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Christmas Cards

An original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - NIGHT

A rustling sound pierces the pitch-black attic. TONY CAVELLI, 9, rolls over in his bed. He turns on his flashlight then passes the beam over his brother, SAMMY CAVELLI, 11.

Sammy is completely covered by an old tattered blanket. He's still asleep. Their beds are pads that are only two inches thick on the cold wooden floor.

A dog whimpers in the darkness.

Tony rapidly moves the light to the foot of his bed. A wagging tail that belongs to Tony's beautiful black lab juts out from beneath the blanket.

TONY (O.S.)
(whispering)
Quiet, Ace. Sammy's still sleeping.

Tony moves the circle of light along the wooden floor. A drop of melted snow shines as it splashes into a bowl that is half-filled with water. Another drop falls.

A mouse is caught by surprise. Tony watches it escape into its hole.

Tony slowly moves the oasis of illumination up the wall and across the ceiling until he stops at a colony of daddy-long-legs.

The spiders bounce up and down as they hang from the space directly above his head. Tony shivers his shoulders.

TONY (O.S.)
Jeepers.

Tony shines his flashlight on his closet which is a rope tied between two rafters. The attic gradually becomes bright enough to reveal vague shapes and silhouettes.

Tony quietly stands. He's tall for a nine-year-old and very thin with thick black hair.

Tony shines the flashlight onto an open almanac. The page reads "Sunrise Chart, New York". All the times have been crossed out through December 11th, 1949.

Tony glances at his alarm clock then turns off the flashlight.

TONY
(whispering)
You better get up, Ace. You're gonna miss the show.

Ace whimpers again then reluctantly shakes the blanket off of his head.

Tony quickly removes all three shirts and the pair of patched up slacks from the rope. Only his nearly new jeans are left hanging in his closet.

Tony throws on his slacks, the two T-shirts, and last is the white long-sleeve button-up shirt.

Tony grabs his socks from a nail above his bed. The socks have more holes than the rag he uses to shine his shoes. He smiles with pride as he examines their glow.

Tony hurriedly puts them on then waits as his wide open eyes glisten in the dim morning light.

A sunbeam comes through the space between the rafters. Another appears then another.

Tony is transfixed as the room completely fills with light. The rays slowly disappear.

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

Though unfinished, the attic is tidy except for a few clothes near Sammy's bed. The walls are two-by-fours and plywood with a small window in the corner.

Sammy wakes.

SAMMY
So, how was the show?

Sammy stretches then struggles to stand. He's thin but his athletic physique shows he is strong and very fit.

TONY
Not bad, I've seen better.

Tony sits at his desk which is two empty cardboard boxes, one on top of the other. There's a slot he cut out of the top box that functions as a drawer.

Tony slips his hand into the slot and pulls out a comic book.

Sammy pulls up his pants. He Removes twenty cents from his pocket.

SAMMY

(sighs)

I need to make some money.

Tony thumbs through the comic book pages.

Sammy adjusts his rolled-up sleeves.

TONY

How ya gonna do that?

SAMMY

There's a million ways, you just need to keep your eyes open...

Tony notices an advertisement about selling Christmas cards.

SAMMY

...and if you're willin' to take a risk you can make a wad.

TONY

Yeah, well, I'm only nine.

SAMMY

Hey, no excuses, just do it.

Tony examines the ad more closely.

TONY

This says I'll get two greenbacks for every box of Christmas cards I sell.

Sammy looks into the mirror which is a broken piece of glass hanging on the wall.

Tony traces a few numbers in the air with his finger.

TONY

I'm gonna make one hundred dollars.

SAMMY

You're such a dreamer. That's a lot of lettuce. How you gonna do that?

TONY

I'm gonna sell fifty boxes.

SAMMY

(laughing)

If it can be done, you can do it. I believe you.

Sammy, now dressed, leaves.

Tony takes the top box off of the bottom one. On top of the bottom box is a small roll of tape, a couple of pencils, a notebook, some envelopes, and a few other things.

Tony copies the address from the ad onto an envelope then slowly tears the coupon out of the comic book.

Tony writes a big 50 where it says "please indicate how many boxes you would like delivered to your house". He puts the coupon in the envelope.

Tony finds a stamp.

TONY

This is the last stamp, Ace. I hope
it's worth it.

Tony holds the stamp to the side so Ace can lick it. He carefully places the stamp in the top right corner then holds out the envelope. Ace whines and puts his head down.

TONY

Okay, okay. I'll do it.

Tony moistens the glue with his tongue, makes a terrible face, and closes the seal.

KITCHEN

Tony reaches the bottom of the stairs with Ace. He's carrying a geography book and a worksheet. He cracks open the door to his sisters' bedroom.

TONY

Hi-de-ho, girls.

Tony only hears giggles. He closes that door then tries to open the one to the left but it's locked.

Directly in front of him is the old card table. It's covered with a white tablecloth and surrounded by four chairs.

Tony sits down then studies his geography book.

Tony's parents' bed is in the kitchen leaving very little room for anything else.

Ace lays down near the small space heater that rests against the wall.

Tony's mother, ANNA CAVELLI, 34, is a pleasant looking woman with slightly disheveled hair. The dress she wears is threadbare and faded.

Anna stirs a pot full of sauce on the stove as she stands awkwardly with one foot on the floor and one knee supported by the bed.

Anna wipes her brow.

ANNA

This'll be ready just in time for dinner.

Anna watches Tony struggling with his homework.

ANNA

Tony. I'm so excited for Christmas. Its a Sunday Christmas. That makes it special.

Tony looks up at his mother.

ANNA

The last Sunday Christmas was eleven years ago. It was just me, your dad, and sweet little Mickey.

She thinks for a moment then looks at the wall in front of her.

ANNA

It was such a happy time. We had such glorious plans. Then everything changed.

Anna's face shows her sadness.

ANNA

I eventually had to let my parents raise Mickey because we couldn't afford...

Anna's voice trails off.

Tony has a blank expression on his face. He's now lost in his imagination.

BEGIN IMAGINATION SEQUENCE:

INT. IMAGINARY KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is much brighter and newer looking. It's larger and the bed has disappeared. Everything looks perfect.

IMAGINARY ANNA, 23, is very pregnant. Her hair is pulled back into a roll and she wears a floral patterned house dress.

With a large wooden spoon, Imaginary Anna stirs the pasta sauce as it cooks on the stove.

IMAGINARY GIOVANNI CAVELLI, 25, is wearing nice slacks held up by bright red suspenders. His carefully tucked in white shirt is brand new.

He puts on his black double-breasted overcoat and approaches Imaginary Anna.

With exaggerated movements, he strokes his pencil thin mustache and gives her a big kiss.

IMAGINARY GIOVANNI
How is my wonderful wife doing on
this wonderful day?

IMAGINARY ANNA
Just wonderful, my wonderful husband.

IMAGINARY MICKEY is two years old. He sits in a high chair at the kitchen table and begins to cry.

He has the body of a two-year-old but the head of thirteen-year-old MICKEY, Tony's oldest brother.

IMAGINARY GIOVANNI
It sounds like our wonderful baby
might be hungry.

Imaginary Anna takes Imaginary Mickey out of the high chair.

Imaginary Giovanni joins them as they pose for a family picture.

They look into the camera and smile big.

IMAGINARY RALPH/SUSAN/MICKEY
(together)
Wonderful.

END IMAGINATION SEQUENCE.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Tony's father, GIOVANNI CAVELLI, 36, walks out of the bathroom. He's a handsome man. His factory uniform is an olive drab shirt and pants that match his worn out flat cap.

Anna dries her eyes with a small towel that's hanging from her waist.

Giovanni goes over to the shelf near the stove.

GIOVANNI
Shouldn't you be on your way to
school, boy?

Tony doesn't answer, he stares into space sporting a big grin.

Giovanni grabs a coffee cup.

GIOVANNI
Tony, Tony.

Tony shakes his head.

TONY
Uh, yeah, Dad. I'm leaving now.

THERESA CAVELLI, 8, walks out of the bedroom as ROSE CAVELLI, 7, follows close behind. Both wear dresses that were made from Giovanni's old clothes.

Tony gets up, gathers his stuff, and hugs his sisters. He kisses Anna on the cheek.

TONY
See ya, Dad. Be good, Ace.

Ace barks.

EXT. MAIN STREET - TONY'S STAIRS - DAY

Tony takes the letter from his pocket, puts it in the mailbox, and raises the flag. He looks at the foot of snow covering the sidewalk.

Tony picks up each foot to examine the holes in his shoes.

TONY
(to himself)
It's gonna be a cold one.

Tony walks down the street lined with small shops that sell a variety of merchandise. The store fronts are decorated with Christmas lights, wreaths, and an occasional snowman.

The shop-owners shovel snow from the sidewalk as a few customers wait for the stores to open.

MR. ROBINSON'S STORE

Mr. ROBINSON is a tall thin man and wears an oversized winter coat. He sees Tony approaching.

MR. ROBINSON

We gotta lot of snow last night.
You cold, Tony?

TONY

Not as long as I keep movin'.

Without slowing down, Tony walks right by him.

Tony sees a new Buick Roadmaster coming toward him. He wildly waves at the car as he puts on his biggest smile.

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

BETTY, 30, is driving the Buick.

Betty's daughter, CINDY, 9, sits beside her.

Cindy has long black hair and wears a fur trimmed winter coat. She fiddles with the heater controls then throws herself back in the seat.

CINDY

Doesn't the heat in this jalopy work?

BETTY

Yes, dear, the car is brand new, of course it works. Just adjust the dial.

Betty sees Tony on the sidewalk. She strains to get a clearer view.

BETTY

Isn't that the Cavelli boy? I think he's bonkers.

CINDY

Yeah, he's nuts.

Tony continues to wave as Betty's and Cindy's heads turn in unison.

Just before they are out of Tony's line of sight they both smile and wave back.

EXT. MAIN STREET - GENERAL STORE - DAY

Tony stops at a window display to look at the merchandise. Among the items is a brand new baseball glove.

MRS. ISAACS, 75, approaches Tony. She's carrying a grocery bag.

Mrs. Isaacs stumbles and a few apples spill onto the sidewalk.

Tony quickly picks them up then hands them to Mrs. Isaacs.

MRS. ISAACS

Thank you, child. See somethin' you like?

TONY

Yes, ma'am, I mean, no, ma'am, nothin' there for me.

MRS. ISAACS

Nothin' wrong with wishin'. Its a Sunday Christmas this year, you never know what may happen.

Tony walks by a laundry and barbershop. He passes the gas station where two of Giovanni's best friends work.

INT. CANDY STORE - DAY

The counter is crowded with different types of candy all in their own containers. One is labeled "new".

Tony examines the latest addition.

TONY

Can I try this one?

The owner, MISS ROSSI, 45, is a short, overweight Italian woman with black hair. She faces KATHY, 12, a blonde girl almost completely hidden beneath her gigantic jacket.

MISS ROSSI

Excuse me.

(to Tony)

I'm with a customer.

Miss Rossi turns back to Kathy as she stands at the counter.

MISS ROSSI

So which one's your favorite?

Kathy points to the red sweets.

KATHY

There.

Miss Rossi lifts the lid.

MISS ROSSI

Excellent choice. Do you want two or three?

KATHY

I'll take two. Make it three and
some of the green ones there in front.

Miss Rossi takes the money and hands the candy to Kathy.
She moves toward Tony.

TONY

Can I try this one?

Miss Rossi rolls her eyes then raises the lid.

Tony puts his nose right inside the jar. He takes a deep
breath.

Miss Rossi closes the lid barely missing Tony's beak.

MISS ROSSI

It'd be nice if someday you'd buy
somethin'.

TONY

I'm gonna and its gonna be soon.

Tony walks toward the door.

MISS ROSSI

Your smellin' ain't gonna put food
on my table.

Miss Rossi cracks a smile then straightens up her store.

EXT. MAIN STREET - PATH TO BRIDGE - DAY

Tony continues to school. The bridge comes into sight.
It's wide enough for two tracks. Trains constantly travel
across it. There's a small path that disappears beneath it.

Tony sees EDDIE, 9, and ANDY, 11, nearly under the bridge.
They wear black Keds sneakers and jeans with white T-shirts.
On top are their bright, plaid, wool and mohair jackets.

Eddie glances back and sees Tony.

EDDIE

(yelling)
C'mon, Tony, you're gonna be late.

A train begins to pass over the bridge. The sounds it makes
seem almost alive.

Tony shakes his head. He takes the long way to school.

ANDY

Nah, he won't come. He never comes.

Andy and Eddie laugh as they continue below the bridge.

The locomotive finishes crossing and in the distance another one approaches.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

The route takes Tony past the Elk's Lodge then St. Theresa of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church. A streaming glow surrounds the cross resting on top of the majestic spire.

Tony pauses a moment then reverently makes the sign of the cross.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony arrives at the front of St. Theresa's Catholic Elementary School. He watches the row of Packard and Cadillac limousines dropping off the wealthy students.

The chauffeurs get out and perform what looks like a choreographed dance as they open the doors.

With clothes from the finest stores, the pretentious kids depart the vehicles.

One of the wealthy students is DANIEL WALSH, 9. He's chubby with red hair. His New York Yankees cap looks too small on his big head.

The wealthy students file by Tony as if he didn't exist.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony sits in the back staring out the window.

Cindy rushes in very late.

She turns sideways to fit through the narrow aisles between the desks.

SISTER REDEMPTA, 23, wears the traditional wide sleeved tunic and habit. She has her back to the class as she writes math equations on the blackboard.

Sister Redempta wipes her hands then moves toward the first row.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Class, please open your math books
to page forty-three.

The students get their books.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Today we are going to begin working
with fractions.

It takes very little time before Tony stares out the window.

LATER

Sister Redempta walks around the class. Most of the kids
are studying with their heads down. She sees Anna through
the window at the back of the classroom.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Tony, your mother's here.

Some of the kids watch Anna wave and smile.

Daniel watches Anna longer than the other children then glares
at Tony.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Well, it must be close to lunchtime.
We'll continue the lesson tomorrow.

Sister Redempta moves closer to the desks.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Pass your papers forward and I'll
collect them.

The students give their assignments to the person in front
of them.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Before you go to lunch I need to
explain your Christmas assignment.

The children groan.

SISTER REDEMPTA

This Christmas is a Sunday Christmas.
The last one was before you were
born.

Sister Redempta collects the papers.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Some say that Yule magic is strongest
when Christmas falls on a Sunday.

Sister Redempta places the papers on her desk.

SISTER REDEMPTA

I want each of you to prepare a short
presentation on what you will do to
make this Sunday Christmas special.

Sister Redempta writes a big twelve on the chalkboard.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Now, complete as much as you can of
the twelve times table. We have
four minutes until the bell rings.

INT. BOBBY PIN FACTORY - DAY

The floor is crowded with machines making the bobby pins.
The presses pull miles of wire from the huge spools with
enormous force.

The noise coming from the wire-cutting devices is almost
deafening.

One of the spools looks very unstable as it begins to vibrate.

Giovanni enters the factory floor pushing a loaded pallet
jack. He approaches FRED GABLE, 39, who's struggling to
loosen a bolt with a tension bar.

Fred's small stature disguises his body-builder frame.

GIOVANNI

Hey, Fred, who's winnin', you or
that machine.

FRED

It's about time Giovanni, that number
four machine's been actin' up all
mornin'.

Fred points to the machine next to him.

GIOVANNI

What a pain in the neck. That
contraption is gonna be the death of
me yet.

FRED

Just talked to Sheila. The bonus
checks'll be ready on Tuesday.

GIOVANNI

Great. Anna's got big plans for this Christmas. She's been plannin' this Sunday Christmas for years.

FRED

Yeah, I heard about that. Supposed to be a big deal.

Giovanni puts on his gloves then grabs a wrench.

GIOVANNI

It would be a big nothin' without that bonus check.

Giovanni climbs inside Pressing Machine Number Four and discovers he has the wrong tool.

The loose spool of wire is now violently shaking.

GIOVANNI

Hey, Fred, could you grab the half inch wrench? It looks like I'm gonna need it. Fred?

Giovanni gets out of the machine then takes off his gloves.

GIOVANNI

It's always somethin' around here.

Giovanni bends beneath the taut wire stretched between the wobbly spool and presser on his way to get the toolbox.

The spool jams, breaks free, and careens toward Giovanni with incredible force. It crashes into him and he's left unconscious on the floor.

Fred's the first to reach Giovanni. He gently rolls him onto his back.

Other factory workers quickly gather around the site of the accident.

INT. SCHOOL - HALL - DAY

Anna makes her way through the crowd of children then spots Tony.

ANNA

How's my little angel today?

TONY

I'm fine, Mom.

Anna is holding something behind her back.

ANNA

I brought you a little treat for
lunch.

Anna hands him a cup of vanilla ice cream.

TONY

Thank's, Mom. I love you so much.

Anna gives Tony a big hug.

ANNA

Love you more. Now you have a good
day. School is important. Try to
learn somethin'.

Anna messes up his hair then walks away.

Daniel watches from across the hall. His interest makes him
stand out from the other children. He sees Anna disappear
through the doors then heads toward the cafeteria.

CAFETERIA

The place is extremely crowded and there's hardly anywhere
to sit.

Some students open their fancy lunch boxes filled with all
kinds of gastronomical delights prepared by talented chefs.

Tony walks toward the only vacant chair he can find.

Daniel sees him coming then just before Tony Passes him he
sticks out his leg.

Tony hits the floor hard but manages to save his ice cream.

DANIEL

Have a nice trip, mamma's boy.

The children nearby point at Tony and laugh.

Without saying a word, Tony slowly rises. He brushes himself
off then checks to make sure that nothing has spilled on his
shirt.

Tony reaches his seat. He eats his lunch as if everything
is fine.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

As soon as Tony opens the door, Ace greets him by nearly knocking him off his feet. His tail wags ferociously.

TONY
Well hello, Ace. I missed you too.

Tony rubs Ace behind the ears when he notices his father lying motionless in bed.

TONY
Down, Ace, not now.

Anna is sitting next to Giovanni. She applies a towel to his forehead.

Tony slowly walks over to the bed.

TONY
Dad, you okay? What happened?

ANNA
Your father had an accident at work.

Anna makes sure the blanket completely covers Giovanni. She makes it nice and smooth.

GIOVANNI
(weakly)
No worries son. I'll be up and about in no time.

Anna gets off the bed. She leads Tony by his arm to the other side of the room.

ANNA
(whispers)
I'm not gonna be able to come to school until your father is better.

TONY
How long?

ANNA
He's strong. Just a few days I imagine.

Tony gives her a big hug.

TONY
That's fine, Mom, do what you need to. If I can help, let me know.

Tony climbs the stairs to the attic as Ace follows.

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - NIGHT

Sammy enters wearing his worn out pajamas and carrying a towel. His hair is still wet from a shower.

SAMMY

Hey, kiddo. Looks like Dad is in pretty bad shape.

TONY

Mom says he'll be fine in a few days.

Tony's flashlight hangs by a wire above his bed. It shines on a picture of Joan of Arc. Ace is in bed with Tony completely under the blanket.

TONY

Sammy, why is Maria livin' at Nona's?

SAMMY

Dad lost his job. Not enough money.

TONY

No, I mean why her? Why not you?

SAMMY

Nona wanted a girl, thought she would eat less. You wish I went and she stayed?

Sammy takes a pencil and paper from the shelf.

TONY

I wish everyone stayed.

SAMMY

So, you ready to play? You'll never get this one.

Sammy writes down the answer.

Tony puts the library book in his desk. He studies Sammy's face.

TONY

Bet I can. Is it alive?

SAMMY

Nope. So whatcha gonna do with all the money you make?

TONY

I sure would like to get a baseball glove. The one I want is ten bucks. Is it bigger than a car?

SAMMY

Nope. That's a lot of lettuce, kiddo.

The kitchen light barely illuminates the room.

TONY

Its a Sure Play Fielders glove.
Really nice. Lets see. Did someone
have to make it?

SAMMY

Yeah, somebody made it. That's three
questions.

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

Tony, in his usual clothes, looks at the blanket that covers
Ace. Sammy's bed is empty.

TONY

No show today, Ace. Way too cloudy.

Fifty boxes are next to Tony's desk.

Tony opens a box then takes a packet out. It contains four
cards with envelopes and thirty-two stickers. He grabs the
script for selling the cards.

KITCHEN

Anna and Giovanni are still sleeping.

Tony and Ace quietly reach the bottom of the stairs.

Tony rubs his hands together to generate some heat.

Ace takes his spot in front of the space heater.

Tony slowly climbs into the bed. He squeezes into the tiny
space between his parents.

Giovanni changes position to protect his leg.

GIOVANNI

Watch it, boy.

TONY

Sorry, Dad.

ANNA

You're fine, Tony.

Anna turns on her side and provides a little more room. All three lie there as they occupy every square inch of the bed.

TONY

You know, Mom, I think it's gonna be a great day.

ANNA

That's nice. Now get warm. It's really cold this morning.

The three of them enjoy the warmth and the closeness.

Rose and Theresa seem to appear out of nowhere.

THERESA

Tony, you don't want to be late for school.

GIOVANNI

She's right, son. Better get goin'.

Tony removes himself from between his parents.

His sisters immediately take his place.

TONY

What, no hug?

Theresa and Rose only giggle.

TONY

Love you, guys.

Tony heads toward the door as Ace momentarily leaves the warmth of the space heater and follows him.

TONY

Ace, watch over Dad while I'm gone.

Ace looks back at Giovanni.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The children talk quietly as Sister Redempta returns to the front of the class. Tony's head is down as he tries to memorize the Christmas card script.

SISTER REDEMPTA

It's Friday. You know what that means?

CHILDREN

Reading Time.

Sister Redempta holds the book so everyone can see the cover.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Today, I'll be reading "The Trolls
Under the Bridge".

The bridge on the cover looks exactly like the one that Tony avoids. There are four scary looking trolls beneath it.

SISTER REDEMPTA

It's written by Jonathan Scott.

Tony puts the script in his pocket then moves to a vacant desk that's closer to the front. He raises his hand.

SISTER REDEMPTA

No, Tony. I'll give you a chance to
go to the bathroom later.

Tony keeps his hand up.

SISTER REDEMPTA

What is it, Tony?

TONY

Is this a true story?

The children laugh.

Sister Redempta gives the signal for quiet.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Many people, especially in northern
Europe, might say it could be. Great
question, Tony.

Tony puts his hand down.

Cindy leans over to Tony.

CINDY

(whispering)
You are so weird.

Tony doesn't take his eyes off the book.

SISTER REDEMPTA

There was a very old bridge that led
to a pond.

Sister Redempta sits on a desk.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The pond provided enough fish to feed the entire village all winter long.

Sister Redempta turns the page then shows the class a picture of the family of trolls.

SISTER REDEMPTA

One day a family of trolls decided to live under the bridge.

Tony nods his head.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The villagers were so frightened that no one would dare cross it.

Sister Redempta reveals the village. Tony's eyes are glued to the book.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Winter was approaching and the people of the village began to worry that there would soon be nothing to eat.

Sister Redempta turns the page then shows a picture of the mayor.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The mayor proclaimed that someone must cross the bridge and catch some fish or everyone would starve.

A drawing of a young boy that looks a lot like Tony is on the next page.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The villagers remain silent until finally one little boy steps forward and says, "I'll do it".

Sister Redempta glances at Tony.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Everyone laughs. "How could a small boy like you defeat those terrible trolls?", said one of the villagers.

Sister Redempta turns to a drawing of the boy's beautiful mother and sisters.

SISTER REDEMPTA

"I don't know but I will not let my mother and sisters starve".

Sister Redempta makes a sad face.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The villagers went home feeling more
hopeless than ever.

Sister Redempta reveals a picture of the bridge at sunrise.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The next morning the little boy grabs
his fishing pole and sets out for
the bridge.

Sister Redempta stands up.

SISTER REDEMPTA

As soon as he starts to cross, the
scariest troll blocks his path.

The next picture shows the troll as he stands in front of
the little boy.

SISTER REDEMPTA

"Give me your gold and you may pass,"
says the horrible troll. The boy
shakes with fear.

Tony's eyes are wide open.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The young boy says, "I'm just a poor
boy from the village. I have no
gold."

The next page shows a picture of the boy with a big question
mark above his head.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The troll roars. It's the most
terrifying sound the boy has ever
heard.

Sister Redempta points to the riddle she had written on the
chalkboard.

SISTER REDEMPTA

"Then answer this riddle correctly
or surely you will be eaten."

Sister Redempta sits back down.

SISTER REDEMPTA

"Greater than anything yet free to
all, in order to have it you must
first fall."

Sister Redempta shows the picture of the boy with the troll.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The little boy did not know the answer
and as he gets ready to be eaten.
He thinks of his mother and sister.

Sister Redempta notices Tony sitting on the edge of his seat.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Then, at the last possible moment,
the answer comes to him. "It's love.
Love is the answer," says the boy.

The last picture shows the boy back in the village. He
carries a large net filled with fish.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The troll screams and the bridge
shakes. Slowly the troll fades away.

A few kids clap their hands.

SISTER REDEMPTA

The little boy cautiously crosses
the bridge and soon catches enough
fish to feed the whole village.

Sister Redempta closes the book.

DANIEL

That's a silly story. Everyone knows
trolls don't exist.

SISTER REDEMPTA

You know Daniel, we can prove
somethin' exists, but we can't prove
that somethin' doesn't. So maybe...

Tony jumps out of his chair.

TONY

No, she's right. Trolls do exist.
I've heard them.

The whole class laughs.

SISTER REDEMPTA

That's enough class, settle down.
It's time for your presentations.
Cindy, you can go first.

Cindy walks to the front of the class as Tony goes back to
his seat. He studies his script.

LATER

Eddie finishes his presentation and takes his seat.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Tony, it's your turn.

Tony slowly moves up the narrow aisle.

SISTER REDEMPTA

What will you do to make this Sunday Christmas special?

TONY

I'm gonna make money by sellin' Christmas Cards.

DANIEL

That's the dumbest thing I've heard. It's too late, knucklehead.

Tony gives Daniel a dirty look.

DANIEL

If you mailed a card today it ain't gonna get there by Christmas.

Tony faces the class.

TONY

No, its true. I have fifty boxes. I'm gonna make one hundred dollars.

All of the children in the classroom begin to laugh.

DANIEL

Look at yourself. You wear the same shirt every day. No one's gonna buy anything from you.

The students begin to chant.

CHILDREN

One-shirt Tony, one-shirt Tony, one-shirt Tony...

Before Sister Redempta can stop them, the bell rings. The children continue chanting as they leave.

Tony just stands at the front of the class.

As the last kid walks out, Tony still hasn't moved. His eyes begin to well up.

SISTER REDEMPTA

I'm sure you'll be able to sell those cards, Tony.

Without a word, Tony walks out.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Ace greets Tony as usual as he comes through the door.

TONY

Not now, Ace. Go bother someone else for a change.

Ace slowly slinks away then lies under the table. Tony approaches Giovanni as he lies in bed.

TONY

Hey, Dad. How you feelin'?

Giovanni smiles slightly.

GIOVANNI

Better than yesterday.

TONY

Let me know if you need anything, anything at all.

GIOVANNI

Love you too, son.

Tony climbs the stairs to his attic without Ace.

ATTIC

Tony grabs a box of Christmas cards then throws them against the wall. The box breaks open and explodes all over the room.

Tony can still hear in his head what the children were chanting.

CHILDREN (V.O.)

One-shirt Tony, one-shirt Tony, one-shirt Tony...

Tony takes the script out of his pocket then tears it into pieces. He flops down onto his bed and stares at the ceiling. One tear rolls down his face.

Tony hears the doctor enter the apartment so he goes to the top of the stairs.

KITCHEN

The doctor and Anna stand beside Giovanni.

ANNA

He's not gettin' better. It just
doesn't seem to be healin' right.

DOCTOR

I'll check him out. I'm sure he'll
be fine.

Giovanni is sweating and shivering.

Anna dampens a towel then places it on his forehead.

Tony listens from the stairs just out of sight.

DOCTOR

How you feelin', Giovanni?

GIOVANNI

Not too good, Doc. My leg's hurtin'
somethin' awful.

The doctor examines Giovanni's leg. He listens to his chest
then records his temperature.

The doctor grabs Giovanni's wrist.

ANNA

I'm really startin' to get concerned.
I've never seen...

Anna stops when the doctor holds up a finger and looks at
his watch.

DOCTOR

So how long has he been like this?

ANNA

Almost a week.

Tony hears everything from the bottom of the stairs.

DOCTOR

Giovanni, you need to stay in bed.
The factory can wait.

GIOVANNI

Will I work before Christmas, Doc?

DOCTOR

I'm afraid not and it will probably
be some time after that.

Anna wipes away a tear.

GIOVANNI

It'll be fine, Anna. I still have my bonus. Fred will bring it over Tuesday.

ANNA

I'm so worried.

GIOVANNI

I know baby. We'll get by. We always do.

ANNA

You're beat. Get some shut-eye.

Anna kisses Giovanni then escorts the doctor to the door.

ANNA

Thank you, Doctor. I'll let you know if things get worse.

The doctor leaves the apartment.

Tony watches Anna as she begins to cry. He feels a tear roll down his cheek then violently wipes it away.

Anna dries her eyes. She goes back to the bed to sit with her husband.

Tony slowly walks up the stairs.

ATTIC

Tony lies in his bed and stares at the ceiling. Sammy walks in.

SAMMY

Mom looks upset.

Sammy scans the room.

SAMMY

What happened here?

Tony stands.

TONY

No excuses, just do it.

SAMMY

What?

TONY

Isn't that what you always say? No
excuses, just do it.

Tony stoops down and gathers the pieces of the script. He reaches into his drawer and pulls out the roll of tape.

Tony tapes the script back together then collects the cards spread throughout the attic.

FADE TO:

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

Daniel's father, VICTOR WALSH, 40, sits at a large dining room table. He wears a suit and tie. In front of him is an almost empty plate of food and a cup of coffee.

Victor reads the newspaper.

Daniel enters the room then sits down causing the chair to scrape along the cut stone floor. He looks at his father hidden behind his paper.

Immediately, the butler, ARNOLD, 51, appears. He has on a tux and acts like someone who would be more comfortable serving royalty. He brings Daniel his food.

Arnold stands next to Daniel and watches him gobble down his breakfast.

ARNOLD

Chewing is an important part of the
digestion process, Master Daniel.

Daniel throws up a hand. Arnold walks away.

Daniel puts down his fork. He wipes his face with a silk napkin then throws it down next to his plate. His eyes focus on Victor. He loudly clears his throat.

DANIEL

Good morning, Father.

Victor makes an indiscernible grunt as he continues to read the paper. He grabs the cup of coffee that sits in front of him.

Daniel's mother, DORIS WALSH, 31, is in a beautiful gown. She quickly walks past the table.

Daniel hurriedly gets her attention.

DANIEL

Mom, Mom, don't forget I'm gettin'
the award Monday. You need to be
there at two.

Doris keeps her back to Daniel. She fiddles with an earring.

DORIS

I have brunch with the Ladies Society.
Maybe next time.

DANIEL

But Mom you promised...

Doris doesn't say a word as she leaves the room.

Daniel watches her leave then looks at Victor. He opens his
mouth to speak but quickly changes his mind. He silently
finishes his food.

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

At his desk, Tony tries to memorize the Christmas card script
as Ace lies on the floor beside him.

Tony sets the script down then closes his eyes.

TONY

(to himself)

Good afternoon Mister or Miss. I am
here representing the American
Specialty Company. Today I...

Tony grabs the script and reads it again. One of the daddy-
long-legs falls from the ceiling. Ace watches the spider
scuttle across the floor.

With the script in his hand, Tony gets out of the chair and
moves to his bed.

TONY

(to himself)

Good Afternoon Mister or Miss. I am
here representing the American
Specialty Company.

Tony closes his eyes.

TONY

Today I have an amazing opportunity
that I know you will want to take
advantage of. Inside... Enclosed...

Tony tries again then stops when Ace licks his face.

TONY

Not now, Ace. I've got to memorize this.

Ace barks three times.

TONY

I know it's Saturday but I need that baseball glove. I gotta help Mom too.

Ace runs to Tony's bat which is leaning against the wall. It's below a shelf where a baseball sits on top of Tony's neatly folded altar boy elb.

As soon as Tony looks back at his script, Ace barks again.

TONY

Okay, okay. I've had enough of this anyway. Let's go, Ace.

Ace puts his head down between his front paws and wags his tail. His barks reveal his excitement.

Tony puts away his script then grabs the bat and ball.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The sun is directly overhead as Tony stands at home plate. Ace is in the outfield.

Tony throws the ball up then strikes it with the bat. The baseball soars toward the fence.

Ace leaps and catches the ball before it can hit the ground. He runs the ball back. With amazing speed, Ace goes back to wait for the next ball.

Tony hits another. The ball hits the ground. It's buried in the snow but Ace has no problem finding it. He brings it back to Tony.

Tony hits another ball.

Ace leaps high in the air and makes a sensational catch.

LATER

The sun is lower in the sky as Ace brings the ball back to Tony then lies down.

TONY

Had enough, boy?

Ace pants as he lies there.

TONY
Me too. Shake.

Ace sits up. He puts his paw in Tony's hand.

TONY
Other shake.

Ace holds up the other paw.

TONY
Double shake.

Ace rests on his hind legs with both paws in Tony's hand.

TONY
Show me you love me.

Ace lowers his head so that his nose rests between his paws.

Tony rubs Ace's head.

TONY
I love you too, Ace. Let's go. I
need to see Maria.

EXT. MAIN STREET - STAIRS - DAY

Tony and Ace reach the stairs to the apartment.

TONY
Home, Ace.

Ace runs up the stairs and barks.

Anna opens the door and Ace runs through it.

TONY
Goin' to Maria's, Mom.

ANNA
Okay, honey.

EXT. NONA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tony walks up the sidewalk. It's a two-story home with brown shingles.

Tony knocks and waits. The door flies open and out comes Tony's sister, MARIA CAVELLI, 10. She's very thin with long curly black hair.

They hug then enter the house.

INT. NONA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

NONA CAVELLI, Giovanni's mother, is short and stout with gray hair. Her wardrobe is dominated by a yellow apron. She speaks with a heavy Italian accent.

Nona walks out of the kitchen. She gives Tony a hug.

NONA

I just made spaghetti and meatballs,
Tony. Sit down. I'll get you a
plate.

Maria takes the chair beside Tony.

In a flash, Nona appears with a plate that overflows with pasta. A meatball as big as a lemon sits on top. A rich red sauce covers the whole thing.

Nona sits down across from Tony as he shovels the food into his mouth.

Maria watches and smiles.

NONA

How's your father?

Tony's mouth is stuffed with food. He holds up his hand and tilts it back and forth then says something indiscernible.

NONA

We're so excited. Your mother was
six at her first Sunday Christmas.
She's made it a big deal ever since.

Tony stops eating.

TONY

Wow, I didn't know how much it meant
to her.

NONA

At the last one, your mother threw
the best Christmas party ever. A
lot has changed since then.

TONY

What do you mean?

NONA

She just needs to have a Sunday
Christmas like that. It'll help her
remember when things were much better.

Tony pushes his plate away.

NONA

Tony, you've hardly eaten anything.
You want somethin' else?

Maria gets up and moves to the old Victrola in the kitchen.

MARIA

Can I play a record, Nona?

NONA

Sure, sure.

Maria opens the doors. She selects a record from the shelf
at the bottom of the Victrola. She lifts the lid then places
the record on the turntable.

Maria lowers the needle and a pop tune from the forties begins
playing. She goes back to the table and sits next to Tony.

MARIA

What's wrong, Tony, I can tell
somethin's bothering you.

TONY

I really want this baseball glove
but I need to sell five boxes of
cards to get it.

MARIA

Is that a problem?

TONY

I can't memorize the stupid script.

Maria laughs.

MARIA

You'll do it but with Dad hurt and
all you probably shouldn't be worried
about some stupid baseball glove.

TONY

I know. Whatever I make I'll give
to Mom, after I get the glove.

Nona takes Tony's plate and fork to the sink.

TONY

My plan is to work all day tomorrow
and sell as many cards as I can.

Maria looks at Tony disapprovingly.

TONY

What?

MARIA

That would not be a good idea.

TONY

Why?

MARIA

God gives us six days to do whatever
we need but Sunday's for Him. You
know that, you're an altar boy.

Tony rolls his eyes.

MARIA

Listen, if you wait until Monday and
study that script at school, Mom
will have the best Christmas ever.

EXT. NONA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maria stands in the doorway. Tony is on the front steps.

MARIA

Remember what I said.

TONY

Yeah, yeah. I'll wait 'til Monday.
Love you, Maria.

MARIA

Love you more.

EXT. MAIN STREET - PATH UNDER BRIDGE - NIGHT

A long train is crossing the bridge. Below it, Tony sees a troll peeking from behind one of the pillars. It has large white tusks that rise from its bottom jaw.

The troll looks at Tony with an evil grin.

Tony closes his eyes then opens them. The troll is gone.

INT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

The chapel has gold relief statues that cover most of the walls and ceiling. Lit candles and flowers brighten the room. PARISHIONERS, in their finest clothes, fill the pews.

The doors open as the procession begins. Tony is in front. He holds a pole with a huge crucifix on top. Anna watches with pride as he reverently walks down the aisle.

FOUR ALTAR BOYS follow behind Tony, two on each side. FATHER JOHN, is last to enter. They wear white elbs that nearly reach the floor.

The altar boys closest to Tony swing the thuribles that hold the burning incense suspended from chains. They pass the holy water fonts near the entrance.

The procession continues down the aisle. Anna can't help but wave and smile as Tony passes.

Tony reaches the altar. It's a table covered by a green cloth with four white ribbons draped across it. The tabernacle, an ornately decorated box, is behind the altar.

Directly above the tabernacle is a statue of Jesus that appears to look down on the congregation from an enormous cross.

Tony places the crucifix in its stand next to the altar. He moves to the front of the altar then stands next to Father John. The other altar boys join them. They all genuflect.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

The mass is over and the parishioners congregate outside the church.

Anna's parents, SOFIA ROMANO, 58, and CRISTO ROMANO, 60, wait on the steps. Sofia wears a new black and red dress. She looks like a slightly older version of Anna.

Cristo is dashing in his suit and tie. Tony's oldest brother, MICKEY CAVELLI, 13, is with them. He wears a long-sleeve white shirt and silver tie.

Anna, Sammy, Tony, Theresa, and Rose walk out the door. Tony wears his nice jeans with his white shirt. Sammy wears a suit and tie.

Anna, Theresa, and Rose look beautiful in their Sunday dresses.

Theresa and Rose immediately run over to Cristo. He picks up Theresa then throws her in the air. He gently sets her down then does the same with Rose.

Tony laughs as soon as he sees Mickey.

MICKEY

What are you laughing at?

Mickey hits Tony's arm.

TONY

Ow. Say wonderful, Mickey

MICKEY

Wonderful?

Tony laughs again.

MICKEY

You've flipped your wig.

SAMMY

Hey, Mickey. Great to see ya. Gotta take a powder though. Got a girl waitin'.

Sammy elbows Mickey in the ribs.

SAMMY

She's got the prettiest peepers I've ever seen.

MICKEY

Yeah, yeah. You're just whistlin' Dixie.

Sofia approaches Anna.

SOFIA

So sorry to hear about Giovanni. Don't worry dear, I guess I can take care of Christmas dinner this year.

ANNA

No, Mother, we'll manage. You know I always have Sunday Christmas at my place.

SOFIA

I was only tryin' to...

ANNA

Help? Please, Mother, I know better.

The two of them share a moment of awkward silence.

SOFIA
Well, then Sunday Christmas at your
apartment it is.

ANNA
Good-bye, Mother.

TONY
See ya, Mickey, love ya.

MICKEY
Love you too. Stay out of trouble.

FADE TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony walks up the steps. He tightly holds the carrying case as he makes his way into the school. One of the wealthy students, BOBBY, 10, collides with Tony.

BOBBY
Sorry. Didn't see ya. Musta forgot
to look down.

TONY
What?

The wealthy students nearby begin to laugh. Daniel witnesses the whole scene. He walks up to Tony.

DANIEL
Because you're lower than him. Get
it?

Tony shrugs his shoulders.

DANIEL
You're an idiot.

The morning bell rings and all the children enter their classrooms.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony is in his seat near the window. He has his script out and is diligently studying it.

Daniel walks in. He notices the carrying case next to Tony's desk. He walks over to Tony then grabs the case.

DANIEL

I thought I told you no one's gonna
buy those stupid Christmas cards.

Tony gets up from his desk.

TONY

Give it back, Daniel.

DANIEL

Look everyone. Tony still thinks he
can sell those cards.

A few children laugh but most are too busy as they get ready
for class.

Sister Redempta enters then walks to the center of the room.
She has to stretch in order to pull down the huge map of the
United States.

Daniel throws the case at Tony then rushes to his seat.

Tony folds up his script then puts it in his pocket.

SISTER REDEMPTA

We'll continue with geography. Today,
we'll be focusing on the pacific
coastal states.

Tony tries to pay attention but in no time he stares out the
window. His frown slowly becomes a smile.

BEGIN IMAGINATION SEQUENCE:

INT. IMAGINARY CELL - DAY

The cell is barren except for one solitary table. JOAN OF
ARC, 19, is in the corner in her gray under-garments.

She shivers and rocks back and forth. She utters something
unintelligible with her head bowed.

The CARDINAL OF WINCHESTER, 56, in his expansive red robe
and cap, storms into her cell. The INTERROGATOR, 70, in a
similar robe but no cap follows close behind.

The Cardinal stands directly in front of Joan of Arc while
the interrogator stands in the back.

CARDINAL

Do you know that you are in God's
grace?

Joan of Arc slowly rises to her unsteady feet. She looks the Cardinal directly in the eyes.

JOAN OF ARC

If I am not, may God put me there,
and if I am, may God so keep me.

The Cardinal growls.

JOAN OF ARC

Your failed attempts to force me
into blasphemy should increase your
faith. Instead, I see yours waning.

The Cardinal slams his fist on the table.

INTERROGATOR

You will burn for your sins, evil
one.

The Cardinal grabs Joan of Arc by the shoulders. He squeezes until she winces in pain.

CARDINAL

Your sly answers are of no
consequence. The verdict has been
predetermined.

The Cardinal passes the interrogator on his way out of the cell.

The interrogator bows as the Cardinal passes.

Joan of Arc slowly returns to the corner of the cell. As she sits, she wraps her arms around her bent legs, bows her head and begins saying the Lord's prayer in Latin.

SISTER REDEMPTA (V.O.)

Tony, Tony.

END IMAGINATION SEQUENCE.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony snaps back to reality.

SISTER REDEMPTA

What three states border the Pacific
ocean?

Tony just stares at Sister Redempta.

SISTER REDEMPTA

I know it's hard Tony but please try
to pay attention.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony walks down the stairs with his head buried in his script.
He bumps into Sister Redempta as she crosses in front of
him. He drops his script.

Sister Redempta drops a book. She picks up Tony's script.

SISTER REDEMPTA

So this is the script for sellin'
those Christmas cards. What happened
to it?

TONY

Uh. My dog ate it.

SISTER REDEMPTA

He did, huh? Ace, right?

TONY

Yes, Sister.

Tony picks up Sister Redempta's book.

SISTER REDEMPTA

I saw you studying that script. It
was almost like you were doing
classwork. Almost.

TONY

Sister Redempta, why are you so nice?
Most teachers make me...

SISTER REDEMPTA

Everyone's different, Tony.

Tony reads the title as he hands the book to Sister Redempta.

TONY

Hyperkinetic disorder, what's that?

SISTER REDEMPTA

Just one of those differences. You'll
be all right Tony, you have what it
takes.

TONY

Sure hope so. Haven't sold a card
yet. Bye, Sister.

Tony hurries down the stairs as Sister Redempta watches.

EXT. OLDER WOMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony slowly walks up the sidewalk leading to the house. When he gets to the door, he takes one last look at the script. He folds it then puts it in his pocket.

With his finger an inch from the door bell, he pauses a moment, takes a deep breath, and presses the button.

The door opens and MRS. PARKER, 52, stands in the doorway.

MRS. PARKER
Can I help you?

TONY
Good Afternoon Mister or Miss. I
am...

MRS. PARKER
Well, I never.

Mrs. Parker slams the door.

Tony slaps his forehead with his hand as he turns around and walks away.

EXT. MR. SHERWOOD'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony stands on the sidewalk and looks at his script. He puts it away then walks to the door. Tony knocks three times. The door opens immediately.

MR. SHERWOOD, 30, stands there in a suit and tie.

MR. SHERWOOD
Yeah kid, what do you want?

TONY
Good afternoon Mister. I am here
representing the American Specialty
Company. My name's Tony Cavelli.

Tony pauses to think.

TONY
Today... today. Wait a minute. Let
me start over.

Mr. Sherwood stands there impatiently.

TONY
I am here from the Specialty. I
mean American...

MR. SHERWOOD
I don't have time for this.

Mr. Sherwood slams the door.

Tony studies the script and then back into his pocket it goes.

EXT. THIRD HOUSE - DAY

Tony knocks.

The door opens.

TONY
Hello...

The door closes.

EXT. MR. BELLUS'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony takes a deep breath and wearily knocks.

MR. BELLUS, 70, opens the door.

TONY
Good afternoon Mister. I am here
representing the...

Tony stands and stares at Mr. Bellus as he tries to remember the next word.

Mr. Bellus stares back.

Tony can't recall what he's supposed to say next.

MR. BELLUS
Yes?

TONY
Never mind.

The sun is almost completely below the horizon. Tony walks toward the next house. He rubs his stomach, turns around, and heads in the opposite direction.

INT. NONA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony has a plate of homemade pasta topped with fried eggplant, fresh basil, and Parmesan cheese. He voraciously devours it as Nona and Maria watch him with a smile.

Giovanni's father, MARCO CAVELLI, enters the kitchen with his guitar. He's dressed in his suit and tie.

MARCO
Ti piace il cibo?

Tony nods his head affirmatively.

MARIA
He asked if you liked the food.

TONY
I know. I do understand some Italian.

Marco sits down and tunes his guitar then he plays an Italian song.

Tony eats his pasta.

Maria joins in by humming the melody.

Tony pushes the plate away then leans back in his chair.

TONY
Thank you, Nona. Delizioso.

Tony winks at Maria.

Maria laughs.

Nona walks away from the stove and goes right to Tony. She grabs his hand. He reluctantly rises then they dance around the table.

NONA
Such a nice dancer. The girls are gonna be after you.

They continue to dance. Nona spins Tony.

Maria stands up then dances too.

Marco's smile gets bigger and bigger.

The sauce on the stove begins to boil over.

NONA
Mamma mia!

Nona quickly goes to the stove. She removes the sauce from the heat and turns the burner off.

Maria kisses Marco on the cheek as he keeps playing.

MARIA

Grazie, Papa. Arrivederci.

MARCO

Ciao.

Maria signals Tony to go to the living room.

Tony retrieves his card carrying case and follows Maria.

LIVING ROOM

Tony and Maria sit on the couch. A wooden coffee table is in front of them.

MARIA

Have you heard "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer"? Isn't it cute? I'm definitely gonna get it.

TONY

It's kinda silly.

MARIA

Don't be a fuddy-duddy.

TONY

I started sellin' the cards today.

Tony opens his case. He pulls out his cash bag.

MARIA

How'd you do?

Tony holds the bag over the table then shakes it. Nothing comes out.

They both laugh.

TONY

I'll never learn that script.

MARIA

Don't worry. It's only Monday. There's plenty of time. C'mon, I'll help you. Let me see that script.

LATER

Tony has his head down on the table.

MARIA

Okay, it sounds like you have the first half down. Let's move on to the rest.

Tony doesn't lift his head.

TONY

There's more?

MARIA

You're so funny. Now study it a few times and give it a try.

Maria hands the script back to Tony.

TONY

Maybe I don't need to do the second half.

MARIA

That's when you really sell it.

TONY

I know. We can do a ventriloquist act like Edgar Bergen. You can say the lines and I'll move my lips.

MARIA

Like Mortimer Snerd.

TONY

(sounding like Mortimer)
It's a figmentation of my imagination.

Maria laughs then Tony laughs too.

Tony goes back to studying the script.

LATER

A Christmas song from the forties plays on the radio. Maria enters the living room holding two coats. She sits on the coffee table across from Tony.

MARIA

You're ready, Tony. I know it. You're goin' to sell some cards tomorrow.

TONY

I don't know. Maybe I am a numbskull.

MARIA

The only problem you have is that you don't waste time on the silly things.

TONY

Silly things?

MARIA

Who said this? Who said that? What should I wear? Does he or she like me? How do I fit in?

Maria holds out a coat for Tony to wear.

MARIA

You don't even worry about that stuff.

Tony gets off the couch but hesitates to take the jacket.

MARIA

It's for boys and girls. Just put it on.

Tony puts on the jacket then Maria grabs Tony's hand.

MARIA

C'mon. I want to show you somethin'.

EXT. WEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The street where Tony and Maria walk has the largest houses in town.

Every mansion is completely covered with Christmas decorations. Flashing red, blue, and green lights reflect off the snow that covers the yards.

Colorful paper chains stretch from tree to tree. The oaks reach across the roadway to form intermittent snow covered canopies.

The hemlocks look like decorated Christmas trees suitable for giants. Bulbs and icicles hang from the leafless sassafras trees.

Every tree is at least as tall as a five story building. Maria and Tony stop a moment to absorb the amazing scenery.

TONY

This is incredible. How do they get those lights so high?

Tony's neck is bent back as far as it will go as he tries to see all the way to the top of the trees.

MARIA

Tony, I know you want that glove and I know you wanna help out Mom and Dad.

Maria's voice sounds powerful in the absolute silence.

TONY

I do but I don't like my chances.

The silence is only broken by the snow that crunches under Tony and Maria's feet.

MARIA

Everyone should be generous when they have a lot but it never has been a responsibility.

TONY

I'm not sure I get you.

Tony and Maria walk in front of a house with three large gold and white angels in the front yard.

MARIA

You should never be afraid that you won't be able to give.

TONY

Afraid. Who's afraid?

MARIA

Fear can keep you from seeing what's really important.

They stop at a spectacular nativity scene as giant snowflakes fall from the sky.

TONY

How'd you get so smart?

MARIA

I just want you to know that no matter what you do or don't do, I'll always be there for you.

TONY

I love you too, Maria. I'm beat. I should probably head home.

Maria and Tony slowly walk back through the wintry paradise.

FADE TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony walks down the steps to the school. He's studying the Christmas card script.

EXT. MR. TESSIER'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony stands in front of the house. After one final look at the script, he knocks on the door.

A friendly MR. TESSIER, 62, greets Tony with a smile.

MR. TESSIER

Merry Christmas, young one. How can I help you today?

TONY

Good afternoon mister. I'm here representing the American Specialty Company. My name's Tony Cavelli.

Tony takes a deep breath.

TONY

I have a variety of high quality Christmas cards available for you to purchase right now.

Tony takes a packet out of his case.

TONY

Every packet contains four cards and envelopes plus thirty-two stickers so you can personalize each one.

Tony shows a box to Mr. Tessier.

TONY

Each packet is a quarter but a box of twenty-four is only five dollars. They'll be just as good next year.

Tony pauses then smiles.

TONY

They are going fast and I would hate for you to miss this fabulous opportunity. Would you like a box?

Tony exhales.

Mr. Tessier has a large grin on his face.

MR. TESSIER

That's quite a spiel young man.

TONY

Yes, sir. It's actually the first time I've been able to get through it.

Mr. Tessier laughs.

MR. TESSIER

Well, I guess I could take a box. Five dollars you say?

TONY

Yes, sir.

Mr. Tessier opens his wallet then hands Tony five dollars.

Tony gives a box to Mr. Tessier.

TONY

Thank you, sir.

Tony turns around and walks away.

MR. TESSIER

Wait!

Tony stops. He slowly turns around with his head hung low.

MR. TESSIER

Merry Christmas.

Tony looks up with a huge smile.

TONY

Merry Christmas to you, sir. Merry Sunday Christmas.

Tony walks away with a spring in his gait.

EXT. YOUNG WOMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony hands a box to a young woman. She hands him five dollars.

EXT. LADY WITH BABY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony's holding the cash bag open as a lady holding a baby drops a few quarters into the bag.

EXT. GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony hands two boxes to a woman who is elegantly dressed. All five boxes he had in his carrying case are gone. The cash bag is full of quarters and dollar bills.

TONY
(to himself)
Time to eat.

INT. NONA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A forties Christmas song plays on the radio. Tony and Maria sit at the table.

MARIA
Well, you gonna make me wait forever?
How'd you do?

Tony silently reaches into his carrying case. He pulls out the cash bag then holds it upside down. A cascade of quarters stream out of the bag and onto the table.

Tony shakes the bag and some bills fall out.

Maria screams in delight.

MARIA
How much is it? We need to count
it.

Maria and Tony start stacking quarters.

LATER

A different forties Christmas song is playing on the radio. Quarters and bills sit neatly on the table.

TONY
One Sure Play Fielder's glove here I
come.

Maria gives Tony that look again.

MARIA

But our parents...

TONY

Ease up, Maria. This is pennies from heaven. There's plenty of time to sell the cards.

EXT. MAIN STREET - PATH UNDER BRIDGE - NIGHT

On his way home, Tony sees three shady looking characters smoking cigarettes. He takes the cash bag out of the carrying case then shoves it into his pants.

TONY

(to himself)

No one's gonna keep me from gettin' that glove.

A train starts to cross the bridge. The strange sounds force Tony to look below the overpass. He sees one troll appear then another one.

Tony closes his eyes then opens them. He sees three hideous looking trolls then a fourth one, twice as big as the others, joins them.

Warts cover every inch of their faces. The white tusks that protrude from their lower jaws shine in the moonlight. The large one turns and points at Tony.

Tony runs from the bridge until it's out of sight.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony walks into the apartment. Ace jumps but only finds air as Tony quickly moves out of the way.

TONY

Careful Ace. Can't afford to lose a quarter.

Anna sits on the bed as she takes care of Giovanni.

ANNA

Did you say something, honey? Come say hello to your dad.

TONY

Can't Mom, have studyin' to do.

Tony rapidly ascends the stairs.

ATTIC

Sammy is looking at himself in the mirror as Tony enters. He combs his hair in one direction. He makes a face, messes up his hair, and then combs it the other way.

TONY
Hi-de-ho, Sammy. Whatcha doin'?

Sammy turns around.

SAMMY
Shelley asked me to come over. She's a regular dreamboat. How do I look?

TONY
You look the same to me.

SAMMY
My hair's different. It's better, I think.

Sammy turns back to the mirror.

SAMMY
You sold any of those cards?

TONY
A few.

Tony checks his pants.

SAMMY
That's great, Dad sure could use some help.

Sammy grabs his wallet.

SAMMY
See ya later.

KITCHEN

Anna is sitting on the bed with Giovanni. She strokes his hand.

GIOVANNI
This leg is bad business. Goin' on two weeks without work.

ANNA

What do doctor's know. They always say the worst.

GIOVANNI

I know. Right before Christmas. That's got to be tough for you. Especially this year.

ANNA

Don't fret over that. We got each other, that's always been enough for me.

Anna leans over then hugs Giovanni.

EXT. APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Fred's clothes are his Sunday best. He checks his breath, adjusts his tie, and steps up to the door. He looks at Giovanni's check.

FRED

(to himself)

Well, I guess it's better than nothin'.

Fred puts the check in his pocket. He runs his cheap plastic comb through his hair then takes a deep breath.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Anna jumps when she hears Fred knock on the door.

GIOVANNI

That's Fred. It'll be nice to get some good news for a change.

Anna gets off the bed.

ANNA

I'm comin'.

Anna opens the door.

FRED

Evenin', Anna.

Anna forces a smile.

ANNA

Hello, Fred. Always good to see you.

Fred slowly walks through the door.

ANNA

You sure are decked out tonight. Is everything all right?

FRED

How's Giovanni?

ANNA

Honestly, it's not lookin' good. The doctor wasn't too positive.

Fred looks at Giovanni in his bed. He turns back to Anna.

FRED

Karen sends her love. She says you two should get together sometime.

ANNA

When Giovanni gets back on his feet I'll be sure and talk to her.

FRED

She'd like that. So how bad is it? Can I talk to him?

Anna steps to the side and points at the bed.

Fred slowly walks to Giovanni's side.

Tony comes down the stairs. He listens to the conversation.

FRED

Hey, Giovanni. We sure miss you at the factory. Machine Number Four still isn't workin' right.

GIOVANNI

Sure, sure.

Fred reaches into his pocket and pulls out Giovanni's check.

FRED

You know, you only worked a few hours before the injury.

Fred hands the check to Giovanni. Anna sees the amount and gasps. Giovanni looks at the check.

GIOVANNI

It's okay, baby. We knew it would be small. Fred has the bonus check. Right Fred?

FRED

I'm so sorry. The boss said since you missed two weeks before Christmas you won't be gettin' that bonus.

TONY

(to himself)

No way. Poor Mom.

Tony moves closer.

FRED

The boss is hard-boiled. I tried...

GIOVANNI

I know, Fred. Well, good-night.

Anna walks Fred to the door. Fred stops in the doorway. He turns around.

FRED

I feel bad about this, I really do.
The whole thing is cock-eyed.

Anna shuts the door. She goes back to Giovanni.

ANNA

We'll have to cancel the Christmas dinner. I'll talk to my mother. She said she could take care of it.

Tony runs up the stairs.

GIOVANNI

This is a nightmare. I can't believe this is happening.

ANNA

This will be better for everyone. Lord knows my mother will love it. My only concern is you.

Tony runs into the kitchen.

TONY

No. Mom, no. You won't have to cancel the Christmas dinner. Look. I've got ten dollars.

Tony gives his money to Anna.

TONY

...and that's just for starters. I'll have more at the end of the week.

ANNA

Are you sure, Tony? It may be...

Tony hugs Anna as tight as he can.

TONY

I promise, Mom. You can't cancel the Christmas dinner. You can't.

ANNA

Okay, okay. Cool down. I had no idea how much this meant to you.

Anna gently pushes Tony back. She looks into his eyes.

ANNA

All that really matters to me is that we'll all be together.

Anna releases Tony then faces him toward the stairs.

ANNA

Now get to bed. Sounds like you have a busy day tomorrow.

ATTIC

Tony's on his knees. He has his hands together in prayer. Ace is beside him.

TONY

Heavenly father please help me to...

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

Tony's fully dressed and sits at his desk. He reads the last page of his Joan of Arc library book. Ace is still sleeping.

Sammy wakes and sits up in bed.

SAMMY

Good morning. How was the show?

TONY

You know Sammy, you always ask me, "how was the show?" Are you just bustin' my chops?

Sammy looks at himself in the mirror.

SAMMY
What's eatin' you?

TONY
You sure have been goin' out a lot.

SAMMY
Yeah, so. You got some kinda beef
with me?

TONY
I know you ain't been around much
but Mom and Dad are goin' through
the wringer right now.

Sammy combs his hair.

SAMMY
Yeah, what of it?

Tony puts his book in the drawer. He moves toward Sammy.

TONY
Are you gonna help out or is some
dish gettin' all your money?

SAMMY
Hey, I do what I can.

TONY
Yeah, right.

Sammy turns around and faces Tony.

SAMMY
You sound like someone who's lookin'
for a knuckle sandwich.

TONY
I'm just sayin'...

SAMMY
You're just sayin' nothin'. I'm
outta here.

Sammy walks out of the attic. Tony starts to follow after
him but stops.

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

Daniel, Doris, and Victor sit at the large dining room table.
Two empty glasses sit in front of each of them.

The beautiful Christmas tree in the sitting room can be seen from their seats. A gold angel sits atop the tree.

The tree's been decorated to look like it's covered with snow. Tiny lights flash on and off in random patterns.

Surrounding the tree are presents of different shapes and sizes.

The maid, ELIZABETH, 18, walks into the dining room then places a table setting in front of Victor. Finally, Doris breaks the excruciating silence.

DORIS

Didn't the store people do a nice job settin' up the tree, Daniel?

Daniel turns around and glances at the tree.

DANIEL

Yeah, looks great.

Elizabeth moves to Doris.

DORIS

Elizabeth, my husband and I are going to the Pocono's. Could you stay overnight for a few days?

ELIZABETH

Yes, ma'am.

DANIEL

What? When are you leaving?

DORIS

In about an hour, didn't your father tell you?

Daniel slumps back in his chair.

DANIEL

Horsefeathers.

Elizabeth places the table setting in front of Daniel.

DORIS

We'll be back by Christmas...

DANIEL

That's great, Mom, because...

DORIS

... to attend the executive Christmas party in New York City. It's supposed to be the event of the season.

Arnold brings a tray with eggs benedict and sets it in the middle of the table.

DANIEL

You know. Tony's mother comes to school nearly every day.

DORIS

I know who Tony is. He's from that poor family. Daniel, you shouldn't associate with kids like that.

DANIEL

No, Mom. That's not what I mean. I just...

DORIS

If you get your grades up, you could go to a private school. Now eat your food. You don't wanna be late.

Daniel takes one of the eggs benedict off the tray.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The children stream out through the double doors. The limousines get in line as they wait to pick up the wealthy children.

Tony quickly walks down the steps. His carrying bag is stuffed with ten boxes of cards. He has the cash bag in his pants.

He reaches the street and looks left then right.

TONY

(to himself)

So where should I start?

He goes left.

EXT. GOLDEN STREET - DAY

Tony comes to an intersection. The yard on the corner is surrounded by a low wall. He sits down and takes off a shoe and massages his foot.

Tony looks up and sees a street sign. It says "Golden Street". The houses are all beautiful expensive homes.

TONY
(to himself)
Golden street. That sounds like a
good place to start.

The first house is a solid white mansion. Two workers spray the house down with high pressure hoses.

Tony makes sure his white shirt looks neat. He combs his hair with his hand. He walks up the sidewalk and passes a fountain that shoots a stream of water high into the air.

On the other side is a statue of a larger than life white lion. Tony pauses for a second to admire the statue.

EXT. WHITE MANSION - DAY

Tony stands in front of the large doors. He hesitantly rings the doorbell. The bells play some tune that goes on until the door opens.

JAMES, 60, a tall manservant in a white shirt and bow tie with a black vest and waist length jacket opens the door. James looks down at Tony.

JAMES
Are you lost young man? Never seen
the likes of you around here.

TONY
No, sir. I'm here representing the
American Specialty Company. My name's
Tony Cavelli. I have a variety of...

The manservant slams the door.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DAY

Tony reaches the end of the street. He looks in awe at the largest mansion in the neighborhood. He walks up the long sidewalk as he practices his lines.

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - GREETING ROOM - DAY

Daniel glances out the window just in time to see Tony.

DANIEL
(to himself)
That guy really gets under my skin.

Daniel gets up against the wall out of Tony's sight. He laughs then bolts to the stairway.

DANIEL
(yelling)
Elizabeth, Elizabeth, hurry, I need
you.

Daniel disappears up the stairs.

Elizabeth walks to the bottom of the stairway.

Daniel comes back with a ten dollar bill in his hand. He holds the money in front of Elizabeth's face.

DANIEL
Elizabeth, this can be yours right
now. Just do as I say.

ELIZABETH
Yes, Master Daniel.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DAY

Tony stands at the front door. He lifts the heavy knocker then lets it strike. He repeats this two more times.

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - GREETING ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth begins to answer the door.

DANIEL
(whispering)
Don't screw this up. Just let him
have his say.

Elizabeth opens the door as Daniel remains hidden.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DAY

Tony is half-way down the sidewalk when the door opens.

ELIZABETH
Can I help you?

Tony spins back around and sees Elizabeth.

TONY
Good afternoon ma'am. I'm here
representing the American Specialty
Company. My name's Tony Cavelli.

Tony takes a deep breath.

TONY

I have a variety of high quality
Christmas cards available for you to
purchase right now.

Tony takes a packet out of his case.

TONY

Every packet contains four cards and
envelopes plus thirty-two stickers
so you can personalize each one.

Tony shows a box to Elizabeth.

TONY

Each packet is a quarter but a box
of twenty-four is only five dollars.
They'll be just as good next year.

Tony pauses then smiles.

TONY

They are going fast and I would hate
for you to miss this fabulous
opportunity. Would you like a box?

Tony exhales.

Elizabeth smiles then Daniel pulls her back inside.

ELIZABETH

One moment.

Daniel slams the door.

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - GREETING ROOM - DAY

Daniel still has his back to the wall. He smiles from ear
to ear.

ELIZABETH

Such a nice boy.

DANIEL

Shut-up, if you want that ten dollars
this is what you need to do.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DAY

Tony waits at the front door. He rearranges the boxes in
his carrying case. The door opens.

TONY
Is everything okay?

ELIZABETH
(nervously)
No. I mean, yes. It's fine. I
just had to, uh, do, uh, something.

TONY
Okay, how many boxes of cards would
you like?

ELIZABETH
I want them all.

Tony laughs a little.

TONY
I have forty-five boxes.

ELIZABETH
Don't sell any more cards. I'll buy
them all tomorrow.

TONY
Really. Are you sure? That's an
awful lot of cards.

ELIZABETH
Yes.

Tony looks in Elizabeth's eyes with suspicion all over his
face.

TONY
You're not giving me some kind of
line are you?

ELIZABETH
Yes. I mean no. I need those cards.

TONY
No foolin'. Well great, I'll be
back tomorrow evening. Look forward
to seein' you again.

Elizabeth closes the door.

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - GREETING ROOM - DAY

Daniel watches as Tony walks away.

DANIEL
(to himself)
This is gonna be great.

Elizabeth holds out her hand.

Daniel gives her the ten dollars.

ELIZABETH
Master Daniel, I don't...

DANIEL
Whatever. Don't you have some work
to do?

INT. NONA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maria and Tony laugh as they sit on the couch.

Maria goes to the player piano. She grabs a piano roll then
inserts it in the carriage.

MARIA
I love listenin' to this old thing.

The piano begins playing a tune.

TONY
It is keen. Like there's a ghost in
the house.

Maria joins Tony back on the couch.

MARIA
So you're in a good mood. What's
up?

TONY
You won't believe it. The second
house I go to, the lady there tells
me she wants 'em all.

MARIA
See. I told you it would work out.
It'll be the greatest Christmas of
our lives. Mickey will be there...

TONY
...and there's gonna be turkey.

Maria gets off the couch.

MARIA

I can't remember the last time I saw
Theresa and Rose...

TONY

...and mashed potatoes, stuffing
with gravy.

MARIA

Grandma and Grandpa Romano will
come...

TONY

... and that big celery like stuff.
What's it called? You know. Nona
makes it taste like licorice candy.

Maria thinks for a second.

MARIA

Oh, finnochio, Nona says it's a little
bit of Sicily right here in New York.
The whole family will be...

TONY

...the desserts. All of those
desserts.

JOEY/GRACIE

It's gonna be the best Christmas
ever.

EXT. MAIN STREET - PATH UNDER BRIDGE - NIGHT

It's later than usual when Tony heads home.

TONY

(to himself)

The cranberries. I love cranberries.
Why do we only have cranberries at
Christmas dinner?

Tony walks right past the route that takes the long way around
the bridge. Just before he's about to go beneath the bridge,
a train begins to cross.

The sounds make Tony aware of where he is then the four trolls
appear below the bridge. He's so close the trolls can almost
reach out and grab him. His fear paralyzes him.

LARGE TROLL

Looks like a tasty little boy has
come to see us.

The largest troll leaves the shadow of the bridge as he walks toward Tony.

LARGE TROLL

Stoke the fire boys. Looks like a special treat tonight.

Tony overcomes his temporary paralysis then runs away as fast as he can.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony, out of breath, walks through the door. Ace knocks him off his feet then begins licking his face.

TONY

I know, Ace. Haven't seen much of you lately. It's okay. Things'll be back to normal soon.

Tony walks over to his parents' bed. Giovanni and Anna are almost asleep.

TONY

(quietly)

Mom, I sold all the cards. You're gonna be able to have the Sunday Christmas you've dreamed of.

ANNA

That's great. If we had to cancel so close to Christmas, it would ruin everything for everybody.

TONY

I told you I'd do it.

ANNA

You're a special boy. We're so fortunate that God sent you to us. You really have saved Christmas.

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - NIGHT

Tony turns on his flashlight then shines it around the room. He quietly gets out of his bed. Ace doesn't move.

TONY

(to himself)

It's a cold one this morning.

The flashlight illuminates the sunrise chart. The dates are crossed out through December 21st.

Tony turns off the flashlight.

TONY

You better get up, Ace.

Ace sticks his head out from beneath the blanket.

Tony sits in his chair. The first sunbeam appears.

A layer of ice has formed between the rafters. The sunbeam refracts through the ice and shines into the room.

Instead of the normal white light, the sunbeams are now full of color. The spectacular reds, greens, and blues fill the room as each sunbeam appears.

The color seems to make them last much longer than usual.

TONY

Holy Mackerel! Quite a show, huh,
boy?

The sunbeams fade away and the room is now bright.

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

Tony looks around the room. He studies the floor then smiles. He glances at the walls then grins. He observes the perfectly placed window.

TONY

You know what Ace, this place really
ain't that bad. It's home right?

Ace barks.

TONY

(to himself)
I wonder?

Tony slowly lifts his head. He dares to look at the daddy-long-legs colony snug up against a rafter in the ceiling.

A spider slips free and falls on his bed. It just misses Ace. Ace leaps out of bed then presses his body up against Tony's leg.

Tony and Ace stare at the alien looking spider.

TONY

Nope, still as creepy as ever. Right,
Ace?

Ace barks. Sammy wakes then gets out of bed.

Tony quickly goes to his chair. He pulls out his book then pretends to study.

Sammy looks at Tony.

SAMMY

(to himself)
What a jerk.

Sammy leaves.

Tony puts down the book then grabs his script.

Tony sees the glass of water next to his bed. He notices a layer of ice has formed on the surface of the water then the glass begins to change.

BEGIN IMAGINATION SEQUENCE:

EXT. IMAGINARY SKATING RINK - DAY

The layer of ice morphs into an outdoor skating rink in the middle of the mountains. Twenty tiny ice skaters start to move.

They join together to form a star then the pattern slowly rotates.

The skaters break apart then form a snow flake.

They separate into five different groups that form circles then start to spin.

In two rows of pairs, the skaters weave in and out as they skate around the rink.

END IMAGINATION SEQUENCE.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony runs through the double doors then into the school courtyard. He dodges children as he goes down the steps two at a time.

Tony sprints down the sidewalk then disappears around the corner.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Tony leaves his school books on the table then starts up the stairs.

Giovanni is in bed with Anna by his side.

GIOVANNI

Hey. Take it down a notch. You don't have time to say hello to your mother?

Tony quickly walks over to the bed.

TONY

(rapidly)

Sorry, I've gotta get these cards to this lady, a really nice lady, but first I have to clean the wagon.

GIOVANNI

Ease up, boy.

TONY

Dad, she wants all the cards. Forty-five boxes, can you believe it? It's far so I don't have much time.

Tony is nearly out of breath.

ANNA

What your father is sayin', Tony, is that nothin' is more important than what is here, right in front of you.

He kisses his mom on the cheek then walks up the stairs as Ace follows.

GIOVANNI

I think he's lost it.

ANNA

He's just excited.

ATTIC

Tony looks up at the dusty red wagon wedged between two rafters. He goes to his desk then puts his unsteady chair directly under the Red Flyer.

Tony stands on the chair as it tilts back and forth. He stretches precariously only to find he can't reach the wagon. Sammy walks in.

SAMMY

Whoa, brother, what do you think
you're doin'?

Tony has only one foot on the chair as he reaches for the
Red Flyer.

TONY

I... just need to... get the wagon.

SAMMY

Get down. I'll help you.

Sammy stands beneath the wagon and studies it a second. He
bends down.

SAMMY

Get on.

Tony climbs onto Sammy's shoulders.

Sammy slowly straightens up.

Tony gets high enough to free the wagon.

TONY

Hey, Sammy. Sorry for bein' such a
jerk.

SAMMY

No problem, brother, I'm gonna help
Mom and Dad out. I mean... I can't
right at this minute but I will.

TONY

I know you will. I know.

The wagon finally comes free and it falls to the floor.
Sammy moves away then loses his balance. The two of them
tumble down.

Tony gets a good look at the wagon.

TONY

It's in pretty bad shape.

Sammy squats next to the Red Flyer. He looks it over.

SAMMY

Nothin' a little elbow grease won't
fix. C'mon, I'll help you.

Tony rights the wagon then pulls it toward the door. The
wheels won't turn easily and they sound like fingernails
scratching across a chalkboard.

SAMMY

Wait a second.

Sammy goes to his shelf then grabs his Brylcreem and two rags.

SAMMY

This will do the trick.

KITCHEN

Tony and Sammy carry the wagon downstairs.

TONY

Mom, you got any soap?

Anna tosses the soap into the wagon.

ANNA

Have at it, boys.

EXT. MAIN STREET - STAIRS - DAY

Tony and Sammy take the wagon out the front door then down the outdoor steps.

Sammy pulls the wagon to the side of the stairs where the spigot is located.

Tony runs up the stairs.

Sammy leisurely folds the rag then carefully applies some soap.

Tony comes down the stairs as fast as he can carrying ten boxes of cards. He places the boxes on the first step then bolts back up the stairs.

Sammy slowly turns on the water then dampens the rag.

Tony comes back with ten more boxes then he goes back up the stairs.

Sammy straightens up then rubs the rag back and forth. He begins to create a lather.

Tony drops more boxes then leaves.

Sammy waits for Tony to come back.

Tony comes down with ten more boxes. He drops them then sits down.

Sammy hands him the rag.

SAMMY
Any more boxes?

Tony gasps for breath.

TONY
Five... there's five.

SAMMY
No problem. I'll get 'em. Hey,
chop-chop. You haven't got all night.

Tony cleans every square inch of the wagon. He gives attention to every corner as he scrubs off years of neglect.

Sammy works on the wheels. Soon they spin freely and quietly.

Tony makes the wagon shiny and squeaky clean.

Sammy puts his arm around Tony's shoulders.

SAMMY
Well beat me daddy eight to the bar,
I'd say it looks pretty good.

Tony bolts up the stairs.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Tony takes the table cloth off of the table.

TONY
Sorry, Mom, I need this.

Anna stands up to protest but Tony's already gone.

GIOVANNI
Anna.

ANNA
He's fine. Like I said he's just
excited.

EXT. MAIN STREET - STAIRS - DAY

Tony places the tablecloth over the boxes.

Sammy helps him tie it down with some rope.

Tony smoothes out any wrinkles or creases then stands back and admires his work.

SAMMY
Gimme some skin, brother.

Tony and Sammy slap hands.

SAMMY
Gotta go. Got a date.

Sammy bounds up the stairs.

TONY
(to himself)
Let's go make some money.

It's a beautiful day. The unexpected warmth has nearly melted all of the snow. The shops are all packed with customers doing their Christmas shopping.

MR. ROBINSON'S STORE

Tony helps Mr. Robinson carry packages to his car. They load the last package.

Mr. Robinson closes the car door and the trunk.

MR. ROBINSON
Thank you, Tony. I owe you one.

TONY
Not a problem. Anytime.

Tony heads down the sidewalk. He waves and smiles at every car that passes.

GENERAL STORE

Tony stops at the window display. He looks at the glove.

TONY
(to himself)
Tomorrow, you're mine.

CHRIS and DALE sit outside the gas station as they enjoy the fantastic weather.

CHRIS
(yelling)
Hey, Tony. How's your dad?

TONY
Gettin' better every day.

INT. CANDY STORE - DAY

Tony sticks his head in the door.

TONY

Miss Rossi you better stock up. I
might buy everything you got.

MISS ROSSI

Sure, sure.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

Tony turns down the sidewalk then walks through the church's
doors.

INT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

Tony slides into the last pew, then pulls the knee cushion
down. He kneels and puts his hands together in prayer.

TONY

(praying)

Heavenly Father, thank you for all
that you have given me and for helping
my family. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Tony reverently makes the sign of the cross. He rises then
heads back to the street.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DAY

Just as the sun begins to drop below the horizon, Tony arrives
at the mansion. He walks up the long sidewalk. His smile
gets bigger the closer he gets to the front door.

Tony arrives at the huge heavy doors. He lifts the knocker
then releases it.

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - GREETING ROOM - DAY

Daniel runs down the stairs just in time to stop Elizabeth.

DANIEL

Don't you dare. I'll get it. I've
been waiting all day for this.

ELIZABETH

Master Daniel. Are you sure that...

DANIEL

Outta my way. I got this.

Elizabeth backs away. Daniel opens the door.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DAY

The sun drops below the horizon. Tony sees Daniel standing in the doorway with a large grin on his face.

TONY

Daniel? I didn't expect to see you here. So this is where you live, huh? Really nice place.

Daniel's eyes begin to tear up as he fights back the laughter.

TONY

I think I'm supposed to see your mom.

Daniel laughs so hard he bends over.

Tony takes a step back.

Daniel abruptly stops laughing. He straightens up then looks Tony right in the eyes. The darkness begins to envelop the town.

DANIEL

I can't believe you thought my mom would buy your stupid cards. You really are a numbskull.

TONY

But the lady said...

DANIEL

You know how many cards we're gonna get? Bupkis. Nada.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - NIGHT

The last rays of sunlight disappear. Tony stands there silently.

DANIEL

Oh and look, it's already dark and it's Thursday. Guess you'll never sell those cards. Now get lost.

Tony turns and slowly walks away.

DANIEL
That wagon looks pretty full,
numbskull.

Tony just keeps walking.

DANIEL
(louder)
I told you, mamma's boy. I knew you
couldn't sell those cheesy cards.

Tony reaches the end of the sidewalk.

DANIEL
(yelling)
Thanks, Tony. You just made this
the best Christmas ever. The look
on your face, classic.

Tony disappears from sight.

Daniel walks into his house.

DANIEL
(to himself)
What a gas. Wish I could do that
every year.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Tony walks by the church without even looking at it.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CANDY STORE - NIGHT

Tony looks at the candies on display then balls a fist.
From across the street, Chris and Dale see Tony as he
approaches. They both wave.

DALE
Merry Sunday Christmas, Tony.

Tony doesn't turn his head to acknowledge them. He kicks a
can on the sidewalk.

GENERAL STORE

Tony walks to the store front window. He stops to look at
the glove. A rock, just about the size of a baseball, catches
his eye.

Tony picks it up then takes a few steps back. He tosses it
up and down in his hand as he stares intensely at the glove.

A tear falls down his cheek. Tony throws the rock straight down then walks away.

TONY'S STAIRS

Tony hides the wagon.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tony begins to turn the door knob but lets go. He forces a smile. His lips move as he practices what he's going to say.

Tony walks through the door.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Anna sees Tony walk in and rises to her feet. Tony tries to get to the stairs before Anna can cut him off.

ANNA

Tony.

Tony stops. He doesn't turn around.

ANNA

Well, how many cards did you sell?
Were the people nice?

Tony keeps his back to his mom.

TONY

Lots, Mom. I'm cookin' with gas.

Tony starts up the stairs.

ANNA

So... tell me about it.

Tony walks up to the attic not saying another word. Ace follows but at a distance.

Anna slightly shrugs her shoulders.

ANNA

(to herself)
Poor kid. He must be beat.

Anna walks back to Giovanni who's still in bed.

ATTIC

Tony lies on his bed and stares at the ceiling. Ace lies right up against him. He rubs Ace's back.

TONY

I don't understand it. I tried, I really did.

Tony's other hand softly pounds the pad.

TONY

Father John always says if you do what's right. God will bless you.

Ace licks Tony's hand. Tony pounds harder.

TONY

He always says if you need help just ask God. He will always answer a righteous prayer.

Ace gets off Tony's bed then moves to Sammy's.

TONY

What could be more righteous than trying to save Sunday Christmas for the family, Ace?

Tony's fist begins reaching the floor through the pad.

TONY

God loves you, blah, blah, blah.

Tony stops pounding. He turns his head and the tears flow down the side of his face. He wipes them away and the elb below the baseball comes into view.

Tony stops crying and stares at the ceiling then he throws himself out of his bed. He rises to his feet then walks straight to the shelf.

Tony pulls the elb off the shelf and the baseball goes flying straight for the window until Ace leaps and catches it.

Tony stomps down the stairs.

KITCHEN

Anna stands up from the bed.

ANNA

What are you doing? You're gonna
wake up your father. He just fell
asleep.

Tony walks out with his elb in his hand then slams the door.

ANNA

Tony?

INT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Tony walks straight to Father John. He takes a deep breath.

TONY

Father John.

Father John slowly turns around.

Tony shoves the elb into Father John's chest.

TONY

I don't wanna be an altar boy anymore.

Father John deftly catches the elb before it hits the floor
then sets his candle-lighter down.

Tony walks away.

FATHER JOHN

Tony.

Tony keeps walking.

FATHER JOHN

(with authority)

Young man.

Tony turns around.

Father John gently smiles.

FATHER JOHN

Hold on, Tony. You're my number one
guy. You know how much we need you.

Tony silently stands there.

FATHER JOHN

The chapel will be packed on a Sunday
Christmas. Who's going to bring in
the crucifix on this special day?

TONY

God won't help me so I don't want to help Him.

FATHER JOHN

I know you too well to believe that. Come, sit down with me. Tell me what's going on.

Father John and Tony sit in the front pew.

FATHER JOHN

You wanna tell me about it?

Father John's gentle demeanor helps Tony calm down.

TONY

My dad got hurt. There was no money for Christmas. I told my mom I'd make the money by sellin' cards.

Father John leans back in his pew.

TONY

I thought I had them sold but it was a lie. Now I haven't sold any cards and I've ruined everything.

Father John looks at Tony.

FATHER JOHN

Sounds pretty crummy to me. What does this have to do with God?

TONY

I'm a good kid. I try to do what God wants. I even prayed for Him to help. I really thought He did.

FATHER JOHN

You know Heavenly Father loves you.

Tony won't look at the priest and gives no answer.

FATHER JOHN

God knows all and He knew you would be going through this even before you were born.

Tony finally turns to face him.

FATHER JOHN

It's still three days to Christmas. I bet you can sell some of those cards.

TONY

I can't even remember the script now. I could never sell enough in time. I'm not that smart.

FATHER JOHN

If you were meant to sell those cards, I would guess that He has already taught you what you need to know.

TONY

I never learn anything in school.

Tony stands up.

FATHER JOHN

School's not the only place you can learn. Sometimes the hardest thing is to understand what you know.

TONY

I'm sorry, Father, but I'm done. You'll have to do it without me.

Tony walks away. His slumped shoulders and slow gait barely get him through the doors.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Tony struggles to make it to the bench. The mental pain has become physical. Tears flow down his face. He grabs his head with both hands then leans over.

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE:

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - NIGHT

The daddy-long-legs look like tiny life pods attached to impossibly long and skinny legs as they bounce up and down while they hang from the ceiling.

EXT. PATH UNDER BRIDGE - NIGHT

Tony is so close to the trolls they can almost reach out and grab him. The sight terrifies him so much that he can't even move.

LARGE TROLL

Looks like a tasty little boy has come to see us.

The large troll is no longer in the shadow of the bridge as he walks toward Tony.

LARGE TROLL

Stoke the fire boys. Looks like a special treat tonight.

EXT. DANIEL'S MANSION - NIGHT

Tony silently stands in front of Daniel.

DANIEL

Oh and look, it's already dark and it's Thursday. Guess you'll never sell those cards. Now get lost.

Tony slowly walks away.

DANIEL

That wagon looks pretty full, numbskull.

Tony just keeps walking.

DANIEL

(louder)

I told you, mamma's boy. I knew you couldn't sell those cheesy cards.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

One of the wealthy students, Bobby, 13, collides with Tony.

BOBBY

Sorry. Didn't see ya. Musta forgot to look down.

TONY

What?

The wealthy students nearby begin to laugh.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony stands in front of the class.

DANIEL

Look at yourself. You wear the same shirt every day. No one's gonna buy anything from you.

The class begins to chant.

CHILDREN

One-shirt Tony, one-shirt Tony. One-shirt Tony...

The last child walks out and Tony still hasn't moved. His eyes begin to well up.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Tony throws back his head.

TONY

(yelling)

I've ruined everything for everyone.

Tony hears two barks in the distance. He lifts his head then wipes his eyes.

Ace runs down the sidewalk toward Tony. He jumps on the bench then licks Tony's face.

TONY

Down, Ace, down.

Ace jumps off the bench then presses up against Tony's leg.

Tony rubs Ace's head.

TONY

Hey, boy. How'd ya know I'd be here?

Tony uses both hands to rub Ace's ribs.

TONY

Haven't seen much of you lately.
I'm sorry. I've screwed everything
up. Made promises I couldn't keep.

Ace jumps up on the bench then lies down next to Tony.

TONY

You must have seen me leave with my
elb. Good boy. Sure glad you're
here. What am I gonna tell Mom?

Ace rolls onto his back as Tony continues to pet him.

TONY

You're so smart. I didn't even teach
you that I took the elb to church.
You just learned it on your own.

Ace barks twice.

TONY
Maybe you don't have to be taught to
learn somethin'.

Tony stands up.

Ace jumps off the bench.

Tony puts out his hand.

TONY
Shake.

Ace puts his paw in Tony's hand.

TONY
Other shake.

Ace nimbly removes his paw from Tony's hand then raises the
other paw.

TONY
Double shake.

Now Ace places both paws in Tony's hand.

TONY
Show me you love me.

Ace lowers his nose until it rests between his paws.

Tony rubs Ace's head.

TONY
I love you too, boy.

Ace faces toward home.

TONY
Yeah, I guess I wanna go home too.

EXT. MAIN STREET - GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Tony and Ace stop at the store front display.

TONY
You know Father John said I probably
learned some things. Just like you.

Tony looks at the glove in the window.

TONY

You think I might be able to sell those cards? I only have one more day. I won't do it using that script.

Tony squats then rubs Ace's head.

TONY

I'm gonna have to sell 'em to just about everyone. There's gotta be a better way.

Ace and Tony walk home.

TONY

Sammy always says just keep your eyes open. It's his answer for everything.

They both continue to walk down the street.

TONY

Miss Rossi always gives her customers a choice. Do you want this one or that one? You want two or three?

Ace starts to walk faster.

TONY

That's right, Ace. We need to hurry. I've got some card sortin' to do.

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

Tony takes his three shirts from the rope.

TONY

(to himself)

I'll start by wearing these.

Tony grabs the nice jeans that he wears to church. He quickly puts on his clothes.

Tony sits down at his desk with Ace beside him. He opens a new notebook.

TONY

It took almost all night but I've got the cards sorted and labeled. I think this is gonna work.

With his pencil, Tony writes the title, "NO EXCUSES JUST DO IT", across the top of the first page in his notebook.

Sammy sits up.

SAMMY

How was... I mean, whatcha doin'?

TONY

You crack me up. No show this morning. Too cloudy.

Below the title, Tony writes, "ALWAYS GIVE THE CUSTOMER A CHOICE".

SAMMY

Dang nabbit! I forgot I'm supposed to meet Linda.

Sammy jumps up then throws on his clothes. He takes the time to look in the mirror to make sure his hair is perfect.

SAMMY

So how'd that card thing go? Get rid of 'em all?

TONY

Not exactly. Hey, Sammy, what did you mean about taking a risk to make more money?

SAMMY

You gotta know what you're doin'. Look at every angle. Sometimes its just a feelin'. Gotta go.

Sammy bolts out the door.

Tony thinks a second then writes, "A RISK CAN BRING MORE MONEY".

Tony leans back in his chair. He pets Ace.

TONY

Sammy knows. I gotta remember that one. Now what else? How can I sell those cards today?

Tony leans back a little more. He closes his eyes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE:

EXT. MAIN STREET - MR. ROBINSON'S STORE - DAY

A new Buick Roadmaster with Betty and Cindy in the front seat comes toward Tony. He begins waving wildly with a big smile on his face.

At the last minute, they wave back and smile.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

Tony lowers the chair and sits up.

He writes, "BE NICE TO EVERYONE".

TONY
That's three, Ace.

Tony leans back in his chair with his eyes closed.

Ace licks his face then barks twice.

TONY
You're right. Don't wanna be late.
I'll come up with the fourth one at
school.

Tony grabs his notebook.

KITCHEN

Ace takes his place in front of the space heater. Tony goes to the bed to check on Anna and Giovanni.

ANNA
I'm so afraid, Giovanni. I can't
even think about Christmas.

GIOVANNI
Don't let fear stop you, it's never
as bad as you think.

TONY
That's it.

Tony sits at the table then writes in his notebook, "DON'T LET FEAR STOP YOU".

Tony gets up.

TONY

Goin' to school. Mom, I'll have the money tonight. See ya, Dad. Love you.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The class is having a Christmas party. The desks have been moved to the side so the children can all congregate in the middle of the room.

Christmas music plays as the kids drink punch and eat cookies. Tony is the only one sitting at a desk. His head is down as he writes in his notebook.

Sister Redempta sits behind her desk and grades papers.

Daniel talks loudly so everyone can hear him.

DANIEL

You should have seen Tony last night.
I thought for sure he was gonna cry.

A few children laugh. Tony doesn't lift his head.

DANIEL

He thought I was going to buy his stupid cards. Now its too late.
He'll never do it now.

Nobody laughs as some children move away from Daniel. Daniel approaches Tony. Tony keeps his head down until Daniel grabs his notebook.

DANIEL

What's this, another stupid plan?

CINDY (O.S.)

Leave him alone, Daniel.

Tony jumps out of the desk then snatches back his notebook.

Sister Redempta looks up from her papers and watches. She cracks a slight smile.

Tony gets in Daniel's face.

TONY

You think it's funny what you did last night?

Daniel takes a step back.

TONY

You think it's funny you ruined Sunday
Christmas for my family?

Tony steps toward Daniel.

TONY

You think it's funny that you broke
my mother's heart? Well, it's not.
It's just mean.

CHILDREN

Yeah.

Some students stand in a circle around Tony and Daniel.

Tony pokes Daniel in the chest.

Daniel takes another step back.

TONY

It doesn't matter though because I'm
gonna sell those cards. My mom will
have the Christmas she deserves.

CHILDREN

Yeah.

Sister Redempta stands but does not interfere.

Tony pokes Daniel's chest to emphasize every other word.
With every poke, Daniel moves backwards.

The children separate to let Daniel through the circle.

TONY

You wanna know why? Because there
are no excuses. You just have to do
it.

Tony's last poke is strong enough to nearly knock Daniel
over. Daniel is now against the wall.

DANIEL

Leave me alone, Tony. You've blown
a fuse.

Tony moves face to face with Daniel.

TONY

And that's somethin' you'll never
understand coz you're just a silly
spoiled rich boy.

The entire class breaks out in laughter. Even Sister Redempta chuckles a little.

Tony grabs his pencil then writes something in his notebook. He rips the paper out.

TONY

If you don't believe me, here.

Tony shoves the paper into Daniel's chest.

TONY

That's my address. You're officially invited to Sunday Christmas dinner at the Cavelli house.

Eddie begins to chant.

EDDIE

Silly spoiled rich boy, silly spoiled rich boy, silly spoiled rich boy...

The entire class joins in.

CHILDREN

Silly spoiled rich boy, silly spoiled rich boy, silly spoiled rich boy...

DANIEL

Stop it. I'm not. Leave me alone.

The release bell rings and the children stop chanting. They gather their stuff then each of them goes to Sister Redempta. One by one they wish her a Merry Christmas.

Daniel is long gone.

Tony goes to his desk. After the last student says Merry Christmas to Sister Redempta, Tony gets up and approaches her.

SISTER REDEMPTA

So, you're gonna sell your cards today.

TONY

Yes, Sister.

Sister Redempta gathers the remaining papers she needs to grade.

SISTER REDEMPTA

Just remember, no matter what happens, you've done your best.

TONY

When we come back, I'm gonna try and not look out the window so much.

SISTER REDEMPTA

I appreciate that, Tony. I see you try every day.

TONY

I do. I really do but then I think of somethin' and...

SISTER REDEMPTA

I know. Hey, don't you have some cards to sell.

TONY

Yes, Sister. Thank you, Sister. Merry Sunday Christmas.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony flies through the doors. He runs down the steps two at a time then disappears around the corner.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Ace jumps on Tony as soon as he walks through the door.

TONY

I love you, Ace. You can knock me down anytime.

Tony sees that Giovanni is sound asleep. Anna is rocking back and forth on the side of the bed.

TONY

Mom, you okay?

Anna tries to hide her tears but it's obvious she's been crying for awhile.

ANNA

I'm fine, but your dad, he doesn't look too good.

Tony walks to the bed and gently places his hand on Giovanni's cheek.

ANNA

The doctor will be here soon.

Tony hugs Anna.

TONY

Mom, I've got some cards to sell.
I'll be back with the money.

Tony squats then rubs Ace's neck with both hands.

TONY

C'mon, Ace.

Ace barks.

EXT. MAIN STREET - STAIRS - DAY

With Ace by his side, Tony walks down the sidewalk pulling the wagon.

EXT. BEDFORD ROAD - MR. SULLIVAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony looks down the street. It seems to go on forever.

TONY

Longest street in town, Ace. We're
going to every house if we have to.

Tony and Ace walk up the sidewalk to the first house. Just as he's about to knock, the door flies open.

MR. SULLIVAN, 65, tries to get through the door with a giant bag of trash. His appearance is dominated by his long white beard. The bag crashes to the ground.

MR. SULLIVAN

Applesauce!

TONY

Sir, sir. Let me get that for you.

With extreme effort Tony manages to get the bag to the sidewalk and into the trash can.

MR. SULLIVAN

You sure know how to work, kid.
Whatcha got in the wagon?

Tony takes the tablecloth off of the wagon. A couple boxes say "variety". One says, "cats". One says "dogs." Another says, "funny". Each box has a different label.

TONY

Christmas cards.

MR. SULLIVAN

Don't need any of those.

TONY

That's great. Wouldn't it be awesome if you didn't have to go through that hassle next year?

MR. SULLIVAN

Sure would.

Tony grabs a box.

TONY

I can make that happen. Do you like funny cards or serious cards?

MR. SULLIVAN

Funny, some of those really crack me up.

TONY

Right now, at a special price because it's so close to Christmas, I've got a whole box of funny cards.

MR. SULLIVAN

That's not a bad idea. I'll take a box of the funny ones.

MRS. WHITES HOUSE - DAY

Tony and Ace walk up to the next house. MRS. WHITE, 30, answers, then steps outside as she closes the door. It sounds like at least three dogs are barking from inside.

MRS. WHITE

What a beautiful dog. Is that yours? Can I pet him?

TONY

Of course. He's very friendly.

Mrs. White pets Ace's head.

TONY

I can see you love dogs.

MRS. WHITE

Oh yes. Nothin's better than a dog.

TONY

Wouldn't it be great if there were Christmas cards with nothin' but dogs on them?

MRS. WHITE
I'd buy them in a second.

Tony grabs the box labeled "dogs".

TONY
It just so happens I have a box of
cards just like that. Ninety-six
cards, all about dogs.

MRS. WHITE
Yes, yes. I would love those.

GLORIA'S HOUSE

Tony stops at the sidewalk. He sees a white Persian cat on
the doorstep.

TONY
You better stay here. Stay Ace,
stay.

Ace sits on the sidewalk. Tony walks to the front door then
gently picks up the cat. He knocks.

GLORIA, 14, answers.

TONY
Is this your cat? She was outside.
I've noticed some cars goin' by pretty
fast. It didn't seem safe.

GLORIA
Thank you, you're right. I didn't
even know she was out here. How can
I help you?

TONY
It just so happens that I have a
whole box of Christmas cards all
about cats.

GLORIA
You do? Mom, Mom, come here.

Gloria's mom comes to the door.

GLORIA
This boy saved our cat from being
run over. He's got a whole box of
cat cards. Can I have them?

TONY
Ninety-six cards for just five
dollars.

Gloria's mom leaves the doorway. Gloria excitedly jumps up and down.

GLORIA
I hope she has the money.

TONY
She will.

Gloria's mother comes back then hands six dollars to Gloria.

GLORIA
Here you go.

EXT. BEDFORD ROAD - NIGHT

Tony stops at the end of the street.

TONY
It must be gettin' late. No one
will even answer the door. I guess
we're done.

Tony takes the tablecloth off the wagon. He sees that there are still 30 boxes left.

TONY
Oh no. I'm not even close to sellin'
enough cards. Mom will be so
disappointed. Let's go home.

Tony and Ace slowly walk home with their heads down.

EXT. ELK'S LODGE - NIGHT

Tony and Ace walk by and hear all kinds of noise coming from inside. There is a large sign on the door. It says, "ABSOLUTELY NO KIDS ALLOWED". Tony keeps walking.

Mrs. Isaacs walks toward Tony.

MRS. ISAACS
Well hello, child. Merry Sunday
Christmas.

TONY
Not exactly.

MRS. ISAACS
 Will you listen to that racket.
 They must have hundreds of people in
 there. They sound pretty rowdy.

TONY
 Sure do.

Tony looks back at the Elk's Lodge.

MRS. ISAACS
 I wouldn't risk going into a place
 like that at my age. Anyway, Merry
 Sunday Christmas.

TONY
 Good-night.

Tony stands there.

TONY
 That sign on the door says they don't
 want us. Sammy says if you take a
 risk you can make some money. C'mon.

As Tony gets closer to the door of the Elk's Lodge the noise
 gets louder and louder.

TONY
 Here goes nothin', Ace.

INT. ELKS LODGE - NIGHT

Ace and Tony walk through the door with the wagon. The place
 is packed. There are so many people Tony can't even see to
 the back of the huge room.

Tony's immediately stopped by Mr. Robinson who wears a purple
 fez on his head. On the front, written in silver, are the
 words, "Exalted Ruler - Katonah".

MR. ROBINSON
 Tony, you shouldn't be in here.
 Can't you read? Take off or I'll
 have to throw you out.

TONY
 I know, I know but I heard all the
 people and I thought, I bet they'd
 love to see the smartest dog in town.

MR. ROBINSON
 Well, I guess I owe you one. Lets
 see whatcha got.

Tony leans down then puts his mouth near Ace's ear.

TONY
(whispering)
Ace, this is important. Do your
best.

Tony stands back up.

TONY
Watch this. Shake.

Ace puts his paw in Tony's hand.

MR. ROBINSON
I'm waiting.

TONY
Just watch. Other shake.

Ace drops his paw then puts the other one in Tony's hand.
His movements are quick and crisp.

Mr. Robinson is not impressed. He stands there with his
arms crossed

TONY
Double shake.

Ace puts both paws in Tony's hand.

TONY
Now show me you love me.

Ace lowers his nose so that it's in between his paws.

TONY
I love you too, Ace.

Tony rubs Ace's head.

MR. ROBINSON
That has got to be the cutest thing
I've ever seen. Do you think he
would do that for me?

TONY
Of course. I told you he's the
smartest dog in town.

MR. ROBINSON
(yelling)
Sheila get over here. You gotta see
this.

SHEILA, 29, is very pretty. She wears a low cut blouse and short skirt. She joins Mr. Robinson. A few others have heard him and they are curious too.

MR. ROBINSON

Watch this.

Mr. Robinson does the trick with Ace. Those who are gathered around laugh.

SHIELA

Adorable. Can I try?

Mr. Robinson looks at Tony. Others gather around.

TONY

Of course.

Sheila begins doing the trick with Ace.

MR. ROBINSON

So what's in the wagon, Tony?

TONY

Christmas cards I'm trying to sell to help my mother. It looks like I'm out of time though.

MR. ROBINSON

Hold on a second. Let me see what I can do.

Mr. Robinson leaves. Another person is finishing the trick. The crowd laughs.

Mr. Robinson walks to the stage in back of the room then grabs the microphone.

MR. ROBINSON

Fellow elks. Fellow elks.

The place gets quiet as everyone becomes aware that their exalted ruler is speaking. They give him their attention.

MR. ROBINSON

That young man with the wagon and the incredible dog is tryin' to sell some Christmas cards.

Mr. Robinson holds up five bucks.

MR. ROBINSON

What do you say we take them off his hands? Five bucks a box, a great deal. I'm gettin' one.

Ace is still doing the trick. People are lining up to take a turn. Tony removes the table cloth and exposes the boxes.

One person hands five dollars to Tony and takes a box.

Another does the same.

EXT. ELK'S LODGE - NIGHT

Tony and Ace walk out the door. The wagon is empty.

TONY

We did it, Ace. I couldn't have done it without you.

Tony hugs Ace around the neck as Ace licks Tony's face.

TONY

C'mon, Ace. I can't wait to tell Mom.

EXT. MAIN STREET - PATH UNDER BRIDGE - NIGHT

Tony sees the same three shady characters. They are much closer this time. They begin to walk toward him.

Tony quickly stuffs the cash bag into his pants. A cat runs by Ace and he chases after it as a train begins to pass over the bridge.

TONY

No, Ace. Get back here.

Ace follows the cat as it runs under the bridge. He disappears into the darkness. Tony hears Ace yelp as if he has been hurt.

Tony can't move because he's frozen with fear.

He hears Ace yelp again.

GIOVANNI (V.O.)

Don't let fear stop you.

Tony hesitates a second then he runs toward the bridge.

EXT. BENEATH THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

The sounds of the train going over are so loud that Tony has to cover his ears. The noises begin to change into evil laughing.

Another yelp from Ace as the laughs get louder. It's so dark that Tony can't see anything.

TONY

Ace. Ace.

Tony hears Ace yelp again. Slowly Tony's eyes begin to adjust to the darkness, at first he only sees shadows and silhouettes.

Tony begins to see distinct shapes. He falls down in fear as he realizes what he's looking at. Three trolls are standing together. They've got Ace.

One of the smaller trolls is holding Ace's front legs. Another troll is holding his back legs. The third troll has muzzled Ace by tying a rope around his mouth.

The trolls are suspending Ace off the ground. Ace yelps again. Tony lays there in total shock.

Out of nowhere, the largest troll appears. He picks Tony up and snarls in his face.

LARGE TROLL

Give us your gold and you can have
your filthy dog back.

Tony is too afraid to say a word. The troll throws Tony down and he hits the ground hard.

LARGE TROLL

Give us your gold.

Tony struggles to lift his head.

TONY

I can't. I have to give the money
to my mom. She has to have it.
Everything'll be ruined.

The troll releases a horrifying roar.

LARGE TROLL

Boys.

The two smaller trolls that hold Ace off the ground pull on his legs as they laugh dementedly.

Ace cries from the pain.

LARGE TROLL

Give us your gold or the dog dies.

Tony lifts himself up. The tears stream down his face.

TONY

Please don't hurt him. I'll give you the gold. Please let him go.

Tony reaches into his pants then pulls out the cash bag.

TONY

Here. Here it is just stop hurting him.

Tony tosses the bag to the largest troll. The noise from the train and the laughs from the monsters creates a dizzying cacophony of sound.

The smaller trolls release Ace and he crashes to the ground. They run over to the largest troll then look at the contents of the bag.

They roar and laugh with the most terrifying sound that Tony has heard. The ground beneath the trolls opens up. A huge chasm forms. Lava glows from deep within the abyss.

Tony's eyes are barely opened as he watches the trolls fall into the fissure along with the cash bag.

Tony passes out.

One quarter falls out of the bag and ends up next to Tony.

The crevasse closes as the last car of the train crosses the bridge. It gets eerily quiet. Ace licks Tony in the face.

Tony wakes up. He sees the quarter beside him.

Tony puts the quarter in his pocket.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony and Ace enter the kitchen. Theresa is laughing hysterically as Sammy tickles her.

ROSE

I'm not ticklish.

SAMMY

You're not? Let's see.

Sammy grabs Rose then tickles her.

Giovanni is sitting up in bed. He holds Anna tight.

GIOVANNI

I told you things would be fine.

ANNA

You sure did, you crazy man.

Tony just stands there at the door. Anna sees him and gets off the bed.

ANNA

Tony, we have such good news. I couldn't wait...

TONY

Mom. I don't have any money.

ANNA

Oh, Tony. You worked so hard. I'm sure you did your best.

Anna smiles big then hugs Tony tightly.

TONY

But Mom, everything's ruined. There's no time to even cancel. What will everyone do?

ANNA

They'll figure it out.

TONY

I thought you'd be so sad.

ANNA

Sad? How could I be sad? The doctor said your dad is doing great. He's gonna be fine.

Tony's face is filled with confusion.

TONY

But Sunday Christmas dinner. What'll we do?

Sammy walks over to them.

SAMMY

Cheer up Tony. I know you wanted that glove. You'll get it someday. It's almost Christmas. No frowns.

ANNA

Right. I'll make that potato soup you guys love.

THERESA/ROSE

Yea.

ANNA

Remember guys. The church will bring the presents tomorrow but we won't open them 'til after Sunday service.

SAMMY

Of course, Mom, it'll be great.

Giovanni sits up then leans against the wall.

GIOVANNI

So, is my baby boy gonna say hello to his father?

Tony goes to him.

TONY

Dad, you look great.

GIOVANNI

Feel great, son. Are you okay? You look a little down.

TONY

I thought everyone would be so sad because I didn't make any money but no one seems to care.

Giovanni pulls Tony closer.

GIOVANNI

We all care. About each other. Tony, you know that's all that matters.

TONY

I do know that. I've always known that. You know me, I get distracted.

Everyone is gathered around the bed. The apartment is filled with laughter.

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - ATTIC - DAY

Tony's up and dressed as Sammy sleeps. Ace is comfortable in bed.

TONY

You wanna go with me? We gotta lot of walkin' to do.

Ace sticks his head from beneath the blanket and barks.

TONY
I know, stupid question.

Tony makes sure the quarter is still in his pocket.

TONY
C'mon, Ace.

KITCHEN

Tony and Ace quietly walk down the stairs. Theresa and Rose are asleep in their bedroom. Anna has her arm around Giovanni as they sleep.

TONY
(whispering)
Everyone was up so late. Who knows when they'll wake up. Let's go.

They walk out the door.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MR. ROBINSON'S STORE - DAY

Mr. Robinson is outside talking to a customer. He sees Tony.

MR. ROBINSON
Hey, Tony. Hey, Ace. You must be feelin' rich today.

TONY
I am, sir, but it has nothin' to do with money.

MR. ROBINSON
That's great, Tony. Merry Sunday Christmas.

TONY
Mr. Robinson, can I talk to you for a second?

Mr. Robinson walks toward the door and waves for Tony to follow him.

MR. ROBINSON
Of course. Step into my office.

TONY
Stay, Ace. I'll be right back.

Ace patiently sits as Tony goes into the store.

LATER

Tony walks out of Mr. Robinson's store.

TONY
Merry Sunday Christmas, Mr. Robinson.

Tony and Ace walk down the sidewalk.

INT. CANDY STORE - DAY

Tony walks through the door.

TONY
So glad your open.

MISS ROSSI
Gotta make a livin'.

Tony walks to the counter. He stands up straight and tall.

TONY
I would like twenty-five penny
candies.

Miss Rossi grabs her heart and pretends she is having a heart attack.

TONY
Very funny. Really, I have a quarter.

MISS ROSSI
Well, Mr. Cavelli. Would you like
some sweet ones are do you like the
sour ones?

Tony looks at all the candies.

MISS ROSSI
Take your time, Tony. Whatever you
want.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CANDY STORE - DAY

As Tony walks out the door, he holds the bag of candy like there was gold inside.

TONY
Merry Sunday Christmas, Miss Rossi.

MISS ROSSI
Same to you, young man. Same to
you.

PATH UNDER BRIDGE

Tony and Ace stop. A train begins to cross. Tony stands there and listens.

TONY
You hear anything, Ace?

Ace barks.

TONY
Neither do I.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

Tony walks into the church while Ace waits outside.

LATER

Tony comes out of the church. He joins Ace then pets him on the head.

TONY
Now we need to see Maria.

EXT. NONA'S HOUSE - DAY

Tony and Maria stand in the front yard.

TONY
... and I talked to Mr. Robinson.
He's gonna bring the decorations.

MARIA
Nona will love makin' the food.

TONY
I know where Mr. Gable lives. I'm
sure he'll want to help. So you can
do it?

Maria points at her bicycle.

MARIA
Yeah, I've gotta bike. I can get to
Mickey's. Tony, it wasn't your fault.
You don't have to do this.

TONY
I do. I promised. Mom will have
the Sunday Christmas she wants.

Tony walks away.

MARIA
Merry Christmas.

TONY
Right back at ya.

FADE TO:

INT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

The chapel is packed. There are as many people standing around the room as parishioners sitting in the pews. Candles and flowers fill the chapel.

Anna, Sammy, Theresa, and Rose are sitting with Cristo, Sofia, and Mickey.

The first altar boy stands behind the purple curtain. He walks forward and the crucifix attached to a long pole juts out near the top of the drapes.

As the crucifix moves forward, the rod slowly separates the curtain downward. The altar boy that carries the crucifix steps through the drapes.

Tony holds the crucifix as he reverently walks to the center aisle. He stands behind the first candle bearer. The second candle bearer stands behind Tony.

Father John joins them. They all genuflect at the altar, turn, and walk out the doors.

EXT. ST. THERESA'S CHURCH - DAY

Tony sees his mother walk out with the rest of his family.

TONY
Mom, I really need to go to the
bathroom. I'm gonna run ahead.

Tony runs down the sidewalk.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Tony runs through the door. He pulls the candy out of his pocket. Six bundles of four candies are tied together with a bow and a card with one piece left for Tony.

Tony places the candy on each of the presents.

TONY

Here, Ace. I'm sure you want yours
now.

The rest of the family comes through the door. Theresa and Rose immediately run to the presents left by the church.

THERESA

Look Rose, candy.

Sammy opens his present. It's a bottle of cheap cologne.

SAMMY

Can't get enough of this stuff.

Theresa and Rose suck on their first piece of candy as they open their presents. Each of them pull out a beautiful doll and shriek with excitement.

Tony walks over to his parents. Giovanni is sitting up in his bed.

TONY

Mom, Dad, these are for you.

GIOVANNI

Thank you, son. Nothin' like a little
sweet to brighten the day.

Anna messes up Tony's hair.

Tony unwraps his present then smiles from ear to ear. It's three pairs of brand new wool socks.

Tony pulls out a pair and puts them on his feet then he wiggles his toes with delight.

TONY

Soooo nice. Sooooo warm.

Rose and Theresa sit on the stairs as they play with their new dolls.

Sammy tries on his new cologne.

Anna looks at the whole family and sees how happy everyone is. A tear runs down her cheek.

Tony puts his arm around her.

TONY

You okay, Mom?

ANNA

Just happy, Tony. Just happy. So should I heat up the potato soup?

SAMMY

Yeah, Mom. I love that stuff. I hope you made a lot.

ANNA

There's plenty.

INT. DANIEL'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

Daniel sits at the end of the large table. There are bowls and plates filled with delicious foods. Arnold walks in with a beautiful turkey then sets it down in front of Daniel.

ARNOLD

Is there anything else I can get for you?

DANIEL

No. I'm good.

ARNOLD

Well, Merry Christmas, Master Daniel.

Daniel looks at all the beautiful food before him as he sits at the table alone. He pulls Tony's address out of his pocket and reads it.

DANIEL

(to himself)

I wonder what that knucklehead is doing?

Daniel gets up and leaves.

DANIEL

I'll be back, Arnold.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Anna is at the stove as she stirs the potato soup.

Giovanni's on the bed with all the kids around him. They are laughing and talking. Someone knocks on the door.

ANNA

Were you expecting anyone, Giovanni?

Tony smiles.

Anna walks to the door and opens it. Fred is standing there.

FRED

Merry Sunday Christmas, Anna. Mind
if I come in?

ANNA

No, of course not. Come in.

Fred walks directly to Giovanni then starts to pick him up.

GIOVANNI

What are you doing?

FRED

Sorry buddy but we need the room.

He lifts Giovanni in both arms then turns to the girls.

FRED

Can your dad use your bed for a sec?

Theresa and Rose look very confused as they nod their heads.

Fred takes Giovanni to the girls' bedroom. He comes out
alone then walks over to Anna.

FRED

Anna, can I put the bed and table
outside?

ANNA

What's goin' on, Fred?

FRED

We just need the room.

Fred goes to the door.

FRED

Let's go, guys.

Two factory workers walk to the bed then take it down the
stairs.

Fred takes the table.

The workers come back with a long table then slide it against
the kitchen wall.

Another table is placed at the end of that one.

Maria comes in with Nona and Marco.

Maria covers the tables with the tablecloths. Nona and Marco carry large plates of food.

Nona goes to the stove then turns the burner off.

NONA

You won't be needin' this.

She sets the soup to the side.

ANNA

Can you please tell me what's going on?

NONA

You don't know?

Nona starts to laugh as Marco approaches Anna.

MARCO

Buon Natale.

Marco kisses her on the cheek. Fred and his wife bring in more food.

Mr. Robinson comes in. He starts to put Christmas decorations everywhere.

Daniel gets to Tony's apartment. He goes half-way up the stairs to see what's going on.

More people come up the stairs behind Daniel. They force him into the apartment.

Daniel looks around then sees the pies sitting on the table.

GIOVANNI (O.S.)

Can someone please tell me what's going on?

ANNA

It's okay, honey. Give me a second.

Tony sees Daniel walk in.

TONY

Look, I don't want any trouble.

DANIEL

Is that vanilla pudding pie? I love vanilla pudding pie.

TONY

All right, Daniel, but you sit right next to me. Don't be a jerk.

DANIEL

I'll be good just gimme some of that pie.

Sofia walks through the door carrying a huge turkey cooked to perfection. Behind her is Cristo and Mickey.

ANNA

Mom, the turkey looks beautiful. You can put it right here.

MARIA

It wasn't easy gettin' this ready in time.

ANNA

I know, Mom. I love you. Merry Sunday Christmas.

MARIA

Merry Sunday Christmas, Anna.

The factory workers set up the remaining chairs then everyone begins to sit down.

Fred goes into the bedroom then comes out with Giovanni. He helps him to a chair.

FRED

You gonna be okay?

GIOVANNI

I'll be fine. You're crazy Fred, you know that. Did you arrange all of this?

FRED

I'm pretty sure Tony was the one that made this happen.

Everyone manages to find a seat. Some are sitting in chairs along the wall. Giovanni grabs a fork then taps on a glass until he has everyone's attention.

GIOVANNI

I'm not sure how you all did this. I'm sure happy you did.

Giovanni slowly stands.

GIOVANNI

I know I can speak for the rest of my family when I tell you how grateful we are. Join hands for the blessing.

Anna holds Maria's and Giovanni's hand. Tony and Daniel hesitate but hold hands too.

GIOVANNI

Bless us Oh Lord, and these thy gifts,
which we are about to receive, from
thy bounty, through Christ, Our Lord.

EVERYONE

Amen.

GIOVANNI

Let's eat.

FADE OUT.

THE End