An X-Mess Story

by

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INT. SANTA’S WORKSHOP/TOYROOM - MORNING

THE ENTIRE MOVIE IS SHOT BY AN UNSEEN DOCUMENTARY CREW

It’s a busy day in Santa’s Workshop. It is first thing in the morning and the elves are working full tilt trying to get as many toys constructed in a short amount of time. The front door opens and through a flurry of snow, in walks JOHN, Santa’s accountant. Though he is an elf, he is a average sized man in his mid-thirties. He is dressed business casual as opposed to the rest of his kin, in green and red outfits. He sips on a Starbucks coffee while heading to his office. TWINKLE, the elf in charge of the workshop floor approaches John, happily.

TWINKLE
(giddy)
Christmas is soon going to be here!

JOHN
(offhandedly)

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Twinkle sits on a very ornate chair, happy to be interviewed.

TWINKLE
It’s not that John lacks Christmas spirit. He doesn’t really have spirit for any holidays. He just lacks spirit... overall.
(pause)
I guess that’s not really a good defense...

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

John looks bewildered as he is being interviewed.

JOHN
You mean, you really got permission to film this?
(looking at interviewer)
Wow.
(pause)
And I like some holidays.
(MORE)
JOHN (CONT'D)
I really like Halloween... not
going out or anything. But I hold
these fantastic horror movie
marathons. I choose horror films
from the early classics right up to
the modern classics. Each Halloween
I tackle a different theme as well.
Last Halloween was “Capitalism as a
movie monster!” It was amazing.
And next Halloween I think a few of
the elves are going to join me. At
least they said they would.
(pause)
It’s really fun.

CUT TO:

INT. SANTA’S WORKSHOP/TOYROOM - MORNING

TWINKLE
See you bought another coffee.
Don’t like the coffee here? It’s
free.

JOHN
No... I mean, Starbucks is on my
way here anyway.

TWINKLE
(suspiciously)
We’re in the North Pole.

John sighs, defeated.

JOHN
Okay. It’s just that... why is it
always candy cane flavoured coffee?
Why can’t we just drink normal,
ordinary coffee?

Twinkle gasps in shock.

TWINKLE
Candy canes are delicious!

JOHN
Yeah, sure. But every day? I mean,
c’mon....

TWINKLE
Why wouldn’t you want delicious
candy canes every day?
JOHN
(getting frustrated)
Yeah. You make a surprisingly great point. Anyway, duty calls.

As he attempts to leave Twinkle clears his throat. John solemnly realizes this means Twinkle has more to say.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Anything else, Twinkle?

TWINKLE
I’ve got a surprise for you!

JOHN
Oh no. You didn’t....

Twinkle holds up a new elf suit in John’s size. John frowns as Twinkle beams with delight.

TWINKLE
I fixed it up again for you after you accidently ripped it... again. Funny how you keep ruining your suits.

JOHN
Yeah. Weird how that keeps happening. A real mystery.

TWINKLE
Well....

JOHN
Look, Twinkle, I’m already dressed for today.

TWINKLE
(happily)
Put it on.

JOHN
I’d hate to have to wash what I’m wearing after only having it on for less than an hour.

TWINKLE
Put it on.

JOHN
I’ll wear it tomorrow. I’ll try not to ruin it in the meantime.
Twinkle simply looks at John and crosses his arms. John sighs and nods, knowing he does not really have a say in the matter. He heads to the bathroom and immediately comes out wearing the elf suit. Needless to say, he looks ridiculous.

**TWINKLE**
It looks great!

**JOHN**
Yes. Great job Twinkle.

John turns and heads to his office, unhappily.

**JOHN (CONT'D)**
(mumbling)
Let’s see how easy it is to fix after I put it through the snowblower.

Twinkle once again clears his throat. John turns around again.

**TWINKLE**
Oh John, one more thing.

**JOHN**
Yes?

**TWINKLE**
Santa wants to see you later.

**JOHN**
(concerned)
Did he tell you what it was about?

**TWINKLE**
Nope.

**JOHN**
Okay, well... see you.

As John turns to leave Twinkle clears his throat again. John turns more impatiently to see Twinkle holding up a candy cane.

**TWINKLE**
Candy cane?

John takes it out of Twinkle’s hand quickly.

**JOHN**
You bet. I hear they’re delicious.
TWINKLE
See you later John!

JOHN
(mumbling)
Not if I can help it.

CUT TO:

INT. SANTA’S WORKSHOP/JOHN’S OFFICE – AFTERNOON

John sits at his desk going over books while typing away at
his calculator. Occasionally he attempts to tear his shirt.

JOHN
What did he fix this with? Kevlar?

The door behind him swings open, scaring John silly, and in
walks SANTA (1737). But not the Santa we are accustomed to
seeing. Instead of his red suit and hat, he is wearing a
Hawaiian shirt and shorts. He seems in a very jolly mood.

JOHN (CONT’D)
(surprised)
Santa!
(eyeing him over)
Formal dress party today?

SANTA
(laughing)
Oh John. Nothing like that. The
Missus and I have decided that I
need a vacation.

JOHN
(smiling)
That’s wonderful. You must be...

John’s jaw nearly hits the floor. He tries to compose himself
through his panic.

JOHN (CONT’D)
You mean after Christmas right?
Because going on vacation now would
be crazy.

SANTA
Oh not now!

John sighs in relief and smiles.
SANTA (CONT'D)
Tonight! Hawaii awaits! Beaches, resorts, hula dancers....

JOHN
You can’t go now! Christmas is in less than a week. We need to organize! Prioritize! Organize... wait I said that!
(trying to compose himself)
There’s lots to do. If you go now, there’s no way you’ll be ready in time for Christmas.

SANTA
That’s fine. I was thinking of taking this Christmas off.

JOHN
Madness.

SANTA
It’s been... what? Over 700 years since I didn’t work the holiday. I think I’m owed one vacation.

JOHN
Then take New Years off. Wouldn’t that be fun?

SANTA
Nope. It’s been decided.

JOHN
The kids will be heartbroken.

Santa laughs merrily.

SANTA
Oh John. I’m not going to go on vacation without getting a replacement.

JOHN
You have a replacement?

SANTA
Well, not yet.

John looks at him in shock. Santa takes out a gadget from his pocket.
SANTA (CONT’D)
But not to worry. This here computer has picked out the perfect person to replace me for this year.

John is not impressed. He pushes a button on the so-called computer and a voice comes up.

COMPUTER VOICE
I am a puppy. Arf arf.

JOHN
That is a speak and spell sir. Unless you think a puppy is the perfect replacement.

Santa looks perturbed and puts the gadget away.

SANTA
Oh, I don’t need some new fangled computer to tell me who I need to replace me. We didn’t need computers in the old days.

JOHN
Yeah. That worked out really well the year you accidently gave Shaq that baseball mitt.

SANTA
Yeah. Oops.
(pause)
But I’ve been eyeing this guy since he was a kid. He’s perfect. And I’ve picked you to get him ready!

JOHN
What!?

SANTA
You’re going to train him. To be my replacement this year.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM – DAY

John, now sitting in his elf suit, looks at the camera, stunned.
JOHN
But.... But I’m an accountant.

CUT TO:

INT. SANTA’S WORKSHOP/JOHN’S OFFICE – MORNING

JOHN
No.
(pause)

SANTA
Afraid not. You’re going to be going to Toronto Canada and training my replacement.

JOHN
This is crazy, Santa! If you weren’t going on vacation I’d tell you that you need a vacation. You’re not thinking straight.

SANTA
You’ll be leaving this morning. Comet agreed to give you a lift. He was going there to see a Leaf’s game anyway.

John holds his hand up to his mouth and coughs meekly.

JOHN
Oh no. Bummer. It seems I’m coming down with a cold. It looks like you’ll need to find someone else.

Santa turns and begins to leave.

SANTA
Remember to have him ready by Christmas. Everyone’s counting on you.

Santa has already left and closes the door behind him. As John leans back on his chair in shock he spills the coffee on his elf suit.

CUT TO:
INT. INTERVIEW ROOM – DAY

John lets out a sheepish smile.

    JOHN
    So... looks like I’m going to
    Canada. I better practice saying
    eh. And hoser.
    (quietly)
    Can you help me get out of this?

CUT TO:

INT. RICK’S BEDROOM – MORNING

The alarm goes off showing it’s 10:30 in the morning. RICK, an attractive, yet slovenly looking man in his late twenties turns it off and yawns. He hops out of bed and begins to get dressed in a dress shirt and pants. He leaves the bedroom whistling a happy song.

INT. RICK’S KITCHEN – MORNING

Rick enters the kitchen, still whistling, and pulls out a cold slice of pizza from the fridge and pops it into his mouth. As he eats he begins to shave himself with an electric razor he had in his pocket. He checks his calculator watch and realizes he’s got to speed up. He quickly rushes into the front hall.

INT. RICK’S FRONT HALL – MORNING

Rick puts on his shoes hastily while chewing away on the pizza. He looks into the living room and sees John sitting on his couch.

    RICK
    (casually)
    Howdy.

INT. RICK’S LIVING ROOM – MORNING

John looks at Rick a little surprised.

    JOHN
    Hi.
INT. RICK’S FRONT HALL - MORNING

Rick is finished putting on his shoes and leaves.

EXT. RICK’S DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Rick reacts to the cold air and rushes to his car. He hits a button on his keys to unlock the door, but the trunk pops open. He rushes and closes it and then tries again, this time with success.

INT. RICK’S CAR - MORNING

Rick starts up the car and a rock song comes on the radio which he immediately starts singing along with regardless of not knowing the words. As he backs the car out of the driveway he stops and puts the car into drive and pulls back in. He shuts off the car and opens the door.

EXT. RICK’S DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Rick once again reacts to the cold weather as he approaches the house. He enters.

INT. RICK’S FRONT HALL - MORNING

Rick once again looks in the living room to see John still sitting on the couch. John gives him a smile.

    RICK
    Who are you?

Rick then looks into the camera.

    RICK (CONT’D)
    And why are you filming me?

INT. RICK’S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

John looks relieved as Rick acknowledges his presence. Rick enters the living room as John stands up to explain himself.

    JOHN
    It’s a long story, and there’s no way you’re going to believe me, so I’m just going to get it over with and say it. I’m an elf who works for Santa Claus and I’m here to train you as his replacement.
Rick reacts like he can not believe what he is hearing. Then he smiles a little and John smiles nervously in return. Then Rick lets out a chuckle and John relaxes. Finally Rick lets out a hearty laugh and John laughs with him.

RICK
Right! I’m not falling for that one again.

John stops laughing and looks at Rick in confusion. He shakes his head and continues.

JOHN
Um. I anticipated a reaction like that... well, actually, nothing like that... but I thought you wouldn’t believe me, so I thought I’d just cut to the chase.

John raises his hand, palm up, and in it appears a candy cane. He then takes the candy cane and throws it into the air, where it turns to snow. Next thing you know, it is snowing in Rick’s living room. Rick looks at John with a happy smile.

RICK
Wow! You’re a magician!

JOHN
What? No... as I mentioned previously, I’m an elf.

Rick folds his arms in disbelief and shakes his head.

RICK
Yeah. Right.

JOHN
Okay. Well how about this.

John looks around the room and finds a little piece of paper. From his front pocket he pulls out an oversized hammer and screwdriver. He begins to work on the paper with his tools until he reveals a toy train set.

RICK
Are you a wizard?

JOHN
(frustrated)
No! I’m an elf. From Santa’s workshop! What is so hard to believe about....
(pause)
(MORE)
JOHN (CONT'D)
Okay. It does seem ridiculous. But then explain this?

He takes Rick to the window and points outside. COMET, one of Santa’s reindeer is waiting as John gives him the “ok” signal. Comet then flies off towards the sky. Rick is astonished.

RICK
You are a magician!

JOHN
Wow.

RICK
Do you know Cris Angel?

JOHN
Thankfully no.

RICK
Can you saw a lady in half?

JOHN
Not without jail time.

RICK
Do you have one of those fancy magician tuxedos? Can I wear it?

JOHN
I have an elf suit you’re more than free to have.

RICK
(laughing)
Yeah, right.

JOHN
What is wrong with you? What have you got against elves?

RICK
Like you have an elf suit.

John stomps over to his suitcase and opens it, revealing the gaudy looking, man sized, elf suit. Rick is flabbergasted.

RICK (CONT'D)
You weren’t lying! You are an elf!
Amazing!

John can not believe this is the man Santa has chosen as his replacement. He eyes Rick carefully.
RICK (CONT'D)
What’s your name? No! Wait! Let me guess.
    (thinking)
Bow Bow?

JOHN
I’ve been around elves my whole life and never have I heard of an elf being named Bow Bow. Haven’t heard of anyone named Bow Bow for that matter. Is that even a name?

RICK
Stinky?

JOHN
No!
    (pause)
Why?

RICK
Pudgy?

JOHN
Please stop guessing. It’s John! John the elf.

Rick looks unimpressed.

RICK
John?

JOHN
Yeah. What’s wrong with John?

RICK
Not very elfy.

JOHN
John is a perfectly good name for an elf.

RICK
Can I call you Johnny?

JOHN
You certainly can not.

RICK
    (sadly)
Bummer.
JOHN
Well Rick isn’t the bee knee’s of names either. Can I call you Ricky?

RICK
(smiling)
Sure!

JOHN
Well, I’m not going to. Anyway, Santa has sent me here to train you to replace him this year. So, we really need to get started. We have lots of work to do if we’re going to get you ready.

RICK
Awesome!
(pause)
Like what? Showing me how he gets down chimneys smaller than he is?

JOHN
Yeah. Though I don’t have the faintest clue how he does that. So we’ll figure it out amongst other things. So we best get crackin’.

RICK
No can do Johnny. I got to get to work.

JOHN
What? No. Christmas is just around the corner. You gotta call in sick or something. There’s no way you’ll be ready in time.

RICK
It’s my last day before the holidays.
(pause)
Plus, I got to do something before I leave.

JOHN
(panicking)
Okay. This can work. I can get some research done while you’re gone.
(suddenly happy)
Where do you work? I’ll drop by on your lunch break and go over some things. This will work out perfectly.
Rick looks a little concerned.

RICK
Um. You can’t drop by then. That’s a bad time.

JOHN
I can’t help but notice, for such a huge event as becoming Santa Claus’ replacement, you sure are taking it in stride.

RICK
Oh. I played Santa Claus in my school play.

JOHN
Of course. That explains it.

RICK
But seriously Johnny...

JOHN
Really John is fine.

RICK
... it’s important that I go to my last day of work. We can’t all be elves eating candy canes and dancing through the strawberry river.

JOHN
You’ve known me for 5 minutes and can you seriously see me doing any of those things? Being an elf isn’t as easy....

RICK
I gotta go. And maybe you should make it stop snowing now.

John notices that he and Rick are now up to their chests in snow. He nods, realizing his mistake and snaps his fingers. The snow stops. Rick muscles his way to the front hall.

RICK (CONT'D)
We’ll have lots of time before Christmas comes. Just make yourself at home. And the shovel’s in the garage.
Rick then zooms out the door leaving John standing amidst the snow filled living room, confused. He yanks out his cell phone, dials a number and puts it to his ear.

JOHN
(into phone)
44 Chestnut Lane? Are you sure that’s the right address?
(pause)
It’s just, I’d be hard pressed to consider this guy as a replacement for the block of wood that holds my office door open.
(pause)
Okay. And I don’t need a candy cane to relax! I don’t even like candy canes! What is it that people like even? It’s not like you have one and go, “Oh wow! What an amazing taste!” There’s a reason why people don’t eat them all year long! What next? Christmas cakes in July....
Hello? Hello?

John hangs up the phone and begins to struggle through the snow to get out of the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE’S OFFICE - DAY

Behind a giant oak desk in an office overlooking the city, sits HENRY CASTLE (55), smiling smugly into the camera. He is well groomed and everything about him screams wealth. Rather obnoxiously.

CASTLE
Thank you for meeting me here in my office. It’s so much nicer than your stuffy excuse for an interview room.

Castle sits back comfortably on his expensive chair and gloats.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
So, I’ve heard through the grapevine that Christmas this year is going to be a little different. That jolly ole St. Nick can’t cut it. He needs a vacay. Typical. You don’t get that obese without being a little lazy.
Castle stands up and looks out his office window at the stunning view of the city.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Well, some of us don’t mind a little hard work. In fact, we thrive on it.

Castle lets out a nefarious laugh and puts his hands behind his back.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
And now that Santa is on vacation, he’s given me the perfect op...

A WINDOW WASHER suddenly swings in front of the window. Castle lets out a piercing scream and nearly hits the ceiling. He catches his breath and turns to the camera, laughing.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
(laughing)
Oh my God! That was crazy! Did you see that. Oh! My! God! I though I was going to have a heart attack. First there was nothing... then suddenly... WHOA! Craaaaazzy!

Castle bends over, his laughter subsiding.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Just let me catch my breath here.
Whoa!

And just like that, Castle is back in full villain mode. He turns back towards the window, and then takes a step sideways as not to be staring directly at the window washer.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
When I was just a boy, Christmas was a tough day for me. I never got one present. Not one! Some nonsense about being a good boy.

Castle spins around and stares at the camera, maniacally.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
But now! Now it looks like I, Henry Castle, have the upper hand. As that oaf sips Margaritas on the beach, Castle and Castle will take over Christmas. Update it! Modernize it.

(MORE)
CASTLE (CONT’D)
And get rid of those ridiculous rules like being a good person.

Castle turns back towards the window. Then steps sideways again to avoid staring directly at the window washer.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Finally, the bad kids will be rewarded.
(pause)
And the good kids will be rewarded too! Poisonous snakes under the Christmas tree! A stocking full of tarantulas! And nice, colourful broken glass for the toddlers. It will be magnificent!

The window washer moves in front of Castle yet again. Castle sighs and turns back towards the camera.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Buy I’m afraid you now know too much. Goodbye.

Castle pulls out a small remote and presses a button. A trap door in the floor opens quite a few feet away from the camera. Castle stares at the camera awkwardly for quite a long time.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM – DAY

Rick sits down on the interview chair, and places his mug of coffee on the armrest.

RICK
So finding out I was going...

The coffee spills on his lap.

Rick screams in pain, causing the cameraman to scream and drop his sound equipment.

RICK (CONT’D)
Let me get that for you.

As Rick attempts to pick up the sound recorder, he knocks over the camera, cracking the lens.

CUT TO:
INT. HARDWICK'S/CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

A bunch of factory workers come into the cafeteria after a hard morning’s work. Amongst them is Rick, walking with determination. He gets in line at the counter and before grabbing a tray, tries to smooth his hair back. Behind him, DUDLEY, a co-worker laughs. He is short and friendly looking. From his body language it is obvious he an Rick are friends.

DUDLEY
So, today’s the big day? You finally going to ask her out?

RICK
Yeah! But don’t talk about it. It’ll make me nervous. And do you need to stand right behind me?

DUDLEY
I’m here for support.

As they near the front, the counter-person, HEATHER, spots Rick and smiles at him. She is roughly his age and is very pretty, in a wholesome, Hallmark Christmas movie, way.

DUDLEY (CONT’D)
Not like you need it. She never smiles like that at anyone.

RICK
You’re making me nervous.

DUDLEY
Okay. Okay. I’ll go and sit at the table and you can just grab my lunch for me.

RICK
No way! She’ll think I’m eating it all myself.

DUDLEY
And?

RICK
She’ll think I’m pig!

DUDLEY
Oh dear. All right, I’ll wait until you’re done asking her out and then I’ll grab my own lunch.
RICK
Thanks Dudley. Your name should be
Dudely!

Dudley turns to leave and give Rick a pat on the shoulder.

DUDLEY
Good luck man.
(conspiratorially)
And if you get in good with her,
maybe we can get extra cheese
sticks!

Dudley exits and Rick nervously approaches Heather, who is
waiting for him with a smile.

HEATHER
Same as usual?

RICK
(overly happy)
You betcha!

Though most people on the face of the planet earth would find
this weird behavior, Heather seems amused.

HEATHER
Any big plans for Christmas?

RICK
(nervously)
Not much. Taking over for Santa.
And having my sister and niece
over.

HEATHER
(laughing)
You’re hilarious. Make sure to say
Merry Christmas to your niece for
me.

RICK
(laughing)
You’re hilarious too.

Heather looks quite confused by this comment.

RICK (CONT'D)
I mean, what are you doing this
Christmas? Any plans?

HEATHER
Just visiting family. Nothing
different from any other year.
Rick takes in a breath and gathers all his courage.

RICK
Well, I was thinking maybe we could do....

The moment is lost when out of nowhere John breaks into line in front of Rick. John looks like he is one step away from full on panic.

JOHN
Rick! Thank goodness I found you! I know you told me not to come today, but in researching I realized that if we are going to start the first step of training, I can give you some literature to read over your lunch!

Rick seems very confused at what to do. He smiles at John, but it’s obviously hiding a look of menace.

RICK
Okay. Just leave them with me and I’ll make sure to read them.

JOHN
Well, they’re actually in the hall. You ever read Santa for Dummies? They make those books for everything! Also, why are there zombies in so many books? I don’t remember Charles Dickens writing about zombies. Am I wrong?

Behind Rick the people in line are getting irritated with Rick taking so long.

RICK
Haven’t read it, but I sure will.
(whispering)
You’re cramping my style!

John has no clue what Rick is talking about. He takes out a pamphlet from his inner pocket.

JOHN
I also found this pamphlet at the library. It’s got some interesting insights on....

One of the people in line get visibly upset.
MAN IN LINE
C’mon man! I don’t want to eat my lunch on boxing day!

JOHN
Oh of course. I guess we should get a move on Rick.

Rick looks at Heather with a sad look in his eye and Heather gives him a reluctant smile.

RICK
Have a happy holiday.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a voice rises. It’s Dudley.

DUDLEY
I think what my friend is trying to say is that he would like to have dinner with you over the holidays if that’s okay with you!

Heather smiles, as Rick and John look at Dudley with surprise.

JOHN
Oh, I can see where you might get that impression, but I was actually showing Rick some pamphlets about....

DUDLEY
(irritated)
Not you!

John finally realizes what was going on and looks very uncomfortable.

JOHN
Oh.

HEATHER
I would love to have dinner sometime.

Heather finally plops some mashed potatoes onto Rick’s plate.

HEATHER (CONT’D)
Just not at a cafeteria, okay?

Rick seems to think about this very seriously and eventually nods his head.
RICK
Deal!

MAN IN LINE
Okay love birds. Maybe now we can finally get something to eat.

DUDLEY
Hey, where’s your Christmas spirit?

MAN IN LINE
Starving to death. Let’s move!

HEATHER
We can talk later.

RICK
Okay! See you!

As the three guys walk away Rick smiles happily at Dudley.

RICK (CONT'D)
Thanks buddy.

DUDLEY
Anytime pal.

John suddenly realizes what has happened and begins to panic again.

JOHN
(to Rick)
Oh no! You can’t go out on a date before Christmas. That will cut into your training time even more, and we’re cutting it close as it is.

DUDLEY
And you are?

JOHN
( extending his hand)

DUDLEY
Rick’s friend, who is telling him not to go on a date with the woman he’s been pining after all year? That friend?

JOHN
(quietly)
Uh. Yeah. That’d be me.
DUDLEY
(shaking John’s hand)
Wish I could say it was nice to meet you.

RICK
Don’t worry Dudley. He’s a good guy. An elf actually. He’s training me to take over for the position of Santa.

Dudley looks at Rick with some concern. John realizes how crazy this sounds and fakes a laugh.

JOHN
A mall Santa that is! That is the pamphlet I was showing him. They are looking for mall Santa’s and Rick would be perfect.

DUDLEY
And you, John the elf, are training him?

JOHN
Oh yes. Mall Santa is a tough gig. Sitting down all day while delighted children tell you what they hope to get for Christ...
(pause)
It’s harder than it sounds.

DUDLEY
(to Rick)
Well, we all gotta take some extra work sometime. Nothing to be ashamed of. Especially with holidays.

RICK
Thanks. And are we still getting together over Christmas.

DUDLEY
The wife and kids are looking forward to it. Make sure to bring Patty and Susan.

RICK
They wouldn’t miss it.

Dudley pats Rick on the shoulder and leaves.
DUDLEY
And good luck with Heather. She’s a sweetheart.

And with that Dudley heads to his table to eat his food. Rick smiles at John happily.

RICK
Dudley’s a great friend. You should go to his house too. They’d love you.

JOHN
Yeah. That’s all well and good. But with your date and going to your friend’s house, that’s really not giving us any time to train.

RICK
Geez John. It’s the holidays. Don’t you have any friends you visit?

JOHN
Well. Most of my friends don’t live around me. My being in the North Pole and all.

RICK
Man. That’s a bummer. I don’t know what I’d do without having a good friend like Dudely.

JOHN
Dudely? I thought it was Dudley.

RICK
Oh. That’s a nickname I just came up with for him. Don’t any of your friends have nicknames?

JOHN
Actually all of them do. There’s Joker1245. And MarvelRulez55. Oh, and ShatnerIsGod22. He’s a real card.

RICK
Those sound like names people use on a computer.

JOHN
They are. I don’t know their real names or anything.

(MORE)
JOHN (CONT’D)
We hang out on a message board for
Science Fiction fans. It’s a great
spot. Great conversations about the
newest movies, TV shows and comics.
Indispensable really. Don’t know
what I’d do without it.

RICK
So you don’t have any real friends?

JOHN
I just told you I have real
friends. Computers are the future!
One day there’ll be no need to even
leave your house.

RICK
Won’t that kind of...be a bummer?

JOHN
Well, me and the other elves don’t
get on too much. They’re all so...

John thinks of the right word to describe them.

JOHN (CONT’D)
...elfy. Always wanting to talk
about toys. And eating candy canes!

RICK
Yum!

JOHN
Yes. Yum.

(pause)
It’s just, I have different
interests than them, so the
computer helps by letting me find
people with the same interests as
me.

RICK
Yeah. But Dudley and I like all
sorts of different things, but we
still are friends.

JOHN
It’s not that I don’t like the
other elves. They’re great. I just
would rather....

John can not think of anything to say as he racks his brain.
He obviously does not consider himself anti-social.
RICK
Well, now you have a flesh and blood friend.

Rick give John a pat on the back which completely takes him by surprise.

JOHN
Great. But let’s worry about making you Santa worthy right now.

John finally shows Rick the pamphlet.

JOHN (CONT’D)
It says here that the Woodbine Mall is looking for a Santa. This is great practice to get into the Christmas spirit! You can interact with the kids all day. It’s perfect.

RICK
Sounds great. When is it?

JOHN
Tomorrow. So you’re good?

RICK
Great. Looking forward to it!

JOHN
And Rick, maybe it’s not a good idea to be telling people I’m one of Santa’s elves.

RICK
So keep it a secret!

JOHN
Exactly.

RICK
A secret. Like when you’re given a mission to impersonate a waiter to find out the secret ingredient in a restaurant’s chicken?
JOHN
Kind of like that. Y’know Rick, I’m an elf who is the size of a full grown man, who does the books at Santa’s workshop, and has been sent to recruit Santa’s replacement, and I gotta say, you lead a very strange life.

And with that John and Rick leave the cafeteria....

CUT TO:

INT. HARDWICK’S/HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

...to see a pile of about 70 Christmas books piled up against the wall. John smiles and gives Rick a hearty pat on the back.

JOHN
So, out of all the books I read, these are the ones I consider important. Try and have them read before you get home.

Rick’s jaw drops as he looks at the gigantic pile.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Oh, don’t worry. I only gave you about a tenth of what I read. This should be a breeze.
(walking away)
See you after work.

When John has left, Rick shrugs and sits beside the pile of books and begins to read as fellow workers walk by.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

John smiles happily as he sits on the chair.

JOHN
So, it looks like this may all work out after all. Santa probably chose me to train his replacement because he could sense my people skills.

John crosses his legs and straightens himself out.
JOHN (CONT'D)
This reminds me of the time I had to train an intern at Santa’s workshop in the ways of accounting. It’s a tough job, and it’s not for everyone. And I did not take it easy on him at all. And by the time he gets out of the institution, he should be one of the best accountants the North Pole has ever seen!

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM – DAY
Rick looks at the camera surprised. He gets up off his seat.

RICK
So that’s it? You don’t need me anymore?

CUT TO:

INT. RICK’S FRONT HALL – EVENING
Rick walks into the front hall as John runs from the living room to greet him.

JOHN
So? How’d the reading go?

RICK
Not too well. So many words. Not enough pictures.

JOHN
Did you even get through one?

RICK
No, but I did practice getting into the Christmas spirit!

JOHN
(delighted)
Good! That’s a great start! What did you do?

RICK
I gave the books away! Like presents! People loved em!
JOHN
What!? Those were library books.
That’s going to cost me a fortune!
Can you get them back?

RICK
That’s not very Christmas like. I
can’t just take them back. Santa
wouldn’t do that.

JOHN
It’s just going to cost me a lot to
replace them.

RICK
You’re being very elfish.

It takes a moment for John to realize Rick has attempted a
joke. Rick laughs.

JOHN
Instead of selfish.

RICK
You got it!

JOHN
I certainly did. Now, let’s eat.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK’S KITCHEN – EVENING

They both enter the kitchen where John has prepared an
elaborate feast that’s spread out on the table appetizingly.
Rick looks at John with suspicion.

RICK
Did you eat my pizza in the fridge?

JOHN
God no. The cockroaches seemed to
be doing a good enough job with
that.

RICK
I would have been fine if you did.
You didn’t have to go to all this
trouble.

JOHN
No trouble at all. And besides,
I’ve got to fatten you up.
RICK
Not before my date!

JOHN
Look. If you’re going to be Santa, you need to look like him as well.

RICK
Are people going to see me?

JOHN
Not if I train you well enough. You should go by unnoticed.

RICK
So why do I need to look like him?

JOHN
Okay. Let’s say a kid does spot you. Instead of being filled with delight at seeing Santa, he’ll instead be traumatized for life by seeing a guy with pizza stains on his shirt stuffing his stocking.

RICK
I’ll wear padding underneath the suit. I won’t gain weight before seeing Heather.

JOHN
Oh, for the love of all.... Okay. You’ll wear padding. Least of our worries anyway.

A knock is heard at the door and Rick turns excitedly towards it.

RICK
A surprise visit!

Rick runs out of the kitchen to answer the door as John rolls his eyes.

JOHN
If I ever need a stick retrieved I know who to call.

John eventually follows Rick out to the hallway and stops dead when he sees...
INT. RICK’S FRONT HALL - EVENING

... Rick’s sister SUSAN (32) stands at the door smiling as Rick grabs her daughter PATTY (8) and raises her above his head.

       RICK
       (happily)
       Who’s my most favourite niece?

       SUSAN
       Be careful Rick.

       RICK
       Don’t worry. I don’t have pizza grease on my hands this time.

Susan looks a little concerned.

       SUSAN
       Still...

John sees Susan and is instantly smitten. He smiles awkwardly at her, but she is too preoccupied by Rick swinging her offspring around. John approaches Susan nervously, making his way past Rick who is still swinging around Patty. Susan finally notices him and gives him a smile.

       JOHN
       Hi....

John is thrown into the air as Patty’s feet connect with his face. He flies backward into the kitchen where a loud CRASH is heard. John screams in a very unmanly manner and staggers out of the kitchen, covered in food. In a very undignified way he attempts to take a whole turkey off his arm that he has managed to get elbow deep into. His eyes open wide in pain though when he finally feels the gravy that has spilled onto his pants burning through to his unmentionables.

       JOHN (CONT’D)
       Hot!

John begins to tear off his pants in front of the shocked mother and child, showing his underwear that is also covered in gravy. Unfortunately, it looks like they are covered in something else brown and runny.

       PATTY
       Ewwwwww.

John looks down at what Patty’s referring to and tries to smile at her reassuringly.
JOHN

Oh, no. That’s not what it
seems....

Some of the cranberry sauce that was on his head begins to
run down into his eyes and when he attempts to wipe it off he
clocks himself in the face with the, still attached to his
hand, turkey. He plummets to the floor in pain.

Rick looks a little off as he turns in John’s direction.

RICK

Man, I’m dizzy.

The light fixture hanging above John becomes detached and
crashes onto him. He lies on the floor, moaning.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK’S LIVING ROOM – EVENING

The group sit on the couch eating take out pizza. John looks
much worse of the wear, but he has cleaned himself up.

PATTY

This pizza’s great.

RICK

I know! I eat it every day!

Susan stops eating and looks over at Rick in a concerned
manner.

SUSAN

Really Rick? I don’t think that’s
very healthy.

RICK

I always make sure there’s a
vegetable on it.

SUSAN

That’s not....

RICK

And before you say it, tomato sauce
counts!

John still seems quite taken with Susan and tries to seem
like he is casually interrupting.
JOHN
(loud and aggressively)
So, you’re John’s sister?

SUSAN
Noooo. I’m Rick’s sister though.

JOHN
(laughing)
Ha. That’s what I meant. I’m always getting me and Rick confused.

SUSAN
Really?
(pause)
Are you feeling all right? That was quite a blow to the head you took.

JOHN
I’m fine. I’m always blowing myself...

John realizes what he is saying and looks appalled. Without hesitation he jumps up and sprints out of the room. The three listen to him running up the stairs and slamming a door.

SUSAN
(to Rick)
So, John is a friend of yours?

RICK
(suspiciously)
Yeeeeeessssss. John is a friend of mine.

SUSAN
How come I’ve never heard of him?

RICK
Weeeellllllll, we just met.

SUSAN
Really? Where did you meet?

RICK
Weeeeeenee meeeeeetttttttt......

SUSAN
Okay, enough Rick. You’re the worst liar in the world. Who is this John fellow?

Rick looks worried. In a panic he grabs his knee.
RICK
(loudly)

SUSAN
Only an idiot would fall for that....

The three hear the door open and a pair of feet running down the stairs. John enters into the room in a panic.

JOHN
Your knee! What’s wrong? Are you going to be all right?

Susan sees John’s concern and is a little taken aback.

SUSAN
You two aren’t.... You know?

John and Rick look at each other in confusion.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
...together?

JOHN
In the same room?

SUSAN
No, I mean “together”.

RICK
Like we’re cool? We got it together?

John likes this interpretation and smiles at Rick who gives him a smile back.

SUSAN
No. Gay.

John and Rick are still attempting to put the pieces together in their head. Susan sighs.

PATTY
Gay. Homosexual.

RICK
(laughing)
No, he’s an elf.
(pause)
However....
SUSAN
Elf?

JOHN
No! Not elf.
(thinking)
Self. Self help.

John’s eyes go wide as he has a Eureka moment.

JOHN (CONT’D)
I’m Rick’s personal trainer.
(pause)
His live in personal trainer.
That’s why I was so concerned about
his knee. It’s been bothering him.
That also explains why I live here.
In fact that explains a lot. I’m
his personal trainer. And I like
you.... Girls. I like girls. Not
guys.

John hopes he managed to cover up his flub, but Rick looks
over at him in horror.

RICK
So you hate guys!? I thought I was
your friend, dude!?

SUSAN
(to John)
A personal trainer?
(to Rick)
When could you afford a personal
trainer?

RICK
Um, weeelllllll.....

JOHN
It’s through work. He hurt his knee
on the job so I’m here to make sure
he gets back on his feet.

RICK
(catching on)
And to work on my gluts.

SUSAN
His gluts?
JOHN
(sighing)
Yes. His employers are very concerned about his gluts.

RICK
And abs.

SUSAN
So, what kind of regime do you have?

JOHN
(confused)
It’s a Prime Minister here, isn’t it?

SUSAN
Fitness regime.

JOHN
Oh. Knee bends mostly.

RICK
And high kicks. Check this out!

Rick gets up and performs a very unimpressive high kick while making a big show out of it.

SUSAN
(to John)
Impressive.

JOHN
I... I have my work cut out for me.

John notices that Patty has not been saying much, just quietly eating her pizza. He gives her a friendly smile.

JOHN (CONT'D)
So, Patty, how old are you?

PATTY
Eight.

JOHN
Any big plans for Christmas this year?

PATTY
No.
JOHN
Anything special you want from Santa?

PATTY
(sadly)
I don’t want anything.

John seems taken aback by Patty’s unenthusiastic response and looks over to Rick. Rick gives John a kind smile and shakes his head to gesture for him not to continue with the questions.

Susan gives Patty a pat on her hand.

SUSAN
I’m sure we’ll have a nice Christmas this year.

PATTY
I have to go to the bathroom.

Patty gets up without ceremony and heads out of the room. Rick sits back down on the couch, looking the most serious we have seen him so far.

RICK
Still isn’t over it, eh?

SUSAN
No, she’s worst over the holidays though.

Susan notices John’s confusion at Patty’s behaviour.

SUSAN (CONT’D)
(to John)
Patty’s dad, my ex-husband, left a couple years ago and moved to Florida after the divorce. He used to write or call Patty, but that has become less and less frequent. Last year he never even sent a Christmas card.

John is appalled.

SUSAN (CONT’D)
With all the festivities around Christmas, I think that’s the worst time for her. Seeing other families together. It really reminds her of what she’s lost.
JOHN
That’s awful. But are you sure he’s okay? Maybe he can’t write or...

RICK
No, he’s fine. If you wanna call it that. Patty’s unfortunately his Facebook friend and sees him having the time of his life.

SUSAN
He’s not a great guy.
(pause)
But, Patty loves him.

JOHN
I should apologize.

SUSAN
You didn’t mean anything by it. Might be better not to bring it up again.

Patty walks back into the room and the adults do their best to act innocent.

RICK
So, I sure do like that sport’s team we were just speaking of.

JOHN
Yes. They do good at... sports.

PATTY
Mom, I’d like to go home now.

Susan gets up and starts to gather her things.

SUSAN
Of course. It’s getting late.
(remembering)
Oh yeah, what I came here to ask!
(to Rick)
Can we be expecting you Christmas morning?

RICK
You betcha! Can John come too?

JOHN
Uh, Rick. My work on your gluts will be done by then. I’ll be back home.
RICK
Doing what?

JOHN
Well, there’s a lot of work to be done after Christmas. Just because it’s over doesn’t mean that it’s vacation time. There’s calculations, error reports...

SUSAN
Don’t you have family?

JOHN
Well, not really. I kind of have a dad, but he’ll be on vacation.

RICK
You’re coming.

SUSAN
I’ll set an extra spot at the dinner table. You’re more than welcome.

John gets that dazed look in his eyes as he sees Susan smiling, inviting him over.

JOHN
Uh, maybe I can make it.

SUSAN
Great!
(pause)
Well, see you soon then.

As they exit, Patty looks back at Rick and John, and musters up a smile.

JOHN
They seem nice.

RICK
They’re the best.

JOHN
I’m sure one day off won’t send everything into chaos.

CUT TO:
INT. WOODBINE MALL - DAY

Kids are screaming and having tantrums as frazzled parents try to calm them in a busy mall. There is a huge lineup for meeting Santa and many of the kids are getting impatient.

CUT TO:

INT. WOODBINE MALL/BACKROOM - DAY

John peeks out a door at the lineup in terror. He turns to Rick, trying to hide his nervousness.

JOHN
Looks like a good turnout.

Rick can hear the screams of children and looks very wary.

RICK
The mall isn’t on fire, is it?

JOHN
No, no. Those are the gleeful screams of excitement.

The door crashes open and the previous DEPARTMENT STORE SANTA comes barreling in.

DEPARTMENT STORE SANTA
It’s chaos. Every Santa for himself!

He begins to tear off his Santa uniform, not being able to get it off fast enough.

DEPARTMENT STORE SANTA (CONT’D)
Monsters! Little monsters!

He hands the outfit to a shocked Rick, who gulps and looks at John. The Department Store Santa, now in his street clothes, rips his wallet out of his pocket and pulls out a 30 day chip.

DEPARTMENT STORE SANTA (CONT’D)
(disgusted)
Get this thing away from me!

He throws the chip as far as he can and rushes out of the room. Rick’s eyes are wide with horror. John forces a smile and rubs his hands together.

JOHN
Exciting!
RICK
I’m not going out there!

JOHN
Oh, come on. They’re just kids.

Rick shakes his head and crosses his arms, refusing to budge.

JOHN (CONT’D)
And besides, I’ll be out there with you.

RICK
(cheerfully)
Really?

JOHN
Of course. I’m Santa’s elf after all.

RICK
(frowning)
But where’s your outfit?

JOHN
What?
(pause)
Oh, that. I don’t need it.

RICK
How can you be an elf if you don’t wear the outfit.

JOHN
Look, an outfit doesn’t define an elf. The modern elf doesn’t need to be shackled down by clothes, clearly not only out of date, but when you think of it, quite silly.

RICK
All right. Then I don’t need to wear this.

Rick casually tosses the Santa outfit aside and begins to head out.

JOHN
Well, that’s not the case. You do need to wear...
RICK
If you don’t have to, neither do I.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM – DAY

John is unhappily wearing his elf suit again.

CUT TO:

INT. WOODBINE MALL – DAY

John stands at the beginning of the line sporting his elf suit. Rick, in full Santa regalia sits down on the red chair. John unchains the barrier and the KID #1 comes shooting through. Though quite overweight, it does not slow him down one bit.

RICK
(loudly)
Ho! Ho!
(seeing Kid #1)
No!

Kid #1 jumps onto Rick’s lap as Rick gasps in pain.

John stifles a laugh. Looking in line he sees none other than Susan and Patty waiting to see Santa. Taken aback, he composes himself and heads towards the two.

JOHN
Hello there!

Susan and Patty seem wary as the elf approaches them, but once they recognize John, Susan smiles brightly.

SUSAN
John!
(pause)
What are you doing here?

JOHN
(delaying)
Well, that’s a good question.
(pause)
What brings you here?

SUSAN
Thought it might be good for Patty to see Ole Saint Nick. So you are an elf after all?
JOHN
(defiantly)

NO!
(pause)

Yes.

In the background, Rick gently takes Kid #1 off of his lap and walks away. Kid #1 stands confused as “Santa” leaves.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You know, getting into the holiday spirit. I volunteered to help out this year.

SUSAN
Well, that’s very nice of you. How sweet.

JOHN
Um, well....

John goes in close to Susan so Patty won’t be able to overhear.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Well, actually your brother is helping too.

SUSAN
Really, where is he?

In the background Rick returns with a brand new fire truck that he hands the thrilled Kid #1. He gives him a rub on the head and sits back down. Kid #1 rushes off happily.

John notices that there is no kid on Santa’s lap and turns to Susan.

JOHN
Sorry, one minute!

John rushes to the head of the line and unlocks the barrier letting KID #2 in. As soon as the excited kid heads towards Rick, John makes his way back towards Susan.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(to Susan)
Actually, that’s him up there.

He points towards Rick, lifting Kid #2 onto his lap.
SUSAN
(concerned)
Doesn’t he have a bad knee? Should he be doing that?

JOHN
Um, well, it’s actually part of his exercise regime. You know, along with being in the holiday spirit.

In the background, Rick lifts Kid #2 off of his lap and disappears again.

SUSAN
Oh.

JOHN
(quietly)
But, you know, is it okay if Patty goes up and finds out that Rick is playing Santa? Won’t she recognize him? Maybe you should come another day.

In the background, Rick appears holding a massive doll house and an easy bake oven. The delighted Kid #2 takes it and meets her shocked parents on the other side.

RICK
(loudly)
Ho! Ho! Ho!

This grabs John’s attention and he rushes forward and lets Kid #3 in. He high tails it back to Susan.

JOHN
So surely, you can see the conundrum here?

SUSAN
No, not at all. It’s amazing that Rick’s Santa. What a special treat for her.

In the background Rick is bringing Kid #3 a pony and a video game console. He is getting a little out of breath from having to keep running to the store.

JOHN
(to himself)
Actually, it will be a good test to see if he stays in character. If he can...

(MORE)
JOHN (CONT'D)
(noticing Kid #3 with presents)
... well, I should have expected this.

John rushes towards Rick as the kids are getting more anxious to be let in.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(to Rick)
What are you doing?

RICK
I'm Santa. I'm getting the kids what they want.

John dips his head sadly.

JOHN
How did you afford this?

RICK
Well, you kept your wallet in the clothes you just changed outta, so I just grabbed the credit card.

JOHN
With that and the library books....

John turns towards the lineup of children.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(loudly)
Sorry kids, Santa's all out of money today. You'll have to wait until Christmas.

An ANGRY MOTHER steps in front of the line.

ANGRY MOTHER
Those other children got presents! Does Santa HATE our children?

JOHN
No. No. Of course not. He just ran out of money.

The angry mother turns to the line of children behind her.

ANGRY MOTHER
Sorry children, Santa HATES all of you.

The lineup of children begin to cry.
RICK
(confused)
Just out of curiosity, what part of “Christmas Spirit” is this?

John looks defeated.

JOHN
The part where I have to get a second job this year.

John turns to the lineup of crying kids with a big smile.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Just joshing kids. Us elves are so mischievous.

The kids cheer and John does manage a smile, seeing them so happy.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

John holds an old Mr. Spock action figure.

JOHN
... and as you can see, it’s still in it’s original packaging so you’re actually getting a really great bargain..

CUT TO:

INT. WOODBINE MALL - DAY

The lineup of kids has grown and Rick waves the next child up. Patty walks towards Rick unhappily and sits on his lap.

RICK
Ho ho ho. Have you been a good girl this year?

PATTY
(moping)
Well, if it isn’t ole St. Rick.

RICK
Ha ha ha. I don’t know who this Rick fellow is, but he sounds aces. I am Santa Claus of the North Pole.
(MORE)
RICK (CONT’D)
Now, what would you like for Christmas?

PATTY
I haven’t told you if I’ve been good yet.

Rick pulls down his beard and smiles at Patty.

RICK
It’s me Pats. And I know you’ve been the best!

Rick pulls the beard back up and gets back into character.

RICK (CONT’D)
So what is it you want, stranger?

PATTY
I don’t care. I don’t like Christmas.

RICK
But I’m Santa this year!

PATTY
Yeah, you’re doing a great job too Uncle Rick. The kids seem really happy. But I gotta go.

RICK
Wait! I mean I’m really Santa. And John is really an elf!

PATTY
I’m not a baby Uncle Rick.

JOHN
He knows magic! I saw it.

PATTY
That’s great Uncle Rick. I need to go now.

Patty jumps off of Rick’s lap and heads back to her mom.

RICK
(frustrated)
You’d believe me if I was a kid!

Before Rick can wave goodbye to his sister and niece, a full grown BUSINESSMAN (30s) sits on his lap.
BUSINESSMAN
A porche and a private jet. And
snap to it, I haven’t got all day.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Castle stands in a nearly empty warehouse room, barely able
to contain his excitement. There is an expensive chair set up
in the middle or the room, and very little else. Castle gives
his most charming smile to the camera.

CASTLE
So glad you could make it to the
unveiling. I trust you found the
place okay?

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)
Well, I...

CASTLE
So without further ado, let me
introduce our new Santa Claus...

Castle extends his arms and clears his throat before the big
announcement.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
(loudly)
Jimmy!

A tall, handsome man in his twenties walks up beside Castle.
He is dressed in a very expensive suit and looks incredibly
well groomed. However, he seems jittery and is sniffing and
wiping his nose an awful lot. This is JIMMY.

JIMMY
Yo. How you doin?

CASTLE
(smiling)
Enough of the chit chat. Let’s get
started.

Jimmy struts towards the chair as Castle motions to a
stunning MODEL to open the door to the warehouse.

A meek looking CHILD (7) walks in slowly. Jimmy gets annoyed.

JIMMY
C’mon kid!
The nervous child picks up his pace and gets to Jimmy. He attempts to sit on Jimmy’s lap.

   JIMMY (CONT’D)  
   (angry)  
   OH!

He throws his hands into the air dramatically.

   JIMMY (CONT’D)  
   What you doin’ kid. This suit costs more than your family’s lives.

The Child looks as if he is going to start crying.

   JIMMY (CONT’D)  
   Just stand there kid.  
   (pause)  
   Now, have you been a good boy this year.

The Child nods his head, still upset.

Jimmy leaps from the chair, furiously.

   JIMMY (CONT’D)  
   What! Who let this kid in here?

The Child is terrified. Jimmy takes out a butterfly knife and starts flicking it around in his hand.

   JIMMY (CONT’D)  
   Someone betta get this kid out a here! I’m losing my temper!

The Child runs out, screaming, right past another BOY (6) who has been waiting. Castle looks pleased as punch.

   CASTLE  
   You’re next. Go see Santa Claus.

The Boy slowly begins to walk towards Jimmy. Once he sees the impatient look on Jimmy’s face he speeds up.

   JIMMY  
   (smiling)  
   So kid, you been a good boy this year?

The Boy thinks before answering.

   BOY  
   (nervously)  
   No.
Jimmy is elated.

JIMMY

Nice!

He bends down and squeezes the boy’s cheeks.

JIMMY (CONT’D)
Good for you kid!
(pause)
What you do?

BOY
Um.. Well... I didn’t listen to my mom one time.

Jimmy looks at the boy with scrutiny. He is not impressed.

JIMMY
Yeah?

BOY
And I lied a couple times...

Jimmy is visibly getting angry.

JIMMY
Yeah?

The boy senses trouble. He thinks carefully.

BOY
And I beat up some guy.

Jimmy smiles from ear to ear.

JIMMY
What? A guy? Like a full grown man?

BOY
Yup.

Jimmy looks over at Castle.

JIMMY
This kid!
(to the Boy)
What he do?

BOY
Uh.. He said he liked being nice to people.
Jimmy can’t believe what he’s hearing. He turns around and kicks his chair, which flies into the wall.

JIMMY
What’s his name? Tell me his name!

The Boy is getting very nervous now.

BOY
Uh. The Easter Bunny.

Jimmy is furious now.

JIMMY
Noooo!

He takes out his butterfly knife and starts stabbing his chair in a frenzy. The boy is paralyzed with fear.

JIMMY (CONT’D)
No! No! No!

Jimmy finally calms himself down. He straightens his suit and walks up to the boy. He reaches into the inside of his jacket and the boy gasps.

Jimmy pulls out a piece of black licorice and gives it to him.

JIMMY (CONT’D)
Here’s some licorice, kid. Happy Christmas.

The Boy walks out past Castle, who could not be prouder. He turns to the cameraman with a grin.

CASTLE
Great, isn’t he?

Suddenly, Castle gets serious and looks at the camera disapprovingly.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
But I’m afraid I’ve shown you too much.

He pulls out a remote control from his pocket.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Goodbye, my friend.

He presses a button and a safe falls from the ceiling quite a few feet away from him and the cameraman. Castle looks very uncomfortable. He suddenly perks up.
CASTLE (CONT’D)

My phone.

He answers his phone that has not rung and pretends to talk
to someone as the cameraman turns and walks towards the door.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

John sits uncomfortably in his chair.

JOHN

Yeah. So the whole Santa training
thing is working pretty good. Rick
seems to be getting the hang of
things.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN’S BEDROOM/RICK’S HOUSE - DAY

Rick is wearing an oversized Santa outfit while John sits on
his bed, wearing PJs. Rick has a big sack of presents hoisted
over his shoulder.

JOHN

So the trick of this is, you need
to enter without waking anyone up,
put the presents under the tree and
then make your way out just as
quietly.

RICK

Easy.

JOHN

Now I’m just going to relax up here
and I shouldn’t even notice as you
come and go. Good luck.

RICK

So, the chimney?

JOHN

Considering there is no chimney
here, no.

(pause)
The front door should suffice.
Until I figure out how Santa gets
into homes without a chimney. I
haven’t got the faintest clue.

(MORE)
JOHN (CONT'D)
(pause)
This is to test your stealth. You
need to be fast and silent, like a
cat.

RICK
What kind of cat?

JOHN
I don’t know.

RICK
What?

JOHN
I mean a tabby. A tabby cat.

RICK
Got it!

Rick exits the room, barely able to contain his excitement.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

JOHN
We still need to work on a couple
things, but for the most part, he
is nailing it.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN’S BEDROOM/RICK’S HOUSE - DAY

John puts his head on the pillow, closes his eyes and
relaxes.

JOHN
(sadly)
And here it comes.

He hears the front door handle jiggling loudly, followed by a
number of loud bangs. Next, he can hear the door being kicked
open as Rick obviously falls in.

RICK (O.S.)
(loudly and in pain)
Aaaaaaah!

John listens as Rick moans and groans for a while longer.
Finally it seems as if Rick has collected himself.
RICK (O.S.) (CONT’D)
(quietly)
C’mon Rick. You can do this.

Next John hears the ornaments on the Christmas tree breaking and a large thud. Rick starts screaming, as more loud thuds can be heard. John rolls over as glass starts breaking and the house alarm goes off. The sound of firecrackers going off fills the downstairs. Rick continues screaming.

John gets up and heads out of the room angrily.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK’S LIVING ROOM - DAY

John enters the room, barely avoiding being run over the pack of wild dogs running out. He finds Rick lying motionless on the floor. Rick looks up to him with disappointment.

RICK
You said a Tabby, right?

John turns to leave but trips over Rick’s gift bag. The light fixture hanging above him falls on him once again.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK’S KITCHEN - DUSK

It’s the night of Rick’s big date with Heather. He is dressed moderately well, considering we have mostly seen him in a t-shirt. John smiles as he brushes some lint off of Rick’s shoulder.

RICK
How do I look?

JOHN
Like a million bucks. You’re gonna sweep her off her feet.

Rick smiles and puts on his jacket.

RICK
Hope Heather likes the restaurant.

JOHN
I don’t think it will matter much. I’m sure she’s there for the company.
RICK
You think she likes one of the waiters?

JOHN
No. (pause) You.

RICK
I’ve never met any of the waiters. Are they nice there...
   (shaking his head) No. This night is about Heather.

JOHN
   (sighing) Good luck.

RICK
Thanks pal.

Rick heads towards the front door, but turns around before leaving.

RICK (CONT’D)
Oh yeah. Since you won’t be dining with me tonight, I told my sister you will have dinner with them. They expect you there around six.

JOHN
What!?

Rick’s usual daft look turns serious for a moment.

RICK
And John, I was wondering, you know... you can do all this magic and stuff, and Patty just hates this time of year... could we maybe tell her?

John thinks about this for a moment, obviously ready to say no. As he goes to speak up, he stops himself. Suddenly he smiles.

JOHN
I can’t see what harm it will do. For sure, we can tell her.

He reaches into one of his pockets.
JOHN (CONT'D)
Maybe I can even give her a bit of a sneak preview tonight.

He pulls out an oversized candy cane from his pocket that is as big as a Christmas tree. Rick is overjoyed.

RICK
She loves candy canes!

JOHN
(smiling)
Yeah. They’re all right.
(pause)
Good luck tonight. And I’ll be at your sister’s by six.

Rick exits, happily. John, now in a great mood, goes to get ready, forgetting he is holding a giant candy cane. It hooks on to the bookcase, pulling it down on top of him.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Heather and Rick sit in a booth at a nice restaurant. Judging from the empty plates in front of them, they have already finished eating.

HEATHER
(smiling)
So, you’re Santa?

RICK
Just this year.

Heather leans back and shakes her head.

HEATHER
You know Rick, I already like you. You don’t have to make up stories.

RICK
I’m not making it up... well the part about Santa begging me to take over I may have slightly exaggerated, but he did pick me out of everyone.

HEATHER
Isn’t Santa... you know, make believe.
RICK
No! Parents just lie to their kids as they get older to take all the credit.

HEATHER
(thinking)
Geez. You know, I think I liked it better thinking they lied to me when I was little to make me happy.

RICK
But that’s not true. They are filthy liars now!

Rick notices Heather’s shocked reaction.

RICK (CONT’D)
And I’m sure they are wonderful filthy liars who I hope to get to meet one day.

Heather laughs and a WAITER shows up with their desert. He places it down in front of them.

WAITER
One chocolate brownie piece of cake for the lady and one... worms and dirt for the gentleman.

RICK
 seriou sly
And, because I ordered from the children’s menu, am I entitled to a toy?

WAITER
Yes you are.

RICK
Yes! I’ll have the boat... no! The top.

Heather laughs as the waiter leaves to get Rick his toy. Rick watches the waiter as he leaves.

RICK (CONT’D)
(to himself)
He’s not all that.

CUT TO:
INT. CASTLE’S OFFICE – NIGHT

Castle sits behind his desk as Jimmy stands next to him, obediently. Castle leans towards the cameraman, happily.

CASTLE
So, I hear from my mole at the North Pole that jolly ole St. Nick has found a replacement of his own. Some dunderhead name Rick something or other. This will not do.

JIMMY
No sir.

Castle stands up and Jimmy pushes back in his chair.

CASTLE
What do you think of this situation, Jimmy?

JIMMY
I ain’t worried. You’ll take care of this, boss.

CASTLE
You are correct once again my stereotypical friend. For I already have a plan formulated.

Castle turns dramatically towards the camera, but knocks his cup of brandy off his desk. He is quite shocked when the glass breaks and lets out a high pitched yell. This causes Jimmy to yell too.

Both Castle and Jimmy break out laughing, barely able to contain themselves. Wiping the tears from his eyes, Castle turns back to the camera.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Oh brother. The World’s Clumsiest Villain Award goes to...
(calming down)
Let’s do that again. This time I’ll try not to mess it up.

JIMMY
“Try”.

CASTLE
Stop it Jimmy, you’re going to get me laughing again.
Castle lets out one last guffaw and straightens himself out. He spins towards the camera with a menacing look in his eyes.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Because I’ve found out this Rick dodo has a niece he just adores.
And tonight...

Castle extends his hand towards the camera and closes it into a fist.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
... me and Jimmy take her. And if this Rick dodo... no, I’ve already used that... idiot brain wants her back in one piece, he steps aside and lets Jimmy and me take over Christmas. People will love it so much, the real Santa will have to go on unemployment. Because no one will want him back!

Castle pulls out a remote control from his pocket and smiles.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
But you won’t be telling my plan to anyone. Because you, my friend, will be dead!

Castle pushes the button on the remote control. His empty chair shoots up into the ceiling. Castle is appalled at this.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Now who thought that this would be a good idea? Nincompoops!

CUT TO:

INT. SUSAN’S HOUSE/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

John sits next to Susan at the dinner table while Patty sulks. John tries to lighten the mood.

JOHN
Hey Patty, you ever hear the one about the cow born with no ears?

PATTY
(gloomily)
No.

JOHN
Well, neither has the cow.
Crickets chirp.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Are crickets still around in winter?

PATTY
I’m going to go to my room now.

SUSAN
Okay, honey.

Patty gets up and exits.

JOHN
Wow. That joke usually kills.

SUSAN
It’s not you. She still hasn’t heard from her dad.

JOHN
Oh. I’m sorry.

SUSAN
Don’t apologize. It’s not your fault.

JOHN
No. I’m just sorry she is so sad.

Susan sits back.

SUSAN
Yeah. Me too.

John suddenly has a mischievous grin.

JOHN
I think I just may know something that might cheer her up a little.

SUSAN
I don’t know, John. I think maybe she’d just rather be left alone right now.

JOHN
You don’t think she’d be impressed by this?

John reaches into his inside pocket and pulls out a kitten.
SUSAN

That’s adorable.

Suddenly the kitten gets freaked out and digs it’s claws into John’s arm, causing him to scream and fall off his chair. The cat can be heard attacking John and the pitcher of gravy on the table falls onto him.

Susan helps John up, who’s face is now covered with scratches.

SUSAN (CONT’D)
I don’t know John. I don’t think seeing a kitten attack you will cheer her up.

JOHN
(nodding)
Good point.

Through his pain he reaches into his pocket yet again.

JOHN (CONT’D)
But how about this?

He pulls out an oversized BUNNY from his pocket, which he places on the table. The bunny gives an animated smile and sings “We Wish You a Merry Christmas”.

SUSAN
I don’t know John. Maybe Patty just wants to be left alone. I’m sure she’d enjoy it later though.

John is confused.

JOHN
Um... aren’t you a little impressed?

SUSAN
Oh yeah. That’s great John. It’s your elf powers isn’t it?

JOHN
(surprised)
You know I’m an elf?

SUSAN
Yeah. Rick told me. He’s terrible at keeping secrets.
JOHN
And you just accept... you know, it isn’t weird...
(pause)
You are a peculiar family.

Suddenly, they hear glass breaking upstairs and Patty lets out a scream.

SUSAN
Patty!

Her and John race upstairs, revealing the huge gravy stain on the back of John’s pants.

The bunny that was still singing in the BG looks at John in disgust.

BUNNY
Ugh. Show some pride man!

CUT TO:

INT. RICK’S CAR - NIGHT
Rick drives as Heather stares out the window.

HEATHER
It’s a beautiful night.

RICK
It sure is.

HEATHER
I had a really nice time.

Rick looks nervous and smiles.

RICK
Me too. I really hope we can do it again sometime.

Heather laughs.

HEATHER
I’d love to.

Rick is overjoyed. He looks at her happily.

RICK
There’s a restaurant up ahead that I heard is pretty great!
HEATHER
Um... I didn’t mean tonight.
Besides, I’m pretty full.

RICK
I’m sorry. I just am having such a
great time. I don’t want the night
to end.

Heather turns to Rick, giving a flirtatious smile.

HEATHER
Well. It doesn’t have to.

RICK
That’s awesome! John the elf is
hanging out at my sister’s place!
We can go there!

Rick now drives happily as Heather looks disappointed.

HEATHER
Yes. That is what I meant.
(pause)
Let’s hang out with your sister.

CUT TO:

INT. PATTY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Susan race in to see the window broken and Patty is
nowhere in sight. Susan runs to the broken window.

SUSAN
Oh my God! Patty!

John searches around the room and finds nothing. Susan yells
out the window.

SUSAN (CONT’D)
Patty! Where are you?!  

Susan looks like she is going to go in hysterics. All of the
sudden, the cameraman clears his throat.

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)
Um. Uh. I might know what happened
to her.

John turns to the cameraman in desperation.

JOHN
What, man? Speak up.
CAMERAMAN
Um well, I don’t know whether I should. I believe it was Dryer who said that the documentarian and subjects should never interact. It destroys the facet of being an observer and the documentary becomes null and void once the observer interacts. I may as well be shooting an infomercial.

John and Patty are furious. John kicks over a chair.

JOHN
You fool! Wohl clearly states that the observer and the observed must interact in order to shoot a documentary. It is impossible to record reality, so the documented film serves as an artificial reality....

SUSAN
(pleading)
Please, just tell me where my daughter is.

Without a beat the cameraman begins.

CAMERAMAN
Some rich weirdo who wants to take over Christmas has kidnapped her in order to get Rick to stop being Santa.

Rick and Heather poke their heads through the door, smiling ear to ear.

RICK
You rang?

Rick sees the destruction in Patty’s room and looks at John angrily.

RICK (CONT’D)
Whoa! You obviously don’t have the slightest idea how to cheer up a little kid. Rule one, you don’t trash her room!
(pause)
Or is that rule two? Rule one might actually involve battery acid...

Susan runs over to Rick and hugs him.
SUSAN
Patty’s gone. Someone took her to force you to stop being Santa.

Rick is appalled. He steps in front of the broken window.

RICK
We’ll just see about that.
(pause)
What they didn’t know is that I already have Santa’s superpowers.
They will never get away.

Rick sprints with all his strength to the window and leaps out. He lets out a bloodcurdling scream as he plummets to the ground. He continues to moan in agony as John looks out the window.

JOHN
(yelling)
It’s the reindeer that fly.

John turns away from the window and approaches Susan.

JOHN (CONT’D)
He still needs a little more work.
But don’t worry, I have a cunning plan.

CUT TO:

INT. SUSAN’S HOUSE/DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Susan, Heather and Rick huddle around John, who pulls a giant book from his pocket. On the cover is printed the word “NICE”. He places it on the table and opens it up.

JOHN
So, as I’m sure you know, Santa can check in on any kid to find out if they are being naughty or nice.

SUSAN
Yes.

JOHN
Well, this is how he does it.

John flips through the book and finds Patty’s name.

JOHN (CONT’D)
There she is.
(to Rick)
(MORE)
JOHN (CONT’D)
I was going to show you this later, but I guess we need you to do this now.

RICK
What?

JOHN
Go to the book, close your eyes, and you will be able to see what Patty’s doing. And more importantly, where she is.

Susan wraps her arms around John.

SUSAN
That’s a great plan!

John is a little flustered, but manages to compose himself.

RICK
Here goes.

Rick goes up to the book and places his hands on it. He closes his eyes and seems to go into a trance. He lets out a smile and opens his eyes, happily.

RICK (CONT’D)
She’s all right! I know where she is!

The group quickly follow Rick as he jumps up and leaves the room. However, in the book, Patty’s name fades away.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE/HALLWAY – NIGHT

The group is now gathered in front of a door in a narrow, dark hallway. Rick has his Santa suit on and prepares himself to enter.

HEATHER
Why the Santa suit?

RICK
I might need some of those Santa superpowers.

JOHN
Uh, it’s just a suit Rick.
RICK
Then it psychotically helps me.

JOHN
(to Heather)
I know he means psychologically, but whatever works for him at this point.

RICK
All right. Let’s do this to this!

Rick summons all his strength to kick the door down.

HEATHER
(to John)
It doesn’t look like there’s a lock.

JOHN
Let him do this.

Rick kicks the door with all his might and it does not budge. He falls to the ground clutching his knee and screams in agony.

SUSAN
Well, there goes the element of surprise.

The door opens from the inside and Jimmy pokes his head out.

JIMMY
Can I help youse?

John pushes his way past Jimmy. The others, including a now limping Rick, follow him inside.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE – NIGHT

They enter the warehouse that now has a number of rough looking ELVES working at a conveyer belt assembling presents. Guns, knives and other horrific “toys” are being put together. It is quite a massive and impressive setup. The group looks on in horror as Jimmy steps in front of them.

JIMMY
They just barged in here boss? What should I do wit them?
The group steady themselves as the boss steps out of the shadows. It’s Patty, wearing a black outfit and sunglasses.

SUSAN
Patty!
Patty smiles.

PATTY
Mom!
Patty runs to her mom and gives her a hug. Castle steps out of the shadows as well, right into another shadow.

CASTLE
Ahem. You are the girl’s mom I believe?
The group peer into the darkness, not able to see who is talking.

RICK
Hello?
Castle, realizing he is still in shadow, takes quite a lot of time re-adjusting his positioning so that they can see him. The group wait impatiently. Finally, he is well lit.

JOHN
You monster! You can’t just go around kidnapping children to get what you want.

CASTLE
Well, actually, it kinda started out as a kidnapping,
(to Susan)
But your daughter here has some really great ideas. Really impressive.

JIMMY
Yeah. Dis kid sure hates Christmas.

CASTLE
So much so, she’s in charge now. I don’t hold a candle to her.

Susan looks at Patty disapprovingly.

SUSAN
We will talk about this when you get home young lady!
PATTY
Ah mom.
Patty hangs her head down and as the group goes to leave. John turns to Castle.

JOHN
You should be ashamed of yourself!

Castle and Jimmy look at each other in confusion. One of the EVIL ELVES stops working.

EVIL ELF
So, uh, should we keep working?
Patty turns back to the Evil Elves.

PATTY
No point. I’m going to be grounded for sure. Nice meeting all of you.

All the elves shrug and start preparing to leave. Castle is furious. He takes out a remote control and the exit door locks. He turns to Jimmy, practically foaming at the mouth.

CASTLE
We won’t be thwarted that easily. Jimmy, if you’re going to be Santa, there’s only one thing standing in your way. And he’s here right now.

Jimmy looks over to the group and sees Rick wearing the Santa suit. Rick gives a “who me?” smile.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
So Jimmy, or should I say, soon to be Santa, why don’t you show him your little butterfly friend?

Rick and the group look thrilled. John looks over to Susan, barely able to contain his excitement.

JOHN
You have a friend that’s a butterfly? How does that work?

RICK
Is it trained? Does it follow you everywhere?

Jimmy smiles and takes out his butterfly knife and begins to play with it.
JIMMY
Why don’t you ask him.

John and Rick are clueless as to what Jimmy is talking about. Jimmy walks closer to them, wielding his knife.

JOHN
I’m confused. You’re saying we can talk to this butterfly? Like it actually speaks. Which is great, but yet you’re approaching us in such a threatening manner.

RICK
Really sending weird messages.

Castle is fuming.

CASTLE
His butterfly knife!

John and Rick finally get it.

JOHN
Yikes! A butterfly “knife”!

RICK
That’s waaay different.

Jimmy is getting closer. He looks Rick up and down and then menacingly licks his knife.

JIMMY
I’m going to enjoy this.

Rick is very nervous now.

RICK
(to John)
This guy is really scary.

JOHN
You’re telling me. I’m terrified now. To think it was only a moment ago I thought I was going to meet a talking butterfly.

John, thinking fast, quickly reaches into his pocket and pulls out a giant candy cane. He wields it like a bow staff. Rick figures out what John is doing and approves. He turns to Jimmy, happily.
RICK
Just take the candy cane. It should last you days. We can forget this ever happened.

The whole group rolls their eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY
John sits on his chair, smiles smugly and crosses his legs.

JOHN
(proudly)
What they didn’t know, was that I had never been in a fight. I don’t even like to argue if I can help it.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT
John raises the candy cane above his head, lets out a primal yell and runs towards Jimmy. Jimmy quickly punches John in the face, knocking him out cold.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

JOHN
I don’t really like confrontation.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT
Rick stands defenseless as Jimmy steps over John’s prone body, knife extended.

HEATHER
You coward! Why don’t you make it a fair fight?

Jimmy looks back to the conveyer belt with all the weapons. He is now close enough to Rick to attack. He smiles at Heather.
JIMMY
That’s a good idea.

He quickly stabs Rick in the gut. Rick gasps as the knife enters. He plummets to the ground.

JIMMY (CONT’D)
But, nah.

The group rush to Rick, Patty and Susan sobbing. John has awakened to see Heather cradling Rick, who has a knife sticking out of him. He races over.

JOHN
Rick!

He kneels next to the shocked Rick.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Oh my God!

Suddenly, the look of shock leaves Rick’s face and he looks down to where his knife wound is. He lets out a little chuckle. The rest of the group suddenly look hopeful.

RICK
Ha. The Santa suit padding.

Heather, Patty and Susan laugh and wipe the tears from their eyes. John frowns and holds up some padding.

JOHN
Uh, remember you didn’t want to look fat in front of Heather.

Rick sees the padding and remembers.

RICK
Oh yeah!

His head falls to the ground and he goes still.

The women begin to cry and John looks heartbroken. He turns to Jimmy angrily, but something catches him off guard. He scrutinizes Jimmy carefully.

JOHN
Wait. I know you.
(pause)
Yeah. You’re little Jimmy Knuckles.

Jimmy is taken a little aback at this, but holds up his knife defiantly.
JIMMY
Yeah. And if I am, what of it?

JOHN
You’re that kid... the one that we missed that Christmas. I think it was eighty-nine.
(pause)
I’ve always felt terrible about that.

Castle is getting impatient.

CASTLE
Stab him, Jimmy!

However, Jimmy is now looking very uncertain.

JOHN
That’s right. It was a stupid accounting error. You never got any presents that year if memory serves.
(pause)
Man, I am so sorry.

CASTLE
Knife the elf!

JIMMY
I never got nuttin that year! And all I wanted was one present That’s it.

John looks as if he is growing nostalgic thinking back on it.

JOHN
That’s right.
(pause)
You didn’t get it any other year?

Jimmy is starting to tear up.

JIMMY
No! I thoughts you forgot about me.

John hangs his head in shame.

JOHN
No. No. It was just a dumb mistake.
(getting an idea)
But wait!

This has caught Jimmy’s attention. Castle is fuming.
John reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a hammer and screwdriver.

John (CONT’D)
I know it’s late, but how about I get you your present now?

Jimmy
You’d do that?

John turns around and sawing and hammering can be heard. He turns back around holding a beautifully wrapped present.

Jimmy begins bawling. He drops the knife and approaches John who smiles as he hands him the present.

John
Merry Christmas, Jimmy.

Wiping the tears from his eyes, and smiling giddily, Jimmy opens his present. Castle watches, disgusted.

A boxing glove attached to a spring rockets out of the box and knocks Jimmy out cold.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM – DAY

John
Don’t feel bad for him. He had wanted an Uzi.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE – NIGHT

Jimmy is lying on the ground and John runs back over to Rick. The women sit around him, not so worried now. John looks at Rick with concern.

John
(to Susan)
Is he breathing?

Susan
If by breathing, you mean snoring, then yes. Yes he is.

John
Huh?
Rick rubs the sleep out of his eyes and smiles at John.

    JOHN (CONT’D)
    How?

    RICK
    Turns out the suit does have
    superpowers after all.

Rick pulls the bloodless knife out of his suit and stands up.

    JOHN
    Oh my God! That’s amazing!

    RICK
    So you were wrong.

    JOHN
    What?

    RICK
    About the suit just being a suit.
    You were totally wrong.

    JOHN
    Uh, yeah. I guess.

    RICK
    No. You totally were.

    JOHN
    I didn’t know...

    RICK
    And I was right.

    JOHN
    Well, I didn’t know...

    RICK
    Admit it. You were wrong.

    JOHN
    What does it matter...

    RICK
    Admit it.

    JOHN
    All right. I was wrong.

    RICK
    And I was right.
JOHN
And you were right.

Rick motions towards the women.

RICK
Now tell them.

John looks to the heavens for help.

Castle is defeated, but he has not given up.

CASTLE
So, you think you’ve won?

The group look at each other, considering it. Then they all nod to Castle.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Well, I’m afraid that’s where you are wrong. DEAD wrong.

Castle takes out his remote control. Before pressing the button he closes his eyes.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
(quietly)
Please. Please. Please.

He presses the button and a huge safe falls on him.

The group smiles, except for John, who is mortified. Heather gives Rick a big kiss and Susan hugs Patty.

JOHN
We just saw a man die. I can’t believe it.

Rick comes behind him and gives him a big bear hug.

RICK
Christmas is saved!

JOHN
(to himself)
I wonder if he had a family. What if he had kids?

The group behind him all hold hands and dance in celebration.
JOHN (CONT’D)
(to himself)
What if his parents are still
alive? A parent should never
outlive their child...

The safe door opens and out walks a dazed Castle, smiling at
the celebration.

CASTLE
Well what do we have here?

The group turns to Castle, worried. Suddenly Castle starts to
dance and sing “Jingle Bells”. The group begin to laugh.

HEATHER
(smiling)
He’s got a brain injury!

RICK
It’s a Christmas miracle!

Castle joins the celebration as John looks at the elves
standing at the conveyer belt. He turns back to the
cameraman.

JOHN
Man. Look at that setup. Conveyer
That would’ve been a really
fantastic action set piece. Could
you imagine the excitement if your
doc ended like that? Almost seems
like a missed opportunity.

Susan runs up to John and gives him a hug. Patty gives him a
happy smile.

John kneels down to Patty’s level and gives her a candy cane.

JOHN (CONT’D)
So, what do you think of Christmas
now that you’ve seen what can
happen if you don’t embrace the
Christmas spirit?

PATTY
Still hate it. Probably even more
now.

John seems surprised, but Susan give Patty a hug.
SUSAN
But we’re going to respect her feelings. And if she wants to change them in the future, we’ll respect them then too.

PATTY
I still want the presents though.

SUSAN
Of course. We’re not monsters.

PATTY
And maybe I’d like it a little more if John spent Christmas with us this year.

John looks at Susan, who smiles back at him.

SUSAN
I’d like that.

JOHN
(nervously)
I’d like that too.

CASTLE
(yelling)
Merry Christmas everyone!

Rick walks up to John and puts his arm around him.

RICK
Well pal, so ends our Christmas adventure. I learned a lot, and had fun doing it.

JOHN
Me too, Rick. This is possibly one of the best times I’ve ever had. I wouldn’t trade it for the world.

Rick extends his hand.

RICK
Until we meet again, friend.

John shakes it happily.

JOHN
Until we meet again.
(pause)
Ah, to heck with it!
John gives Rick a big hug and Rick gladly reciprocates.
Everyone laughs as Jimmy still lies prone on the floor.
John’s cheerfulness disappears suddenly when a realization hits him.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Dear God! We still have to get you ready to be Santa. We’re not even close yet!

RICK
Oh, yeah.

Susan, Patty and Heather walk up to them.

SUSAN
You can count on us to help.

HEATHER
We’d be happy to.

PATTY
We can use my evil elves!

John looks to the elves, who all smile and rub their hands together, deviously.

JOHN
I don’t know if we need to do that. But thanks! This should be a breeze now!

SPIN DISSOLVE

MONTAGE TO PEPPY MUSIC

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY
John is yelling at Rick who has put the presents in the fireplace.

SPIN DISSOLVE

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY
Susan is yelling at Rick who has attached cardboard reindeer to the back of a sleigh.

SPIN DISSOLVE
INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Heather is yelling with frustration at Rick who is wearing two stockings that were being hung up to put presents in.

SPIN DISSOLVE

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Patty cries as Rick tries to comfort her after giving her a DVD of Watership Down as a present.

SPIN DISSOLVE

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

An exhausted John sits on the couch while the rest of the disheveled group sit around him.

JOHN
Well. We failed.

SUSAN
Yup.

JOHN
Christmas is ruined.

Patty raises her hands above her head happily.

PATTY
Yay!

JOHN
Which means, no presents.

Patty crosses her arms and leans back, unhappily.

JOHN (CONT’D)
It’s Christmas Eve, and I think Rick has only gotten worse.

RICK
Not true! I am totally Santa. (laughing) Ho Ho Ho and a bottle of rum.

JOHN
That’s not it. Don’t say that.

John gets up and sighs.
JOHN (CONT’D)
But, we gotta try. Come on Rick.
Time to ruin Christmas.

Rick jumps up, excitedly.

RICK
Let’s do this to this!

John takes out his cellphone and dials.

JOHN
(into cellphone)
Hey Comet. You can pick us up now.
We’ll be in the backyard...

John hangs up the phone.

JOHN (CONT’D)
... sobbing.

Susan stands up.

SUSAN
Wait.
(pause)
By training... or attempting to
train Rick, we’ve all learned how
to be like Santa ourselves. And we
definitely know what not to do.
With our help, Christmas should be
okay. Or at least not ruined!

John and Rick look at each other, optimistically.

JOHN
That could work. You’d do that?

PATTY
We said we’d spend Christmas
together.

Rick is looking out the back window.

RICK
A goat just landed in our backyard.

JOHN
That’s a reindeer...

He looks at the three girls on the sofa and smiles.
JOHN (CONT’D)
Our ride is here.

CUT TO:

INT. SANTA’S WORKSHOP – DUSK

John and crew walk into Santa’s busy workshop. The elves are working like gangbusters to get the last of the toys boxed as John escorts the group to the factory floor. They pass by a MOLE who is sitting on one of the tables.

JOHN
(casually)
Hey Frank.

John goes to a clearing on the floor and turns to the gang.

JOHN (CONT’D)
All right. First things first. I have no idea how to fit all these toys in the sleigh.
(smiling)
We’re doomed already!

Everyone signs.

SANTA (O.S.)
Ho! Ho! Ho!

John turns in shock towards Santa, who is strolling in with Twinkle.

SANTA (CONT’D)
Back so soon?

Rick is astonished.

RICK
Oh my God! Santa Claus is real?

John turns to him, annoyed.

JOHN
How did you go this far if you didn’t think.... Ah, forget it.
(to Santa)
Of course I’m back. Aren’t you supposed to be on vacation?

Santa looks to Twinkle mischievously.
SANTA
Oh yeah, that. That’s what we call a “white Christmas lie”.

JOHN
What?

TWINKLE
Well, you were so stressed out.

SANTA
And it’s not like you’d ever take a vacation.

TWINKLE
You were like a tightly wound ball of steel wool!

SANTA
So we decided to tell you I was going on vacation in order to get you out of the office.

TWINKLE
You really needed it.
   (pause)
You were kind of a drag to work with.

John is in shock.

JOHN
So you’re not going to Hawaii?

SANTA
No. That would be insane.

JOHN
And Rick isn’t the new Santa Claus?

SANTA
No. But he’s a super nice guy. I knew you two would become fast friends.

JOHN
(angrily)
You’re right. He’s a great guy. But that’s beside the point. I’ve been going out of my mind with worry about this!
SANTA
You would have worried no matter what.

Santa looks over the group who accompany John.

SANTA (CONT’D)
And now it looks like you have a nice group of people you can call friends. If that’s not a great Christmas present, I don’t know what is.

John, still angry, goes to speak further. But he turns to his friends behind him and sighs.

JOHN
That is true. They are a great group of people.

Twinkle nudges Santa and points to his watch. Santa gives him a nod.

SANTA
So, just enjoy yourselves. I got to go to work tonight, but I’ll see you tomorrow. And also...
(loudly)
Merry Christmas!

Santa and Twinkle walk by the group, and John turns towards the exiting duo.

JOHN
Actually Santa, you’re right. I do need a vacation.

Santa turns towards John, happily.

SANTA
I’m glad to hear that, John. After wrapping up this Christmas, I think you should take a long, relaxing vacation.

JOHN
Actually, I’m going to go now. But don’t worry. I have a replacement.

John points to a surprised Rick.

JOHN (CONT’D)
(to Rick)
You know accounting, don’t you?
RICK
Of course I know accounting. A one
and a two and a three and a....

Santa’s jovial expression turns to concern.

JOHN
Hawaii sounds nice.

John escorts Rick to a desk.

JOHN (CONT’D)
This will be your workspace. If you
have any questions, I’ll be back in
about a month.

Rick is thrilled. He picks up a calculator and points it at
the computer.

RICK
The remote for your TV isn’t
working.

Santa slumps his shoulders.

SANTA
(sadly)
Ho. Ho.....

He turns around and walks out.

Susan walks over to John.

SUSAN
You’re not really going to go on
vacation before Christmas.

JOHN
Nah. Just thought I’d get a little
revenge on him. I’ll tell him
before he takes off.

SUSAN
Well, when Christmas is done,
Hawaii sounds nice.

Susan give John a romantic kiss, leaving John speechless.

SUSAN (CONT’D)
Merry Christmas, John.

John gives a genuinely happy smile.
JOHN
Merry Christmas.

The cameraman zooms out to see the whole group, celebrating happily. He turns the camera towards a full length mirror on the wall, but there’s no reflection. The camera seems to be floating in the air.

Rick notices this and alerts the others.

RICK
The cameraman... he doesn’t have a reflection.

Rick backs toward the others as the camera approaches him. John pushes Susan behind him, protectively.

RICK (CONT’D)
He’s been a vampire this whole time!

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)
I want to suck your blood!

The group screams as the cameraman lunges towards them.

CUT TO BLACK:

CREDITS

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN’S SCREENING ROOM - NIGHT

The credits cut and we see John and his group of friends watching the film. Rick holds hands with Heather. Susan and Patty sit on either side of John. Dudly and family are gobbling down popcorn. And Santa, Twinkle and Castle sit in the back row.

SUSAN
I guess we’re lucky that happened or we wouldn’t have been able to watch this for Halloween Horror Movie Mania.

JOHN
Yes, we were very lucky he was a vampire. It fits in perfectly with this year’s theme of Identifying With The Monster as Voyeur. Next up is Peeping Tom and then we end the night with My Little Eye.
HEATHER
What about something like
Disturbia?

JOHN
(smugly)
The only monster as voyeur there
would be us watching a trainwreck.
Give me Rear Window any day, thank
you very much.

Susan looks at John, disapprovingly.

JOHN (CONT’D)
But if you liked the movie, that’s
great. Good for you!

Heather smiles at John.

HEATHER
You’re getting better!

John smiles, pleased with himself.

RICK
I liked the part where the guy
fought that other guy with a candy
cane!

JOHN
That was me.

RICK
Yeah! And the part where that other
guy made it snow.

JOHN
Also me.

John stands up to address his friends.

JOHN (CONT’D)
I’d like to thank everyone for
making tonight’s Halloween Horror
Movie Mania the most successful
ever.
(pause)
Thanks for coming.

CASTLE
Thanks for having us!
TWINKLE
And buying candy cane flavoured popcorn.

JOHN
If it saves me from buying pumpkin flavoured popcorn, candy canes win every time.

SANTA
Ho ho ho! Happy Halloween!

As John sits down, Susan gives him a kiss on the cheek.

SUSAN
Happy Halloween.

JOHN
(smiling)
Happy Halloween to you too.

Patty stands up, cheerfully.

PATTY
Happy Halloween to everyone!

They all smile, revealing vampire fangs.

Cut to credits, with a very Chritmassy design, but with a song akin to the Monster Mash playing underneath.

FADE TO BLACK.