OUTSOURCING

Written by

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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 to 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 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.
What?

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 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.