

The Stolen Santa

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

There is a full moon outside and the wide windows allow enough silver light inside for us to see the English sheepdog curled up on a rug in front of a large marble fireplace. This is JED, 9 years old and dreaming of chasing cars and digging up bones.

An elaborate and ornate carriage clock sits proudly at the center of the mantelpiece. Its ticking is monotonous and reverberates around the large room.

The noise of FOOTSTEPS on gravel from outside somewhere.

The noise wakes Jed from his sleep. He stands to attention, his wet nose twitching and slowly circles the room as if searching for the source of his disturbed sleep.

Every surface in the somberly furnished room is littered with photographs, memories of friends and family cover walls and furniture. Hundreds of eyes follow Jed's every move as he continues to circle the room.

The sound of BREAKING GLASS sends Jed into a frenzy, he runs towards a closed door and begins to claw it and WHIMPERS excitedly.

The door swings open with such force that Jed is sent sliding across the polished oak floor, coming to rest only when he collides heavily with a wall.

Into the room steps JASON GRANTHAM. Mid 30's and unshaven he looks like he has slept in a hedge for a week.

He has a length of rope in his hands and approaches Jed before the dog has time to attack. Forcibly holding him down he hooks the rope around the struggling dog's collar and pulls tight. Jed chokes and frantically tries to paw at Jason.

Dragging the dog by the make-do leash Jason leads him back out through the door.

He re-appears a few seconds later minus the dog.

JASON
Fucking Mutt!

It is Jason who now slowly circles the lounge, taking in his surroundings. He pauses for a moment and stares at his own reflection in a large TV screen, rubbing his stubbly face as if not recognizing himself.

Continuing his tour of the lounge his eyes light up when he spies a bottle of 12 year old malt. He picks up a tumbler from next to the bottle and fills it with the whiskey.

Leaning his head back he downs it with a single gulp. Wiping his mouth with the back of his left he slams the glass back down onto the table.

He picks up a photograph and gazes at it. Two young couples on a tropical beach posing for a shot, a little something to remind them of a happy time.

Replacing it he picks up another, the same two couples but this time they are at a party. He slowly runs his finger lightly over the face of one of the women.

A CREAK frokm behind him, his eyes dart to the TV screen where he can see the reflection of a door opening. He slowly turns and stares into the head of a 3 wood which is aimed squarely at his face.

The small and thin man who holds the golf club is trembling. Beads of sweat drip down his forehead. WILLIAM SCARSDALE, early 30's and dressed in checked pajamas takes a single, unsure step towards his uninvited house guest.

WILLIAM

I've called the police, You might
want to do yourself a favor and
leave.

Jason calmly glances at the clock.

JASON

I've got time.

Jason steadily steps backwards and places the photograph carefully back in its place. William looks at it for a second, puzzled but then returns his gaze to Jason.

WILLIAM

There's no money here. So if that's
what you're after you'll be
disappointed.

JASON

It's not money I'm here for.

William begins to look around the room, a puzzled expression on his face.

WILLIAM

Jed! Jed!

(to Jason)

What have you done with my dog?

JASON

Jed's dead.

William's face takes on a look of horror and he steps forward about to strike Jason with the golf club.

The door opens with a loud CREAK and both men turn to look as NATHAN SCARSDALE enters the room. 70 years old and certainly showing it he is dressed in a long nightgown and walks carefully with the aid of a cane.

NATHAN

What in god's name is going on here? Who are you?

Nathan flicks a light switch and illuminates the scene.

WILLIAM

He's killed Jed.

NATHAN

Chill. The dogs fine. I let him go.
(turning his gaze towards Nathan)
Some things don't deserve to be kept locked inside.

William now with a relieved look stares up at Jason. With the light on he sees him properly for the first time and studies his features. Dark hair and piercing brown eyes, His long stubble doing a bad job of hiding the bad skin underneath.

A glint of recognition in Williams eyes.

WILLIAM

I know you.

Jason gives a hint of a smile.

JASON

I wondered when you would notice.

WILLIAM

Shit. Oh my god, the guys at the Post Office are never gonna believe this. I don't get it.

NATHAN

What on earth are you talking about son? What has this man got to do with the Post Office? Will someone please explain what the hell is going on here and can you please tell me why you are playing golf at 2am?

WILLIAM

This Dad, is Nick Overhill. He worked at the Post Office. Well until he went out one morning with a mail truck full of mothers day cards and never came back. I must have told you about it?

NATHAN

Sure, I remember. They found the mail truck at the bottom of Jagers creek.

WILLIAM

That's the one.
(to Jason)
We all thought you were dead.

JASON

Nick Overhill is dead.

WILLIAM

I don't understand.

JASON

There never really was a Nick Overhill.

WILLIAM

This is crazy. Why did you have to let everyone think you were dead.

JASON

At the time it was the right thing to do.

WILLIAM

(shakes his head)
None of this explains why are you here. Why you have broken into our house. What did I ever do to you?

JASON
 Your father knows.
 (to Nathan)
 Isn't that right? The great Nathan
 Scarsdale knows exactly why I am
 here.

Nathan is now staring intently at Jason, he swallows hard.

WILLIAM
 Dad, What's going on?

NATHAN
 I need my glasses, William where
 are my glasses?

William gestures at Jason with the club.

WILLIAM
 But..

NATHAN
 (impatiently)
 Oh put it down, what are you going
 to do with it? You can't even hit a
 ball straight, what do you think he
 would do once you miss his head?

William obediently leans the club against the wall, his eyes fixed on Jason. He shuffles over to a desk in front of the window and returns clutching his fathers glasses.

The three men stand facing each other while Nathan places the glasses on the end of his nose. He looks up at Jason and studies his face for a moment and gives a resigned look before speaking.

NATHAN (cont'd)
 So it is you. I thought you might
 make an appearance at some time.

Jason stares back at Nathan but says nothing. William looks confused.

WILLIAM
 Dad?

NATHAN
 I thought I might see you at your
 fathers funeral. I looked, but had
 no real idea what you looked like.

JASON

I saw you. I couldn't believe you had the nerve to show up.

WILLIAM

Dad?

NATHAN

So what? Are you here for revenge?

JASON

The truth.

NATHAN

The truth?

Nathan slowly shakes his head and carefully plots his way towards an old leather armchair at the side of the fireplace.

NATHAN (cont'd)

There is no truth. Only hurt.

(beat)

I need to sit down.

William rushes towards his father and helps him get to his seat. Nathan pushes him away, he is as animated as a 70 year old man get get.

WILLIAM

What exactly is going on here?

Nathan falls back into the chair.

NATHAN

This is Jason Grantham, he's my god son.

WILLIAM

Grantham?

(the penny drops)

You mean as in Roy Grantham?

William looks at both men as they stare into each others eyes.

WILLIAM (cont'd)

(to Jason)

What? His son? You're Roy Grantham's son?

JASON

Don't worry, it was a surprise to me too.

NATHAN

I was sorry to learn of his death. Despite everything I know it can't of been easy for either of you.

JASON

(irritated)

Which part? Not easy for him spending 20 years in a jail cell? Or not easy spending the rest of his measly, cancer ridden life in a filthy hospital bed?

(beat)

Or not easy for me finding out who my father really was? Having to take care of him, having to listen to his constant bitterness of what you did to him.

NATHAN

So this is revenge.

JASON

Maybe. I don't know. I never thought much about what I'd do once I was here.

WILLIAM

What's this got to do with my father?

NATHAN

Roy Grantham.

Nathan slowly shakes his head, deep in thought.

NATHAN (cont'd)

Roy Grantham and I were best friends. We both started at the Post Office on the same day.

WILLIAM

I know the story.

Nathan shoots a look at William "Shut up I am talking". Though that look says it in a way that words never will.

NATHAN

(to Jason)

I was there when he met Sally, your mother. She worked there too. I was his best man, Janet and I were your godparents. We were all family back then.

JASON

Some family. After what you did to him how can you say that?

NATHAN

I did nothing to him! It was all in his head, a paranoid fantasy. You say you want the truth? Well the truth is that he turned into a bitter, jealous man after your were born. He was drinking more and more, he was violent. I know he beat your mother on at least two occasions and probably more. He--

JASON

I've heard all this before, this is what you told the court, It was your evidence that sent him to prison.

NATHAN

You said you wanted the truth.

JASON

Not your version of the truth. I know what really happened. He told me everything before he died.

NATHAN

Well it's not hard to guess. The same thing he told the police I would imagine. Did he tell you that your mother and I were having an affair? That we were planning to runaway? That he caught her in the process of leaving him and during the fight she attacked him?

(beat)

He claimed that while he was trying to defend himself she fell and hit her own head on the chair.

JASON

He was not the only one who knew something was going on with you and my mother.

NATHAN

(raising his voice now, angry)
All lies. I was there remember, You had been taken away by then. I had to live through those stories, some people believed them. They nearly destroyed my life, my marriage.

Nathan takes a long look at William who is just sitting watching with an amazed expression on his face. He composes himself somewhat and forces himself to lower his voice.

NATHAN (cont'd)

If it were not for William here it probably would have been the end. Janet found out she was pregnant the day your father was sentenced.
(beat)

We moved on. We had no choice.

JASON

While I was left to rot.

NATHAN

We tried to take you in, we wanted to look after you. But with everything that happened they wouldn't allow it.

JASON

I don't believe you.

NATHAN

It's the truth.

JASON

Have you any idea what it was like for me? Passed around from home to home, never knowing who my family was or ever understanding why I was alone?

NATHAN

It can't have been easy. I wish I could of done more.

JASON

I think you did enough, don't you?

Nathan takes a look at the huge clock above his head and lets out a deep SIGH.

NATHAN

It was Christmas eve, we were exchanging gifts. We had a tradition back then, obviously one you would not get away with nowadays.

WILLIAM

The stolen Santa?

NATHAN

Well we called it Mystery Santa, but yes, that was the idea. We would pick a name from a hat and give them a present we had managed to acquire during our rounds that day.

JASON

Acquire? You mean stole?

NATHAN

(ignoring Jason)

Usually they were just any old crap. You wouldn't believe some of the stuff people will send to each other at Christmas. I seem to remember I got a Beatles LP that year, but usually it was soap or candles or other such nonsense.

(beat)

I picked your mothers name out that year and boy did she hit the jackpot. A silver brooch, shaped like a butterfly and covered in diamonds. Looked expensive. I could hardly believe my luck, nor could your mother, her eyes lit up like a firecracker when she opened that box. Can you imagine somebody sending something so lovely through the post?

William looks at his father with a hint of disgust.

NATHAN (cont'd)
Oh William, times were different
back then. We all did it.

WILLIAM
It certainly doesn't happen now.

NATHAN
Well aren't you just a goody two
shoes?

(beat)

That brooch is probably what
killed her. Roy saw the look in her
eyes, he thought he saw something
between us. He claimed I had bought
the brooch for her and somehow
managed to pull her name from the
hat on purpose. He had been
drinking that day, he was
delusional, paranoid. He may even
have had been on something else,
there was lots of it about back
then. I could tell something was
wrong, I should have done
something. I will never forgive
myself for that.

(beat)

They went home after work and that
was the last time I saw either of
them.

Nathan looks down at his feet and for a moment allows the
sadness to wash over him.

He shakes it off.

WILLIAM
But why come to work at the post
office, why change your name. Why
lie to everybody?

Jason still shows little emotion, his hands are slightly
trembling but his face remains calm.

JASON
I was hoping to understand, to try
and figure things out. The Post
Office was so important to him, it
was his life. I thought that if I
was there I could somehow
understand him more, understand
what made him tick.

WILLIAM

By working at the same place he did. I'm sorry but I don't get it.

JASON

You would know.

WILLIAM

I'm sorry?

JASON

The family business does not seem to have done much for you. Why are you still living at home?

William squirms in his seat.

WILLIAM

I'm looking after dad. He needs me since mum--

NATHAN

Bah, I don't need anyone. He's only here because he screwed up his own marriage. At least be honest boy.

William's eyes drop from his fathers gaze. He squirms again.

NATHAN (cont'd)

(to Jason)

You look like him. Your dad I mean.

JASON

I never realized how much until I came here.

NATHAN

He was a good man, to begin with anyway. He was my best friend. It was the drink, it was only the drink. It was like poison to him. I tried so many times to get him to stop but he turned against me in the end.

Jason jumps to his feet, the emotions he has been trying to keep in check begin to spew out. His body is tensing up and taking on a more aggressive stance.

JASON

(shouting and wildly gesturing)

Don't you dare! How dare you patronize me, lie to me. Do you

JASON
really think I believe your
bullshit? Did you really think I
had been taken in? It was you! It
was always you!

NATHAN
(remaining calm)
I see the apple has not fallen far
from the tree. You are no
different, I notice you have been
drinking my scotch. Like a drink do
you?

JASON
(still shouting)
Don't you dare! I know the truth,
he certainly knew the truth. I am
not prepared to listen to the same
old bullshit anymore.

Jason quickly pushes William to the floor and grabs hold of
the golf club. Before William has time to get back to his
feet Jason has it held triumphantly in his hands.

JASON (cont'd)
You keep out of this, this is
between your father and me.

His hands shaking, the golf club is raised behind his head
as if he is ready to strike down at Nathan. Tears begin to
run down his cheeks, mixing with the dirty skin and leaving
dark stains under his eyes.

Nathan stares into Jason's face unable to do anything.

NATHAN
You've got it wrong. You have got
it all so wrong.

JASON
All I want is the truth. You know
what I'm talking about. I really
don't want to have to beat it out
of you.

NATHAN
I don't know what he told you or
what you think you know but I
promise you it is not true.

JASON

You tell me then, what do I think?
What is it that I know?

William takes the chance to make a jump at Jason and sends him sprawling to the floor. The golf club leaves Jason's hands and slides across the room.

William is on Jason's back and tries to land a punch but fails.

Jason is too strong and William is thrown from Jason's back like a rag doll.

William is thrown into the fireplace and hits it hard. His flailing arm brings down the mighty clock with him. With a loud crack it comes crashing down onto his head.

William's body lies at his father's feet as a pool of blood slowly seeps from behind his smashed skull. The clock lies next to him bloodied but unbroken.

Jason stands looking down at William on the floor.

Nathan is stunned and drops onto his knees to cradle William's head to his chest. He smears blood onto his nightgown in the process.

NATHAN

Oh god what have you done?

Jason looks stunned, a look of terror on his face.

JASON

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

POLICE SIRENS in the distance.

Jason looks into Nathan's eyes.

JASON (cont'd)

God. I'm so sorry, is he going to be alright?

NATHAN

Go.

JASON

What?

NATHAN

Just go. Before they get here.
Leave us.

Jason takes a last look at Nathan and their eyes lock.

NATHAN (cont'd)

I never want to see you again.

Jason turns his back to Nathan and exits the same way he came in.

The SIRENS get louder.

Nathan SOBS softly.

Nathan's hands move towards the clock and with a great effort manages to turn it over onto its back and springs open a hidden compartment.

Nathan pulls out a folded piece of stiff paper, wrapped inside is a butterfly shaped brooch. It's diamonds are dirty and faded but still have some shine left in them.

He lifts the brooch to his lips, closes his eyes and kisses it gently. He folds open the paper, it is a photograph, he looks at it for a moment and lets it drop to the floor in front of him.

The flashing blue light casts an eerie shadow across Nathan's face as his sobs get quieter.

The clock still TICKS as Williams blood starts to collect around the photograph on the floor. A young darked headed boy, piercing brown eyes, his small frame hidden amongst the grownup's post office uniform he is wearing. He smiles at the camera as the blood slowly engulfs him.

FADE OUT: