

OUTSOURCING

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FADE IN:

INT. DINER - EVENING

LON, 45, sips coffee, the remains of a burger on the table in front of him. In security guard uniform, Lon is overweight and hardly special. As he gazes out the window, his phone BUZZES. He looks at the caller ID and answers.

LON

Yeah, babe.

(beat)

I called. They're working on it.

(beat)

It's too late today. They'll call tomorrow. I know every day counts, and I'll follow up. I promise.

(beat)

How is it?

(beat)

I'm sorry about that. Really, I'm sorry. Try to sleep. Marcy can take of herself. You sleep.

(beat)

Love you too.

As Lon kills the call, RALPH, small, pudgy, slips into the booth. Ralph slings a briefcase on the table and wipes sweat from his brow. He could be an old 30 or a young 60.

RALPH

It's hotter'n blazes out there. I need a coke. Where can I get a coke?

Lon stares as Ralph waves for a waitress.

LON

Do I know you?

RALPH

How long does it take to get service?

LON

I'm sorry--

RALPH

I'll get to that. Don't leave.

Ralph slides out and goes to the counter to get a coke. Lon frowns, off stride. Ralph slips back into the booth.

RALPH

You gotta love coke. Beats the hell out of eggnog, you know?

LON

I don't mean to be rude, but who are you?

RALPH

Not who, what. What am I?

LON

What?

RALPH

Exactly. To keep this simple, my name is Ralph, and I'm an elf.

LON

Elf?

RALPH

I know, I know, there's no Santa, no reindeer, no elves, no North Pole. Sometimes, I think the disinformation office does too good a job. To keep this from becoming an argument, just pretend you're at a movie. Suspend disbelief for a few minutes, OK?

Ralph takes a slug of coke as Lon looks at his watch.

LON

I don't know anything about disbelief, but I have to run.

RALPH

The watchman gig.

Lon frowns.

RALPH

Do you really think I'd make a job offer without doing some research? Come on, Lon, give labor resources some credit.

LON

I don't know who you are.

RALPH

I know about your day job at the concrete plant.

LON  
Or how you know what you know.

RALPH  
Your wife's cancer.

LON  
But I sure as hell

RALPH  
Your daughter's spine issue.

LON  
Am not going to

RALPH  
The past due bills.

LON  
Talk to you!

RALPH  
Even that little blood you manage  
to pass on occasion.

LON  
That does it. If you don't leave  
now, I'm going to clean your clock,  
got that?

RALPH  
Relax, Lon, relax, I'm offering you  
an opportunity, a chance take care  
of a few problems. And it's the  
easiest gig going. Come on, don't  
throw away the gold ball because it  
doesn't fit in your pocket. Work  
with me.

Lon taps his watch.

LON  
Two minutes.

RALPH  
That's the spirit.

Ralph grabs his briefcase and opens it.

RALPH  
The gig couldn't be easier. One  
night, six hours. We supply the  
goods and the entry.  
(MORE)

RALPH (CONT'D)

You spread the stuff around and maybe snag a cookie or two.

LON

One minute.

Ralph takes out several forms and sorts them.

RALPH

You start at eleven and end by five. Since this is your first year, your route is actually pretty lame. I mean, six hundred drops in six hours is something a monkey could do.

LON

You're almost finished.

RALPH

The best thing is the pay. Ever hear of the milk of human kindness? If you know people, you know human kindness is the rarest thing in the world.

Ralph slides the forms across the table.

RALPH

Already filled out. All you have to do is sign.

LON

Time's up. I suggest you leave.

Ralph laughs.

RALPH

OK, OK, you got me. You're too smart. I couldn't fool you. Look, look, I got this bet going. It means a case of beer for me if you sign. No sweat from you, but beer for me. I'll toss in a five if you help me out.

Lon regards the Ralph a moment.

LON

How did you know about me?

RALPH

Google, Facebook, Twitter. Yeah, I was supposed to go random, but how could I win beer that way?

Ralph pulls \$5 from his pocket and slaps it on the table.

RALPH

What do you say? Contribute to the death of my liver?

Lon laughs and pulls over the forms even as Ralph produces a pen.

RALPH

You're a good man, Lon, a good man.

INT. DINER - SIX MONTHS LATER - EVENING

Lon, a leather coat over his guard uniform sips coffee and looks out at the Christmas lights lining the buildings.

WAITRESS (O.S.)

Warm up?

Lon looks up and nods as a WAITRESS, 40s, fills his coffee cup. A Christmas bulb, pinned to her top, blinks.

WAITRESS

Doesn't feel like Christmas Eve, does it?

LON

What?

WAITRESS

Last day before Christmas. I should be running around the mall or something. Instead, I'm pouring coffee. Just another day.

LON

Yeah, I know. You're not supposed to get a pink slip on Christmas Eve.

WAITRESS

You're kidding. What heartless bastard did that?

LON

The heartless bastard who got tired of paying my medical bills.

WAITRESS  
I'm sorry about that.

LON  
Everyone is.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lon sits in a small booth by a line of overhead doors. Only a few lights hold the dark at bay. Lon faces a bank of monitors which show no activity. Over the monitors, a TV shows a Christmas classic.

A TAP on the door makes him jump. He spins. A short WOMAN holds up a watch and taps it.

Lon stands and opens the door.

WOMAN  
Let's go. Your route starts in two minutes.

LON  
Who are you, and what are you talking about.

WOMAN  
I'm an elf, and you're on the hook for six hundred drops. Are you ready?

LON  
There are no elves, and I'm about to call the police. How did you get in?

The Woman produces a tablet and taps keys.

WOMAN  
That damn Ralph.

She shows Lon the tablet which displays the documents he signed six months earlier.

WOMAN  
That your signature?

LON  
Yes, but--

WOMAN  
No buts. Take my hand.

LON  
What?

WOMAN  
Damn.

She grabs his hand.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

The Woman and Lon stand outside a house bright with Christmas lights. The Woman holds out a small bag.

WOMAN  
It's not rocket science. Spread  
the presents and get out.

LON  
Wait, how do I get in?

WOMAN  
The same way you got here.

LON  
I don't get it. If you can do  
magic, why am I here?

WOMAN  
Take the bag.

Lon takes the bag.

INT. HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Lon stands in front of a unlit Christmas tree. The bag by his side is suddenly full of presents.

WOMAN (V.O.)  
It's a union thing. We're not  
allowed inside, as if we're going  
to steal something. Jeeze.

He looks around as if crazy. Then, he starts to place the presents under the tree.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

The Woman leans against a tree. Lon appears with the empty sack.

WOMAN

You're going to have to do better.  
At this rate, you won't finish your  
quota.

LON

I don't--

She grabs his hand.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Lon half stumbles as he and the Woman arrive in another yard.  
She hands him the sack.

INT. HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Lon appears with his full sack and starts to distribute.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Some bright curly toes came up with  
the idea of distributed deliveries.  
Like we're Amazon or something. A  
bunch of recruiters went out and  
signed up an army of dummies.

INT. HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Another house, a lit Christmas tree. Lon puts presents under  
the tree.

WOMAN (V.O.)

So, we got a gang of rookies trying  
to do what the big guy did without  
breaking a sweat.

Lon stands, spots a plate of cookies, and manages to snag one  
as he disappears.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

The sky seems lighter in the East. The Woman and a tired Lon  
face something little more than a shack.

WOMAN

Last one.

LON

Wait. What happens after...

WOMAN

Take the sack.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Lon faces a bleak room without a Christmas tree an ornament or a light. Scrooge couldn't find a bleaker room. He looks around for some place to put the presents. Shrugging, he unloads the presents on the couch.

He turns. A young, small BOY looks at him.

LON

Yeah, I know. No beard, no sleigh.

The Boy spots all the presents and smiles.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAWN

Lon sits in his chair in his booth. No sack, no Woman, nothing. He looks around. It's as if he never left.

Except for one item.

In the middle of his desk sits a small blue vial. He picks it up.

The label reads MHK.

Lon frowns. What the hell.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

Lon finishes a lap of the warehouse. As he approaches the booth, he spots WALT, 50s, fruit basket in hand, walking toward the booth.

LON

Merry Christmas, Boss.

WALT

Merry Christmas to you, Lon.  
Here's something for you and the family.

Lon takes the basket.

LON

Thank you very much.

WALT

I don't know if you're aware, but Bill is leaving next month.

LON

Retirement?

WALT

Yes, and that leaves us without a VP for security. I like to hire from within, so would you like the job?

LON

VP of security?

WALT

I know this is short notice, but I admire anyone who volunteers for holiday duty.

LON

I don't know what to say.

WALT

No need for an answer. Go home, talk to the family--

LON

No, no, I'll take it. Of course, I'll take it.

Walt beams and sticks out his hand.

WALT

I'll have Penny work up a contract. That fit you?

LON

I...I can't thank you enough.

WALT

I'm the thankful one. You deserve a chance.

Walt walks away from Lon.

WALT

Take the rest of the shift off. No self-respecting thief works on Christmas.

LON

Yes, sir.

INT. LON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Lon comes in the back door and takes off his coat. Even as he does his wife, MAGGIE, and daughter, EMILY, 10, come in all smiles.

LON  
I've got great news.

MAGGIE  
Me first. I got an email from the clinic. I'm in remission.

LON  
You...you...

He reaches out and they hug.

EMILY  
And my last x-ray says I'm getting straighter.

He gapes, and Emily joins the group hug.

MAGGIE  
It's a Christmas miracle.

LON  
That's right, that's right.

INT. DINER - MORNING

Lon, in suit, sips coffee, remains of breakfast in front of him. The Waitress stops to refill his cup.

WAITRESS  
New job?

LON  
Yeah, right after New Year's. I'm shadowing till then.

WAITRESS  
Well, you deserve it I'm sure.

She walks away as Lon looks out the window. When he looks back, Ralph sits across from him.

RALPH  
Congratulations, Lon.

LON  
You're back.

RALPH  
Hey, the feedback on your  
performance wasn't the best, but  
it's good enough to give you  
another shot. What do you say,  
next year?

LON  
Same route?

RALPH  
You're not a rookie any more, Lon.  
Another hundred stops.

LON  
Same pay?

RALPH  
That remains the same.

LON  
Where's the contract?

Ralph opens his briefcase and pulls out a tablet that he taps  
to bring up a form.

RALPH  
That's the spirit. New app cuts  
the paperwork.

Lon takes a stylus from Ralph and signs the tablet.

RALPH  
Say, you wouldn't happen to know  
someone who could use a Christmas  
Eve gig, do you?

Lon looks at Ralph

RALPH  
There's something in it for you.

LON  
Come back in a month.

Ralph stows the tablet.

RALPH  
And a bonus for me!

Ralph disappears. Lon grins as he sips coffee.

FADE OUT.

