolls, my brothers and I be there. Quick.

GNARLES
Fine. I am done here.

MONGER
Want to go bungee jumping? Plenty of strong rope. Good enough us. Plenty good you. What you say?

GNARLES
Bungee jumping?! Goodness, no. My duties require me elsewhere. Good day, Mr. Monger.

Monger slaps the back of Clumsy Troll's head.

CLUMSY TROLL
What that for?

MONGER
You smell bad. Lots bad.

The trolls banter back and forth as they continue their trek to go bungee jumping.

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY

Gnarles waits in the coal-blackened snow just outside the shaft entrance.

THOMAS KOHL (20s), pale skin, black beard and dark eyes, walks up to Gnarles and stops a few feet away.

GNARLES
Mr. Thomas Kohl? You received my phone call?
THOMAS
Of course. Why else would I be here?

GNARLES
I arranged for us to have some privacy. The dwarfs are at a bashing party.

EXT. DWARF CAVE - DAY

A roomy cave. A wall of fallen rock covers one side of the cave. The dwarfs brag and bash piles of rock to impress each other.

TURKIAH
This rock's name is Gnarles Gnedward Gnome.

He raises his mallet.

TURKIAH (CONT'D)
(as Gnarles)
Now, do you have the amount of coal required for the naughty list?

He smashes the rocks to pebbles.

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY

THOMAS
Well, down to business. Santa no longer wants to be Santa--

GNARLES
--I would not say that.

THOMAS
I would.

GNARLES
You have a solution to the Christmas delivery issue?

THOMAS
You mean, the near earth-shattering (MORE)
THOMAS (CONT'D)
crisis that the children of the
world will experience, in about one
week, when Santa doesn't show? That
one?

GNARLES
Yes, that would be the one.

THOMAS
Here's what we'll do...

MOMENTS LATER

Gnarles listens. Nods his head and leaves.

Thomas remains.

Something moves inside his coat pocket.

A small creature pops out of Thomas' pocket.

The creature appears to be the size of a man's hand and made
of black modeling clay and coal. Nasty with sharp teeth. This
is LUMP, a coal mite.

THOMAS
Ah. Lump. Did you hear all that?

The coal mite nods and bites at the air.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Now, that we're near Santa's magic,
show me what you can do.

Lump jumps to the ground.

Blue light swirls around Lump as he grows bigger and bigger.

As he grows, Lump creates other mites.

The blue light grows stronger. Quite impressive.

An electrical crackling signals a sharp reversal in Lump's
size as he shrinks back to normal size.
The new coal mites pop like exploding light bulbs as they vanish.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Don't worry, Lump. There will be no shortage of magic come Christmas Eve.

Thomas picks up an exhausted Lump.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I remember when I was the show off.

FLASHBACK:

SUPER: Christmas Eve - Fifteen years ago

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The church windows glow from the candlelight mass. SINGING fills the night.

A fire alarm RINGS. The sprinkler system kicks in with a WHOOSH.

The glow from the windows goes out as the water extinguishes each of the candles. The wet churchgoers flee.

Mass confusion.

The FIREFIGHTERS arrive in their truck amidst a flash of lights and the wailing of sirens.

A few moments later, the firefighters signal "false alarm."

A short distance away, YOUNG THOMAS, a seven year old boy with a thin build, pale skin and dark eyes, enjoys the commotion.

Thomas' dark eyes flash with mischief until an ANGRY NUN grabs his shoulder from behind and pushes him toward the church.

ANGRY NUN
Mr. Thomas Kohl. Up to no good again.
Why am I not surprised?
Thomas' expressionless face looks into the street light.

INT. THOMAS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Average wallpaper and furniture. Spectacular Christmas tree.

ROSE KOHL, Thomas' mother, stands over Thomas while he sits at the table.

Her anger simmers beneath her tired eyes.

She lays his hands flat on the table.

She TAPS a rolling pin on the edge of the table.

    ROSE
    Thomas. (tap)

    YOUNG THOMAS
    Mm.

    ROSE
    You scare me. (tap)

    YOUNG THOMAS
    What?

    ROSE
    You don't listen. (tap) You don't care. (tap) You don't help out. (tap) You don't--

    YOUNG THOMAS
    --Mom.

Rose slams the rolling pin on the table.

Thomas flinches and pulls his hands back. He wiggles all ten fingers. Relief.

    ROSE
    Thomas. Do I have your attention?

Thomas nods. His eyes never leave the rolling pin.
Rose grabs Thomas by the chin and forces him to look at her.

ROSE (CONT'D)
I want you to go to bed. It's Christmas Eve. I want you to think about what you did tonight.

YOUNG THOMAS
Mom.

ROSE
Go!

INT. THOMAS' HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Christmas morning.

Thomas walks slowly down the stairs and looks gloomily at the small stack of gifts under the tree.

He checks the stocking on the fireplace. The familiar coal-shaped lump. He stops. Rose gazes at her son with a pained expression.

ROSE
Son, I am sorry.

YOUNG THOMAS
I am too.

Thomas looks sad. Rose hugs him.

ROSE
You'll always be The Prince of Coal to me.

Thomas' lips form a tight line.

He grabs the lump of coal from the stocking and walks slowly back upstairs to his--

BEDROOM

--where he reaches under the bed and retrieves a basket full of coal.
He adds lump number five to the basket.

Magical sparks and blue light weave around the five lumps of coal.

The lumps float in the air.

Thomas' eyes go wide and his jaw drops.

The lumps reform into a the dull, dark, puppet-like body and head of a coal mite.

Lump, the newly-formed coal mite, stretches. His eyes and sharp teeth shine a glossy black.

LUMP
Yes!

YOUNG THOMAS
That was wicked cool! Are you an alien?

LUMP
No, I am not an alien. I'm more of a pet. A pet you can pal around with. A friend.

YOUNG THOMAS
My name's Thomas.

LUMP
You can call me Lump. Say, what did you do to earn lump number five?

MOMENTS LATER

Lump and Thomas laugh.

LUMP (CONT'D)
At a church? On Christmas Eve? That's legendary. We'll get along just fine.

END OF FLASHBACK

SUPER: One week before Christmas
EXT. REINDEER SHED - DAY

The reindeer stand in the snow. Their thick fur looks shaggy and lackluster.

The herd watches as two reindeer fly above Santa's cabin.

Each reindeer has an elf rider armed with pine cones. The riders throw the pine cones down the chimney.

Mrs. Claus comes to the window and shrugs her shoulders.

The reindeer gaze sadly at Santa's cabin.

INT. TOY WORKSHOP - DAY

The elves putter around the workshop.

Chuck and Bruce perform martial arts exercises with any elf who will join them.

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY

No dwarfs. The mining carts sit empty on the rails.

EXT. DWARF CAVE - DAY

The dwarfs sprawl about the cave, mallets by their feet.

TURKIAH
Lads, personally, I wouldn't mind getting coal for Christmas. But the little tots...

He checks to see if the dwarfs are listening.

TURKIAH (CONT'D)
If Santa doesn't deliver gifts this year...it might time to rethink the "coal as penalty" rule.

The dwarfs jump up and shout at Turkiah.
DWARFS
What? You're crazed Turkiah! Bash a boulder, that'll get you right. Don't worry about Santa Sad Sack.

TURKIAH
Ah, you're probably right, lads. Not our problem.

EXT. TROLL CAMP - DAY

Monger and several of his brothers enjoy bungee jumping from a tree next to a high cliff.

Clumsy Troll coils Monger's rope by the tree. Monger interrupts.

MONGER
Me check own knot.

Monger faces away the edge and dives backward off the cliff.
Eyes open. Graceful.
He glides through the air, wind flowing through his fur.
The rope pulls him back. He stops bouncing.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Me do that again!

INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY

A huge pile of letters addressed to Santa sit in the center of the room. Unopened.

Gnarles eyes the new table. Next, he scrutinizes a less-than-robust Santa.

GNARLES
Santa?

SANTA
Mm.
GNARLES
I understand you are not feeling particularly well right now... and with Mrs. Claus...

Santa groans.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
I may have a solution.

Santa pays attention.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
An opportunity has presented itself.

SANTA
Out with it, Gnarles!

GNARLES
The opportunity...

SANTA
Gnarles!

GNARLES
A replacement for you has contacted me. He can start as soon as you retire.

Santa looks at the piles of letters.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
Santa?

SANTA
Mrs. Claus won't be happy with me.

Gnarles' face shows a glimmer of hope.

SANTA (CONT'D)
I'll do it.

Gnarles looks surprised.
GNARLES
Are you sure about this? Do you want to know his name?

Santa lifts the gnome. They dance around the cabin. Gnarles' feet scamper against Santa's chest.

SANTA
Thank you, Gnarles! I feel like my soul is so much lighter. Jessica will see, she will.

Santa puts Gnarles down.

GNARLES
Thomas said your word was required to begin preparations.

SANTA
Of course.

GNARLES
Thomas will arrive in a few hours for a news conference. He insisted.

SANTA
No problem.

As Gnarles leaves, he turns around to watch Santa dancing with himself. Gnarles then shakes his head and continues on his way.

EXT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY - LATER

A TV news van sits outside in the thick snow. The station call letters: NPOL. A satellite dish. Numerous cables run into the cabin.

INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY - LATER

The TV NEWS CREW sets up microphones and cameras. The crew alerts their reporter, CALVIN CREST (30s), slick with a smile enhanced by modern dentistry, that Thomas is in the building.

Santa and his replacement stand at opposite ends of the cabin.
Santa looks unkempt and happy. He wears jeans and a flannel shirt.

Thomas looks handsome and energetic. He wears a dark business suit and tie.

Gnarles chases Calvin away from the stack of letters.

Lump peeks out of Thomas' suit coat pocket and grins with his sharp teeth. Thomas pushes him back in. Lump grumbles.

Gnarles leads Santa over to Thomas.

GNARLES
Santa Claus, this is Mr. Thomas Kohl.

Santa claps Thomas on his shoulder.

SANTA
Thank you. Thank you very much, sir.

THOMAS
What's it like?

SANTA
I'm sorry...

THOMAS
Bringing such joy to all those children.

SANTA
Well, to be honest. I need a break from the little hooligans.

THOMAS
Mm. I understand Mrs. Claus won't be here for the announcement.

SANTA
Um, that's correct. She's on vacation already--
THOMAS
--During preparations for Christmas Eve?

Gnarles, agitated by Thomas' questions, tugs at Santa's sleeve.

GNARLES
Ah, Santa. We'd better go. The camera crew is ready for us.

SANTA
Mrs. Claus is not the one who delivers the gifts.

Gnarles guides a confused Santa to the podium.

The bright lights go on. The microphones go live.

The event displays on every television, everywhere.

TV CREW MONITOR

The monitor shows a frumpy, old man with a thin, white beard. A shadow of the jolly, old fat man.

SUPER: Santa Claus - North Woods

SANTA
Hello, children. And parents as well. I am usually dressed in my red suit when you see me. That's what I want to talk to you about today.

Santa pauses. He has no notes. Gnarles motions for Santa to continue.

SANTA (CONT'D)
No more red suit for me. That's as plain as I can say it. I will retire this Christmas season--

CALVIN
--What about the kids?
Thomas steps in front of Santa and the camera.

THOMAS
Hello. I am Thomas Kohl.

SUPER: Thomas Kohl - Santa's replacement?

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I am honored to be the new Santa.
After being selected from thousands of candidates--

SANTA
Candidates?

THOMAS
--I assured Santa everything would run smoothly. And, Santa also told me that he can't wait to enjoy his permanent vacation from you little hooligans.

Lump laughs from inside Thomas' pocket.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
And I wish Santa and Mrs. Claus the best rehab, excuse me, vacation ever.

CALVIN
What should we call you?

THOMAS
There's only one Santa Claus - so I don't want to step on his boots - but maybe, a simple Thomas? You know, like Madonna or Michael.

Gnarles jumps on the podium. His small figure fills the monitor screen.

GNARLES
This news conference is over!

While everyone focuses on Gnarles, Thomas sets Lump on the floor. Lump heads to the electrical power cable and gnaws on it.
CALVIN
Hey, someone get the elf off the podium.

GNARLES
Elf!? I am not an elf. I am a gnome. Elves are silly things with pointy ears. I am not a troll. Trolls are big and clumsy, plus they reek.

The gnome shakes with frustration and shows no sign of stopping his tirade.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
Dwarfs just want to bash things. Reindeer kick you when you are not looking.

Lump gnaws through the wires. The TV feed is lost.

CALVIN
Wait. It doesn't matter about the "gnome." We lost our feed.

Lump returns. Thomas bends down to pick up Lump and stashes him in his pocket.

Gnarles sputters out of steam.

GNARLES
I'll be glad to be rid of them.

Santa eyes Gnarles.

SANTA
Gnarles, what have you done?

GNARLES
Well, somebody had to save Christmas. You certainly were not going to do it.

Santa has nothing to say.

Gnarles regards Santa with pity.
Thomas smiles and exits. Lump still laughs.

People react to the news:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Upset. TWO SMALL CHILDREN sit in front of an old TV and stare in confusion. They cry as their PARENTS try to calm them.

Havoc. Several PARENTS and WORKERS at a daycare center attempt to settle the TINY TOTS.

Destroy. A LARGE FAMILY OF CHILDREN rip down their Christmas tree and other decorations.

Grief. The public school in New York, where Serena attends, has GRIEF COUNSELORS for the children. Jackson enjoys the other children's cries and sniffles.

Deaf. Serena's school again. Serena speaks up for Santa but the other kids shout her down.

Nasty. The department store SANTA LOOK-A-LIKES hide from the kids anywhere they can: Rest rooms, behind the Santa shacks, and window displays. The kids always find them.

Outrage. PARENTS speak out at an outdoor "Santa, Come Back" rally. Parents shout "Santa yes, Thomas no!"

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. VAIL, COLORADO - DAY


At the top of the ski lift, a mature, white-haired woman in a red ski suit, deftly jumps off.

She skis smoothly past the Black Diamond trail marker. Only for experts.

She waits as two younger SKI BUNNIES, women skiers, join her.
MRS. CLAUS
Come on ladies. Daylight's wasting!
Or, are you young, timid bunnies going
to sit up here and wiggle your noses,
while I send the ski patrol back?

Mrs. Claus pushes off. The two Bunnies push off after her.

They race down slope towards the lodge. The Bunnies ski with ease, but Mrs. Claus kicks it up a notch.

Mrs. Claus arrives first in a spray of snow.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
Thanks ladies! Same time tomorrow?

SKI BUNNIES
We'll be there. Awesome skiing today,
Mrs. C.!

INT. SKI LODGE - DAY

Mrs. C. sits by the fire in the center of the spacious, wooden lodge. Her eyes wander around the lodge.

She spots some fellow SKIERS yelling at the TV.

Curious, she walks over to the TV crowd. She watches the reporter on TV intently.

She gasps when she sees Santa. She gasps again when she sees Thomas and Gnarles.

CALVIN (V.O.)
Disturbing news, indeed from the North Woods. We'll keep you up to date on "Santagate" as news develops. This is Calvin Crest, NPOL. Good day.

SKIER
--Can you believe that? Santa's hanging up his suit. I think I'll stay here tonight. Too much drama at home with the kids.
MRS. CLAUS
Oh no you don't, Santa. You're not getting off that easy. Days are wasting.

The skier shakes his head.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
Rehab center? My big red... apples.

Mrs. C. exits.

SUPER: Two days

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY

The dwarfs bash with their mallets and scoop with their shovels.

Turkiah sets a stiff pace. Coal piles up everywhere.

Thomas strolls up behind Turkiah and the dwarfs.

TURKIAH
I bet we'll be shoveling this coal through Christmas Day.

The other dwarfs struggle to keep up.

TURKIAH (CONT'D)
I do believe that Thomas is going to sell this coal to the highest bidder.

THOMAS
You're a sharp one, aren't you?

TURKIAH
Bash it! Quit sneaking around. Say what you're going to say.

THOMAS
Ah, now, you're being blunt. I like that.

Turkiah bashes the coal pile next to him into dust.
THOMAS (CONT'D)
Your bashing of coal, while effective, is hardly efficient. You and your dwarfs are fired.

TURKIAH
You can't do that! Only Santa... and you're the...

THOMAS
Yes?

TURKIAH
The new Santa.

THOMAS

The dwarfs grumble. Turkiah holds up his hand. The dwarfs stare as Thomas returns to the shack.

TURKIAH
Let's go to Santa's cabin and see if we can talk sense into Santa and Gnarles.

Turkiah looks beat like the rest of the dwarfs.

ZACHARIAH "ZACH" STRANGLEHOLD, another mature dwarf, stands ready for Turkiah's directions.

TURKIAH
Zach, you and the other bashers go ahead, I'll just keep my eye on Thomas for awhile.

INT. TOY WORKSHOP - DAY

The elves bustle with excitement.

The work order machine spits out toy orders. A green light flashes every time an order arrives.

The elves strive to fill the children's wishes.
CHUCK
Let's go elves!

BRUCE
Let's do it for ourselves!

BRIELLE
And for Thomas.

The elves stop.

A chilly cricket shivers and chirps in a corner. The cricket shrugs.

ELVES
For the children!

The elves resume their frantic pace.

Thomas walks in. Unseen.

The work order machine flashes a red warning beacon. An alarm sounds as everything grinds to a halt.

BRIELLE
What's going on?

THOMAS
You elves can work for yourselves.

BRUCE
Yeah! We can do it. We can--

Chuck spin kicks Bruce. Bruce reacts.

CHUCK
Knock it off.

Bruce realizes he should be quiet. The other elves don't move and stare at Thomas.

THOMAS
Anywhere, anytime, anyone. But not for me. You are all fired.
Thomas gives a smug smile as he walks past the elves and exits.

Once the door closes, the elves panic and scurry about.

    BRIELLE
    Elves. Stop. Stop! Let's go see if
    Santa knows about this.

    BRUCE
    That sad sack of toys?

    CHUCK
    He owes us!

Brielle separates the arguing duo.

Brielle glances back at the silent and dark workshop. A few of the elves wipe their eyes as they exit.

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY - LATER

A huge office trailer replaces the old mine shack. No dwarfs bash about.

INT. THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY

The office contains extravagant furniture. Heavy desk. Thick arm chairs. Long table. A large window.

Thomas lounges in an arm chair while Lump stands on the table.

    THOMAS
    Get Santa to doubt himself. Check.
    Using that girl was inspired, Lump.

Lump mimics a crying little girl.

    LUMP
    Having Mrs. Claus leave was a nice bonus.

Lump mimics Mrs. Claus slamming a door.
THOMAS
Get Santa to quit.

LUMP
Check.

Lump draws an imaginary check mark in the air.

THOMAS
Fire the dwarfs and elves. And that annoying gnome.

LUMP
Check, check, and check!

Lump punches the air in front of him three times.

THOMAS
Christmas ruined by The Prince of Coal.

LUMP
What would Gnarles say, if he had an open item on his checklist?

THOMAS
(as Gnarles)

Both Lump and Thomas laugh. Lump looks at Thomas out of the corner of his eye.

INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY

Santa wears a plain dressing robe.

Santa packs.

He lays out his famous red suit on the bed. He caresses the suit.

The stack of letters is gone. A note from Gnarles.
GNARLES (V.O.)
Santa, one last item on my checklist before I go. I have requested Monger to assist me with delivering the remaining letters to Thomas. Gnarles.

A single letter remains on the table. The letter is from Serena. Unopened.

Santa picks it up. Puts it back down. He eyes the letter and then turns away as he puts his head down on the table.

Santa folds his arms over his head.

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY

Monger carries a bag of letters towards Thomas' office.

Gnarles rides atop the bag.

A tree branch snaps him in the face and he falls hat first into the snow.

His pointed hat pops off. His hat flips over full of snow and looks like a snow cone.

Monger continues walking.

GNARLES
Monger!

Monger laughs as he picks up the irate gnome.

Monger sticks out his tongue and takes a lick from the snow cone.

Gnarles grabs his hat and wipes the troll drool off.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
You did that on purpose!

Monger shakes his head and avoids smiling.

They arrive at the trailer.
Gnarles approaches the trailer and hears two voices.

    GNARLES (CONT'D)
    Please Monger. Quiet be. Lift me up to
    the window.

Gnarles spies into the trailer.

    GNARLES (CONT'D)
    Thomas and a nasty little coal mite!

INT. THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY

Lump points at Gnarles peeping in the window.

    THOMAS
    What is it Lump?

    LUMP
    It's Gnarles. Get him!

EXT. THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY

Thomas exits.

Monger throws the bag of mail at Thomas.

Thomas trips.

He gets up and snags Gnarles and holds him by the neck.

    THOMAS
    Leave troll. Or Gnarles' neck snaps as
    easily as I snap my fingers.

    GNARLES
    Monger, do as he says. I shall be
    alright. Just go back.

Thomas shakes the gnome with menace.

Gnarles mouths "brothers."

Monger looks puzzled. He nods, grunts, and leaves.
Thomas heads into the trailer with Gnarles.

Turkiah hides behind a nearby coal pile.

TURKIAH
Serves you right, Gnarly boy.

INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY

Serena's letter remains on the table. Santa eyes Mrs. Claus' coffee cup. Santa puts his head in his hands.

HOOF BEATS echo outside.

The door opens.

MRS. CLAUS
Well, at least the reindeer still answer when I call.

SANTA
Jessica! You're here. I knew you'd come--

MRS. CLAUS
--Not another word! There's someone I'd like you to see.

A little girl peeks out from behind Mrs. C.

SERENA
Santa!

She runs into Santa's arms.

SANTA
Serena.

Santa touches her scar.

SERENA
It doesn't hurt. My dad says it makes me look distinctive.

Her big eyes stare into Santa's eyes.
SANTA
Serena, I am so sorry about that fire.

SERENA
I know, Santa. Mrs. C. explained it to me. But, I don't understand why your magic runs out at dawn.

MRS. CLAUS
Think about it dear...

SERENA
Santa's magic is good through dawn of Christmas morning...

MRS. CLAUS
And...

SERENA
It's the birthday of Jesus!

MRS. CLAUS
So...

SERENA
...Santa's magic, um, honors the birthday of Jesus?

MRS. CLAUS
Very good. Anything else Santa?

Santa embraces the two girls in his arms.

SANTA
I am so sorry about this last year.

MRS. CLAUS
I know. Let's worry about this Christmas first.

Serena spots her letter.

SERENA
Hey. You didn't read my letter.
SANTA
Do I need to?

SERENA
Santa, you can be so dumb. Yes, you should read it. Or, I'll tell you.

SANTA
That doesn't matter. What matters, is that I couldn't help you during the fire.

SERENA
I'm just glad that you waited as long as you could.

Santa smiles. Mrs. Claus hugs him. Serena looks adorable.

INT. SANTA’S CABIN – DAY – LATER

Serena enjoys a hot apple cider drink as she sits at the table. Mrs. C. and Santa sit and hold hands.

Serena clears her throat.

SERENA
When do I get to meet the gnome who was on TV?

MRS. CLAUS
That would be the Gnarles. You can meet him tomorrow after you get some rest.

SERENA
I am not tired. The kids are calling you Santa Fraud. They know you're real. But they feel like you left us behind.

Santa averts his eyes from Serena.

SERENA
So, what are you going to do about it, Mister Claus?
SANTA
Thomas has my word. My magic will pass to him Christmas Eve.

She stands up on her chair in a huff.

SERENA
So, there is nothing you can do. Or, nothing you want to do.

MRS. CLAUS
Spirited girl.

SERENA
Thank you Mrs. C., I borrowed that one from my mom.

SANTA
Serena, I don't know what to do. We'll see what the morning brings.

INT. COAL MINE - THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY

Gnarles struggles to break free of the ties that bind.

THOMAS
Well, Gnarles. Or, do you prefer Gnarly? I like Gnarles best.

Gnarles tries to wiggle out of his restraints.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Mr. Gnarles Gnedward Gnome.

Thomas picks Gnarles' hat off his head.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Funny. This hat looks like a fool's cap.

GNARLES
I am not a fool!

THOMAS
But you did betray Santa Claus.
GNARLES
I did no such thing. He betrayed us.
The children. Everyone.

THOMAS
Wasn't he worthy of a second chance? A
third chance?

GNARLES
I...

THOMAS
Of course not. You and your check
lists didn't have a box for a tired
and confused old man. Did it?

GNARLES
You're twisting what happened!

THOMAS
Am I? Lump, what do you think?

Lump jumps out of Thomas' pocket.

LUMP
(as Gnarles)
Well, someone had to save Christmas!

GNARLES
A coal mite! Thomas, do you know what
you have? It is vermin!

CRASH!

The door shatters. Turkiah emerges through the doorway with
mallet in hand. He gasps when he sees Lump.

TURKIAH
A coal mite!

Turkiah swings his mallet at Lump.

CRASH! Miss.

Thomas hides in the corner.
GNARLES
Turkiah!

TURKIAH
Gnarly!

GNARLES
Get me out of here.

He picks up Gnarles and the chair and tosses them through the window. Turkiah follows.

THOMAS
We should chase them.

LUMP
What can they do? The traitor and an old dwarf. Who's going to listen?

THOMAS
They smashed up this place.

LUMP
We have to prepare.

THOMAS
What for? What's so hard about giving coal to every child? The reindeer will just be extra tired come Christmas Day.

SUPER: One day

EXT. SANTA'S CABIN – DAY

Early morning. The elves and dwarfs camp in front of the cabin. No trolls or gnomes.

Chuck and Bruce practice their elf tae kwan do.

CHUCK
Where's Gnarles? He started this with Thomas.
BRUCE
How can we trust, Santa? He's a gnome lover.

A spin kick from Bruce nearly knocks Chuck down.

CHUCK
What about the dwarfs?

Another spin kick from Bruce but Chuck easily blocks it.

BRUCE
What about them?

Chuck turns for an extended leg kick. Bruce evades it. Chuck lands in a snow pile.

CHUCK
They probably like Thomas because he fired us.

Chuck executes a flurry of moves forcing Bruce to fall into a snow ravine.

BRUCE
No mercy on the Thomas lovers.

Bruce and Chuck lead the elves in making a lot of snowballs.

ISAIAH "IZZY" STRANGLEHOLD, a young adult dwarf, talks loudly with Zach.

ZACH
Why do we expect anything from Santa? He can't even help himself.

IZZY
I say we go bash Thomas!

ZACH
We can't solve everything with bashing.
IZZY
I know it's wrong, but it feels so right.

A snow ball with a chocolate center hits Zach. Izzy laughs.

ZACH
You pointy ear freaks!

ELVES
Thomas lovers!

The reindeer circle just above the trees. The elves ride the reindeer while bombarding the dwarfs.

The dwarfs build a wall of snow blocks. The snowballs fly towards targets on both sides.

Santa emerges from his cabin.

Santa gets clobbered with a flurry of snowballs. His skin turns red from the multiple impacts.

He forces a laugh. All eyes center on Santa. One final snowball hits Santa.

SANTA
I suppose I had that coming. Now what are you doing here?

ZACH
We were fired by Thomas.

BRIELLE
Elves, too.

ZACH
Gnarly had a hand in it, we're sure.

SANTA
I don't know what to say. My most sincere apologies can't begin to--

IZZY
--What are you going to do about it?
Mrs. C. steps out of the cabin.

CHUCK
She's back. Mrs. Claus, hi!

MRS. CLAUS
You should be ashamed of yourselves.
"Santa help me! Santa we need you!"

No one can match her stare.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
This is about us. As members of a family. If father's not here, we don't fall apart. We help each other.

IZZY
Where were you, Mrs. Claus? We needed you, too!

MRS. CLAUS
Sometimes, leaving is the best way of standing beside your man.

IZZY
What?

Serena steps out of the cabin.

ELVES
Is that her? That's Serena!

SERENA
What about the children?

Everyone looks at their feet and shuffle back and forth.

MRS. CLAUS
This little girl knows more about Christmas than any of you.

SERENA
Mrs. Claus--
MRS. CLAUS
--Our Santa has claws. Either you are in his sleigh, or you're in the way!

The group cheers.

SANTA
Jessica, what have you done?

MRS. CLAUS
Given you a name to live up to.

SERENA
Got a plan?

SANTA
Nope.

EXT. NORTH WOODS - DAY

Turkiah huffs as he walks underneath the trees. Gnarles bumps up and down as he rides on Turkiah's shoulders.

Gnarles checks over his back.

GNARLES
Why don't they pursue us?

TURKIAH
My guess? We're too small to worry about.

GNARLES
I hate being small.

TURKIAH
Gnarly, did you know about the coal mite?

GNARLES
No.

TURKIAH
Thomas doesn't know?
GNARLES
About what?

TURKIAH
About mites. Gnarly, is your hat on a
tad too tight? You seem a little
bashed.

GNARLES
Thomas called me a traitor.

A branch full of snow dislodges onto the two travellers. They
look like a weird snowman. They dig themselves out.

TURKIAH
Ah, that was refreshing. You okay,
Gnarly?

GNARLES
It's Gnarles. My name is Gnarles.
Would you prefer I address you as
Turkey?

Turkiah looks at Gnarles with a new respect. He offers Gnarles
a boost to his shoulder. Turkiah picks up his mallet.

TURKIAH
Ha! Boy, you got me there. Tell you
what. I'll call you Gnarles from now
on and you can keep calling me
Turkiah.

GNARLES
And, if you address me as Gnarly, I
will address you as Turkey in front of
everyone.

TURKIAH
Agreed.

Turkiah trudges through the snow. He aims for a branch that
swipes Gnarles off his shoulders.

TURKIAH
Sorry about that, Gnarles.
GNARLES
You did that on purpose Turkiah!

TURKIAH
Maybe I did. Maybe I didn't.

Gnarles eyes Turkiah and scoffs.

GNARLES
It doesn't matter. I will be forever known as the gnome who betrayed Christmas.

TURKIAH
If that were true, I would have bashed you instead of Thomas' door. Besides, Christmas isn't here yet.

GNARLES
Tonight is Christmas Eve.

TURKIAH
Right. We're almost to Santa's cabin.

GNARLES
So, what do you know about coal mites? Actually, they are quite interesting.

The two figures continue to talk as they plow through the snow.

INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY

Brielle and Zach update Santa and each other. Mrs. C. and Serena listen while tailoring Santa's suit.

SANTA
Sounds like Thomas had this planned all along. But, what's his next step?

BRIELLE
Ruin Christmas, like he ruined the elves.
And the dwarfs.

Turkiah and Gnarles burst through the door. Turkiah breathes heavily. He helps Gnarles off his shoulder and onto the table.

BRIELLE
Traitor!

ZACH
Bash him! Bash him hard!

The Zach swings his mallet at Gnarles.

Turkiah grabs the shaft of the mallet and holds it steady -- inches away from Gnarles' red hat.

TURKIAH
Yes, he was fooled first and fell like a rock, but he's no traitor. Can any of you claim you weren't fooled or tricked by Thomas?

Gnarles beams thanks at Turkiah but bows his head.

GNARLES
Santa. I acted like the rule bound, uptight loner that I am. I thought I had to fix it myself. I should have helped...

They each bow their heads.

BRIELLE
The elves too.

TURKIAH
Same for the dwarfs.

MRS. CLAUS
Me too.

Serena stands with hands on hips.
SERENA
Not me. I did all I could. I can't help it Santa is such a sad sap.

Surprised, Santa steps back from Serena.

SANTA
Thank you, all. We're good. But what's next?

TURKIAH
Thomas has a coal mite. He calls him Lump, like they're the best of buddies.

SERENA
What's a coal mite?

TURKIAH
They're made of coal lumps like this one...

Turkiah takes a lump of coal out of his pocket. Everyone looks at him strangely.

He shrugs and passes it to the people sitting at the table.

GNARLES
At least five lumps of coal...

SANTA
From my coal mines with some of my leftover magic on it...

MRS. CLAUS
Given to a naughty boy or girl...

TURKIAH
Forms into a nasty little vermin that fancy themselves smarter than gnomes.

GNARLES
I highly doubt that.
Serena examines the piece of coal. Serena shrugs her shoulders.

SERENA
Big deal. What does it do?

BRIELLE
Make more mites. Plenty of mischief. And make it impossible for anyone to enjoy Christmas.

SERENA
But, you saw only one. Right?

Serena hands the coal back to Turkiah who puts it back into his pocket.

SANTA
That'll change tonight. That's when the magic is strongest.

Gnarles takes charge.

GNARLES
Hand me that piece of coal, Turkiah.

Gnarles places it on the table.

GNARLES (CONT'D)
Thomas and Santa are scheduled to meet here at the coal mine for a final news conference.

SANTA
At dusk.

GNARLES
We will need to stop Lump form producing mites so we'll need the elves to bring baskets.

Brielle looks confused for a moment then has an "aha" moment.

BRIELLE
What else?
GNARLES
Tell your fung goo--

BRIELLE
--Tae kwan do--

GNARLES
--elves to bring their bamboo sticks.

Gnarles turns to Turkiah.

GNARLES
The dwarfs will need to bring their mallets.

Turkiah salutes Gnarles.

TURKIAH
Turkiah of the Stranglehold clan at your service.

Turkiah raises his fist about to smash the table again. Mrs. C. grabs his outstretched arm and slowly pushes it down.

MRS. CLAUS
Save your strength for tonight. I don't need another new table.

TURKIAH
What about the reindeer?

GNARLES
Santa goes in the sleigh as planned,

Santa, Mrs. C. and Serena stand stunned at the activity.

SANTA
Any orders for us, General?

Santa sweeps his hand at Serena, Mrs. C. and himself.

GNARLES
Yes, Santa. Send a messenger to the trolls. I think Monger knows but make sure he brings rope and plenty of it.
Gnarles looks at everyone around the table.

**GNARLES (CONT'D)**
Anyone think of anything we may have overlooked? Now everyone go!

Turkiah, Zach and Brielle exit. Indistinct yelling off screen.

**SANTA**
May the Christmas Spirit be with us.

**INT. SANTA'S CABIN - DAY - LATER**

Serena crosses her arms and stomps her feet.

**SERENA**
I won't go.

**MRS. CLAUS**
The reindeer and I will take you.

**SERENA**
You know, I'll just find a way to stay or come back.

**MRS. CLAUS**
Santa will never forgive... He was a wreck ever since he had to leave you last Christmas.

**SERENA**
I am going to make sure Santa is all right before I go. Just like he waited for me.

**MRS. CLAUS**
You are one tough little girl.

**SERENA**
Now, you're talking.

**SUPER: Christmas Eve**
EXT. NORTH WOODS - DAY - LATER

The elves and dwarfs head for the coal mine and Thomas.

About fifty dwarfs follow Turkiah. The dwarfs chant "We Will Bash You."


Their mallets held high for each chorus.

About one hundred elves follow Brielle. They carry ropes and baskets.

The elves march in step with the dwarf stomp. Chuck and Bruce follow at the end of the line whirling their bamboo sticks to the beat.


TURKIAH
I hope this works.

BRIELLE
If not, we "mite" not live to see Christmas morning.

TURKIAH
Oh, Brielle. I thought you were funnier than that.

Brielle blushes.

BRIELLE
Really?

Turkiah blushes.

TURKIAH
I wish we knew if the trolls were coming. We could use their strength of "smell."
INT. THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

The broken door and window remain in pieces on the floor.

Lump's black eyes glow with anticipation. His short figure stands on the table while Thomas babbles on.

THOMAS
If we've fired the elves... and the dwarfs... Who is going to load the sleigh tonight? Won't the coal be awfully heavy?

Lump laughs and jumps to Thomas' shoulder. He whispers in his ear.

LUMP
Don't forget that with Santa's magic, excuse me, The Prince of Coal's magic, the coal will load itself.

THOMAS
I don't remember all of Santa's magic powers, but I really like that one.

Lump laughs again and jumps back to the table. He cartwheels to the other end.

LUMP
The magic is almost here. I can feel it.

THOMAS
You think Santa will come?

LUMP
Santa gave his word. He'll be here.

INT. REINDEER SHED - DAY

Santa arrives in his red suit and hat. Tailored.

Team Santa prepares the familiar red sleigh for Thomas. All decked out.
GNARLES
I do not understand why we are doing Thomas' work for him.

SANTA
We do it for the new Santa. Now, do the complete checklist, Gnarles.

GNARLES
Santa, remember your magic ceases to function when the sun comes up.

SANTA
Gnarles, you worry too much.

Gnarles checks off the last item.

GNARLES
And, so do you.

The reindeer bow to Santa as he stops at each one and says goodbye. Santa gets into the sleigh. The reindeer saunter to the door.

MRS. CLAUS
Stop! You don't think Gnarles and I are going to miss out on the last sleigh ride, do you?

Gnarles and Mrs. C. jump in.

SANTA
You too, Serena.

SERENA
How did you know?

SANTA
The reindeer weren't the least bit tired and I didn't think you'd leave without saying goodbye.

Serena leaps into the sleigh. She laughs as the reindeer run through the snow and they take to the air.
GNARLES
Thomas and Lump won't be happy to see us, Santa.

SANTA
We're just four people in a magical sleigh pulled by nine reindeer on a wonderful night. What could go wrong?

GNARLES
Down one day, up the next. Sometimes, I think you are bipolar.

Gnarles waits. His eyes flash.

MRS. CLAUS
That was the first joke I've ever heard you try, Gnarles. Don't do it again.

Gnarles slumps down as the others try to keep from laughing out loud.

EXT. COAL MINE - NIGHT
Dusk and coal make for a gray landscape.

INT. THOMAS' OFFICE - NIGHT
Thomas and Lump wait in the office. A new door and window.

OUTSIDE
Calvin and the TV news crew return and set up.

INSIDE

THOMAS
There they are.

OUTSIDE

CALVIN
There's Santa!
The camera powers up.

The reindeer do a corkscrew roll before landing. The sleigh slides to a stop in front of Thomas' office.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Looking good, Santa.

INSIDE

THOMAS
Ready for the magic, Lump?

Thomas exits the office with Lump in his pocket.

EXT. COAL MINE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and the news crew gasp.

Thomas wears a suit like Santa's.

Except where one is red, the other is black.

Thomas stands for a moment. He looks handsome in the black suit, dark beard, hair and eyes.

Thomas oozes charm as he walks towards Santa.

CALVIN
Big smiles for the public. This is history!

SANTA
Merry Christmas, Thomas.

THOMAS
Greetings to you, Santa.

Neither one offers to shake hands.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
So, how do we do this?

SANTA
Where's the coal mite, Thomas?
THOMAS
Ah, so Gnarles did make it back.

SANTA
The coal mite will turn on you, they always do.

THOMAS
Let's get this over with Santa.

CALVIN
Come on, guys! We have a show to do. Start again. No retakes this time!

Santa takes a step back as does Thomas.
The cameras roll.

SANTA
Merry Christmas, Thomas.

THOMAS
Greetings, Santa. I see Mrs. Claus is here. Returned from her "vacation," has she?

Mrs. C. lunges forward but Gnarles and Serena grab onto her legs.

THOMAS
I remember Gnarles, the one who arranged this.

Mrs. C. lifts an angry Gnarles up by his coat back.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
And is that the adorable Serena? You can definitely see the scar.

A steaming Serena stares and scoffs at Thomas.

SANTA
Thomas. More "Ho, ho, ho!" please.
THOMAS
Go wet yourself.

Santa ignores Thomas' comment.

SANTA
For the children.

THOMAS
Come on.

SANTA
Take my hand.

The magic flows from Santa to Thomas.

CALVIN
Show time!

The blue light and sparks crackle around their hands.

Thomas laughs as the magic surrounds him.

The magic flows towards Thomas' pocket.

Lump cries out as he absorbs the magic through Thomas.

Lump jumps out of the pocket onto the ground.

SERENA
Santa! I remember now. That's the little black puppet I saw at my house the night of the fire!

LUMP
I remember...

FLASHBACK:

SUPER: Last Christmas Eve

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT
SERENA
Let me know if the reindeer like the apples.

SANTA
I will.

Lump hides in the Christmas tree but almost falls.
The Christmas tree rustles as Santa passes by.
Santa glances at the tree as if he had knocked it.
Lump gnaws the wires in a hurry.
Santa shrugs and exits.
Lump finishes gnawing the wires.
The tree light's electrical wiring sparks into a flame.
Lump's black form slips out the window.
Off screen, a car door slams and Thomas' muffled laughter carries in through the house window.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. COAL MINE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

LUMP
Yes. I remember burning your house down. I almost got Santa, too!

Lump struggles as his body parts morph into bigger parts and quickly return to normal.

THOMAS
Lump! That wasn't our plan.

LUMP
Your plan? Or my plan?

Lump puts his hands on his knees.
THOMAS
Our plan. Together. I am The Prince of Coal. Our mission was to ruin Christmas for every kid with a lump of coal.

LUMP
Our plan? My plan has always been to send a coal mite to every child.

Lump stands up. His body continues to morph between normal and bigger sizes.

THOMAS
Ah, Lump. I really don't have a problem with that.

Lump ignores Thomas.

MRS. CLAUS
How did Thomas know you would go to Serena's house?

SERENA
Duh!

MRS. CLAUS
What?

SANTA
It was the one night they could count on me showing up.

SERENA
So, Thomas and this thing just get away with it?

SANTA
We have a bigger problem, Serena!

Lump finally grows big. Then bigger.

Little coal mites sprout off Lump.

The mites scatter and circle around the gathering.
LUMP
I have the magic! Christmas is mine.

THOMAS
The magic belongs to me, and you belong to me--

Gnarles slaps his forehead.

GNARLES
--Of course!--

LUMP
--Thomas, you mean nothing to me.

EXT. COAL MINE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

THE BATTLE

Santa's army of dwarfs and elves arrive.

Several dwarfs make piles of burning coal.

The dwarfs and elves face off with the mites.

TURKIAH
Bash them all!

BRIELLE
Elves! Catch and burn.

The first wave of mites die.

The dwarfs smash them into dust or the elves capture them in basket traps and burn them in the fires.

Bruce and Chuck use their sticks to flip the mites into the fires. They salute each other like warriors.

But the remaining mites grow stronger and smarter. They stay close to Lump.

TURKIAH
I didn't know they could get that big!
Gnarles tries to warn the news crew.

**CALVIN**
There's that gnome fellow. He's shouting at us... "Behind you."

The crew turns to find Lump about to stomp them.

The crew bails out of the way. Their camera smashes flat.

Gnarles tries to reach Santa but is overwhelmed by coal mites.

The mites bite Gnarles. Painful bites.

Turkiah hears Gnarles cries and fights his way over to him.

**GNARLES**
I need to get to Santa!

**TURKIAH**
Now?

Turkiah bashes another mite.

**GNARLES**
I know how to stop the mites!

**TURKIAH**
Jump on my back and keep those pesky biters off me.

The mites pile on the troll and gnome. Turkiah's dwarf muscles struggle with the burden.

Turkiah and Gnarles break free as the mites are thrown off.

**THE BATTLE (BY SANTA)**

Santa tries to help Serena and Mrs. C. escape. Mites block their way.

**SERENA**
Santa!
SANTA
Think, Santa. Think.

SERENA
Can we get to the reindeer?

SANTA
Yes, but they are Thomas' now.

Santa pauses. Thomas stands in the middle of the battle untouched. Thomas appears crazed.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Thomas!

THOMAS
There's nothing you can do!

SANTA
Thomas, listen. Jessica and Serena aren't part of this. Let the reindeer fly them away from here.

The reindeer prance.

THOMAS
No! You brought them, you save them.

The reindeer freeze in place.

Thomas walks closer to Santa.

SERENA
Santa, hurry!

The mites circle Santa and the girls but don't attack.

MRS. CLAUS
What are they waiting for?

SERENA
Lump.

Serena points.
Blue light and sparks flash around Thomas.

The energy arcs towards Lump.

THOMAS
Lump? What are you doing?

LUMP
Taking it all!

Lump swipes at Thomas.

Thomas hurls through the air and lands by Santa.

THE BATTLE (BY BRIELLE)

The landscape glows red from the coal fires.

The dwarfs bash the mites into dust. The dwarfs tire.

Turkiah still fights with Gnarles on his back.

BRIELLE
Come on elves! Show them what you're made of!

The elves fight with a burst of energy but eventually retreat from the sharp teeth of the mites.

The mites throw Bruce and Chuck into the fires. The elves hop away, their butts on fire. They plant their butts in a snow bank.

THE BATTLE (BY SANTA)

Blood trickles from Thomas' brow and nose. Mrs. C. rips strips from her dress for bandages.

THOMAS
Lump! Help me.

MRS. CLAUS
I don't think he's in a helping mood right now.
THE BATTLE (BY TURKIAH)

Several large, shadowy figures pick up the rope coils by the mine entrance.

The shadowy figures throw the ropes over Lump.

One of the figures steps into the glow of the fires.

    MONGER
    Turkiah! Ropes!

    GNARLES
    About time, Monger.

The dwarfs and the trolls pull the ropes tight over Lump.

    GNARLES
    Turkiah, I still need to get to Santa. Now!

Down to one knee, Lump fights the ropes.

    TURKIAH
    Not now, Gnarly!

Turkiah struggles with several other dwarfs and trolls keeping the ropes tight.

    GNARLES
    Turkiah! Throw me as hard as you can at Santa.

    TURKIAH
    I can't let go of the rope.

    GNARLES
    We'll never defeat Lump this way. He's too strong.

    TURKIAH
    I ma not sure I can throw you that far.
GNARLES
Turkey. Turkey the jerky dwarf!
Gobble--

Turkiah lets go.

Lump breaks free.

Turkiah throws Gnarles, pointy hat first, like a missile at Santa and--

THE BATTLE (BY SANTA)
--hits Santa square in the gut.

SANTA
Uff dah!

Santa and Gnarles untangle themselves.

GNARLES
Santa. Thomas tricked us.

SANTA
And Lump tricked us all.

GNARLES
We can stop them! I know how.

SANTA
Go on. Thomas should listen too.

GNARLES
Are you sure?

Santa nods.

GNARLES
Thomas said that Lump belonged to him.

Thomas stares.

GNARLES
And if Thomas had a coal mite that means he was a naughty boy--
THOMAS
For five years in a row. So?

GNARLES
Naughty boys or girls can not be Santa Claus.

SERENA
Never?

GNARLES
Never.

THOMAS
Lump!

THE BATTLE

More ropes loop around Lump as he fights the strong arms of the dwarfs and trolls.

Santa's army pulls Lump towards the coal fires.

The mites go nuts. They bite the dwarfs and trolls while the elves try to keep the mites at bay.

Lump breaks free again and stomps towards Santa.

MONGER
Santa. Save Santa!

The trolls and dwarfs throw ropes around Lump. Third time.

Lump goes down--

THE BATTLE (BY SANTA)

--as Thomas watches.

THOMAS
Santa, can I give you the magic back?

GNARLES
Santa could just take it.
SANTA
It's best if the magic is freely given.

THOMAS
Will Lump survive?

SANTA
That's up to Lump.

Thomas' hand stretches toward Santa. Santa's hand stretches toward Thomas. The hands clasp.

The familiar blue light with sparks glows around the hands.

The magic arcs from Lump to the two men and finally to Santa.

The reversal shrinks Lump down to normal size. The remaining mites bust to dust.

Thomas runs over to Lump and crouches down.

THOMAS
Why?

LUMP
You aren't The Prince of Coal, I am.

Lump fades into dust. Thomas puts his forehead in his hands.

Serena, Santa, Gnarles, and Mrs. Claus watch with sad looks on their faces.

SANTA
Thomas, I know what it's like to be powerless to save a friend.

THOMAS
What am I going to do?

GNARLES
Stay away from coal?

Serena slaps Gnarles hat and gives him a stern look.
SANTA
The spirit of Christmas isn't about giving life, it's about enjoying life.

THOMAS
And that bumper sticker of wisdom will make me feel better?

Thomas stares at each of them.

SANTA
Thomas, you had the spirit inside you. Didn't you feel it?

THOMAS
I don't know. Lump wasn't sharing. Maybe, if I start glowing blue...

THE BATTLE - AFTERMATH

Turkiah, Monger, and Brielle stand before their cheering troops. They stand in a circle, hands extended in a team sharing moment.

Monger puts in his large, hairy hand.

MONGER
Brothers.

Followed by a delicate hand.

BRIELLE
Elves.

Topped by an large, calloused hand.

TURKIAH
Dwarfs.

A tiny, age spotted hand.

GNARLES
Gnomes.

A small child's hand
SERENA
Children.

Serena gasps.

SERENA
Is it too late? I can't believe it.

SANTA
There's not enough time. Even for me and the reindeer.

Calvin gets up close with his cellphone camera.

CALVIN
This is the money shot!

Serena buries her face in Santa's coat and sobs. Serena pulls away from Santa and looks up at his face.

Mrs. C. walks over to Santa

MRS. CLAUS
Are you sure, Santa?

Santa nods his head.

SANTA
With all my magic and Christmas Spirit, I am powerless.

SERENA
I know what it's like to have to wait until next Christmas. My gifts burned up in the fire last year. This one day a year to you, is worth so much to us children.

The gathering murmurs assent.

Thomas lifts his head up.

THOMAS
What if there were two Santas?
Everyone looks askance at Thomas.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Not me! Mrs. Claus.

Santa and Mrs. C. look stunned then bemused.

Santa gets down on one knee and takes her hand in his.

SANTA
Jessica, would you help me guide my sleigh tonight?

MRS. CLAUS
On one condition. This is the way we do it every year.

Santa eyes twinkle as he looks into Jessica's eyes.

Mr. and Mrs. Claus kiss.

And that blue light starts to glow and sparkle as they embrace.

Serena and the weary elves, dwarfs, trolls, reindeer, and one gnome, cheer.

In the background, the Calvin finishes shooting and looks into the cellphone camera.

CALVIN
Did you get that? Did you get that?
Yeah, I know. I was crying.

Calvin wanders off.

TURKIAH
You know, Santa, there's not much time to load coal and all...

SANTA
Out with it.

Turkiah kicks a coal pile as if he were a nervous kid.
TURKIAH
The dwarfs could help the elves load presents and such. We could do it if there were no coal to load for the naughty children.

SANTA
And get rid of the naughty list? Are you joking?

TURKIAH
That's okay, Santa--

SANTA
--I love the idea, Turkiah! No more coal for the kids. My sleigh will be lighter--

MRS. CLAUS
--for two. Thank you, Turkiah. Well done.

Turkiah blushes. Some of the dwarfs slap him on the back. The rest of the dwarfs shake their heads. The elves give cautious thanks.

Santa faces Gnarles.

SANTA
Gnarles, on behalf of all of us: Thank you for saving Christmas. Twice!

GNARLES
Anything for you, Santa.

BRIELLE
Just don't do it again. Or we're no longer friends.

Gnarles eyes glisten and takes his glasses off to wipe his eyes.

SANTA
Quickly now. We have toys to deliver!
EXT. GLOBAL LOCATIONS - NIGHT - LATER

The two Santas deliver the gifts to children around the globe.

MONTAGE:

Pictures of children of different nationalities shown sleeping or waiting up. Alternate with pictures of Santa and Mrs. Claus delivering presents.

SUPER: Time Remaining: 40% Deliveries: 0%

The team serpentes through the cities of the world: Europe, the Ukraine, Africa...

SUPER: Time remaining: 25% Deliveries: 25%

The team streaks though Australia, India, China, Japan...

SUPER: Time Remaining: 15% Deliveries: 60%

The team goes to the North Woods for a sleigh refill. It's like a NASCAR pit stop.

The team goes extremely fast through South America and Mexico...

SUPER: Time Remaining: 5% Deliveries: 90%

The team goes ultra, extremely fast through Canada, the USA...

SUPER: Time Remaining: 0% Deliveries: 100%

END MONTAGE

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Santa's sleigh approaches Serena's house.

The sky turns a bit lighter.

The sleigh drops. Pulling the reindeer down, hooves thrashing. The sleigh stops a few feet above the ground.
Santa holds his breath. The sleigh jerks up to the same height as before.

The reindeer snort.

Serena awakes.

SERENA
Santa?

SANTA
Two minute warning. We'll have to leave very soon.

Serena hugs Santa.

SERENA
You know, Thomas and Lump almost got what they wanted, but they were stopped by the real Prince of Coal.

SANTA
So, now I am The Prince of Coal? Because, I didn't give coal this year?

SERENA
Yup.

Santa wears a thoughtful expression on his face.

MRS. CLAUS
Serena, you can visit the reindeer anytime.

SERENA
You mean, I can visit you anytime I want.

MRS. CLAUS
A most precious child indeed.

SANTA
Thank you, Serena for keeping the spirit of Christmas alive in me.
The team lands.

Serena exits.

Another quick hug.

The reindeer and sleigh take off and disappear in flash of color just before the sun rises.

A portion of the magic flashes into Serena's house.

INT. SERENA'S HOUSE - LATER

Serena enters. Serena's parents wait half-asleep for her. The number of presents surprise Serena and her parents.

Serena smiles so wide her scar hides for the moment.

SUPER: Next Christmas Eve

EXT. NORTH WOODS - DAY

Late in the day. Picturesque. Snow. Trees. Blue sky.

INT. TOY WORKSHOP - DAY

The elves scurry from work table to work table. Twice as many gifts as last year.

Brielle gets hit with a snowball.

Chuck and Bruce point at each other. She spin kicks both of them at once.

The two trouble makers bow low before their new master and get back to work.

EXT. COAL MINE - DAY

Turkiah supervises the dwarfs as they bash coal and load the mining carts.

A large sign proclaims "Serena's Coal Mine" while a smaller sign states "Proud Sponsor of No More Coal for Kids Charity."
Turkiah throws a coal mite doll in the mine by the other dwarfs. The dwarfs bash it with enthusiasm.

Turkiah waves at Thomas--

EXT. THOMAS' OFFICE - DAY

--where he stacks boxes of coal mite dolls.

One of the coal mite dolls sits on Thomas' shoulder with the assistance of a couple of strips of duct tape. It has the name "Lump" embroidered on its chest.

The "Lump" doll appears to come alive and sneer, making biting noises with its teeth. It quickly resumes its doll form. Creepy.

A sign on the building identifies "The Prince of Coal Production Company."

EXT. TROLL CAMP - DAY

Monger and his brothers entertain a group of elves, dwarfs, and Gnarles with a bungee jumping show.

EXT. SERENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Serena waits at the table with cookies and apples. A fire extinguisher and a child-sized mallet stand beneath the table.

EXT. REINDEER SHED - NIGHT

Dusk. Santa and Mrs. C. ready to go. Brielle, Monger, and Turkiah stand with the elves.

Gnarles goes through his pre-flight checklist, the reindeer snicker and one of them playfully nudges Gnarles.

Another takes his hat. Another takes his notebook.

Everyone laughs, including Gnarles.

He gets his hat back but not his notebook.

Gnarles laughs and walks over to his friends.
TURKIAH
Nicely done, Gnarly. This'll be the best Christmas.

GNARLES
Even if you're not bashing coal mites?

TURKIAH
One coal mite wasn't that bad.

Mrs. C. glares at Gnarles and Turkiah. They stop chatting.

Mrs. C. smiles and turns her attention to Santa.

MRS. CLAUS
Santa, I'll drive for the first hemisphere, you drive the next.

SANTA
East. West?

MRS. CLAUS
North. South.

She snaps the reins.

The group waves as the reindeer and the two red-suited partners rumble through the snow and pop into the air.

SANTA/MRS. CLAUS
Merry Christmas!

The reindeer and Mrs. C. show off by performing a barrel roll and--

FADE OUT.

THE END.