

SPIRITS IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Screenplay by:
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Adapted from the novel:
"Spirits in A Material World"
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May 28, 2022

LOGLINE

*A child's doubtful letter to Santa
ensnares her family in a deadly
conspiracy by holiday Spirits to
seize control of Christmas.*

FADE IN:

BLACK CARD: "THE PAST"

ESTABLISHING SHOT: AIRPORT - LATE EVENING

CHYRON: "3 Years Earlier"

INT. AIRPLANE - COACH CABIN

The camera meanders through a slow moving herd of restless PASSENGERS boarding a flight and finds the source of their frustration - DR. CHARLES HAMILTON. Confused about his seat assignment, the disheveled, 80-year-old SCIENTIST mills about anxiously, searching for his boarding pass.

DR. HAMILTON

I'm sorry, I had it, I'm sure it's here...

The growing chorus of impatience alerts BEVERLEY TYNES, a comely FLIGHT ATTENDANT in her late 20's, who quickly comes to his aid.

BEVERLEY

Welcome aboard...

She spies his BOARDING PASS behind his POCKET PROTECTOR and retrieves it.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

(re: boarding pass)

...Dr. Charles Hamilton. Seat 6-A. That's in first class. C'mon, it's this way, follow me.

DR. HAMILTON

Thank you. Thank you, very much.

INT. AIRPLANE - FIRST CLASS CABIN

Beverley stops and points to a unoccupied WINDOW SEAT.

BEVERLEY

Seat 6-A.

(re: possessions)

I'll take care of these for you. May I get you something to drink, Dr. Hamilton?

DR. HAMILTON

Uh, yes. A cola - with no ice.
Thank you.

Dr. Hamilton exchanges pleasantries with aisle PASSENGER 6-B and settles in as Beverley stows his CARRY-ON in the OVERHEAD BIN, then takes his OVERCOAT and hangs it in the FORWARD CLOSET.

EXT. AIRPORT - TARMAC / RUNWAY - LATE EVENING

The airplane backs away from its berth and taxis toward the runway. It takes off into a fading evening sky with OMINOUS STORM CLOUDS building on the horizon.

INT. AIRPLANE - FIRST CLASS CABIN

Beverley appears with DINNER MENUS and finds Dr. Hamilton staring intently out the window.

BEVERLEY

(re: dinner menu)
Here you are, Dr. Hamilton.
(taking empty glass)
Would you like another drink?

DR. HAMILTON

Yes, thank you.

A jolt of turbulence ripples through the aircraft.

SFX: Warning 'pongs'.

ANGLE ON: 'Fasten Seat Belt' lights illuminate.

PILOT (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, we are experiencing some turbulence, so the Captain has turned on the fasten seat belt sign. Please return to your seats and keep your seat belts fastened. Thank you.

Dr. Hamilton returns to the porthole, cupping his face against it for a clearer view.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT SKY

A billowous STORM CLOUD nears. Each discharge of LIGHTENING illuminates the crude contour of a FACE forming in the cloud.

INT. AIRPLANE - VARIOUS

Turbulence grips the aircraft. Passengers scramble unsteadily to their seats, others secure POSSESSIONS and TRAY TABLES.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT SKY

STORM CLOUD P.O.V.: The cloud rapidly closes on the aircraft. Dr. Hamilton's face - framed by the porthole - shifts from curiosity to terror.

INT. AIRPLANE - VARIOUS

The airplane shudders violently. Lights extinguish, overhead bins open, OXYGEN MASKS deploy and screams fill the cabin.

Beverley and PENNYE, the other FIRST CLASS FLIGHT ATTENDANT, ride out the disturbance wedged between GALLEY CABINETS and the BULKHEAD.

As suddenly as it started, the turbulence subsides and calm is restored. FLIGHT ATTENDANTS reassure passengers and help re-stow BELONGINGS.

INT. AIRPLANE - FIRST CLASS CABIN

Beverley surveys the cabin and eyes Dr. Hamilton's empty seat.

BEVERLEY

(to Passenger 6-B)

Are you okay?

(nods yes)

And Dr. Hamilton?

PASSENGER 6-B

Who?

BEVERLEY

Dr. Hamilton, the gentleman in the window seat.

Passenger 6-B glances warily between her and the empty seat.

PASSENGER 6-B

That seat has been empty since we took off. No one's sitting there.

Beverley demurs, then checks the overhead bin for Dr. Hamilton's carry-on. It is gone - as is the overcoat she placed in the forward closet.

INT. AIRPLANE - GALLEY

Beverley searches the PASSENGER LIST for 'Dr. Charles Hamilton'. No matches. The SEATING CHART lists '6-A' as 'unoccupied'.

Beverley flips through the PASSENGER MANIFEST.

CU: "TOTAL PASSENGERS MANIFESTED: 230".

INT. AIRPLANE - VARIOUS

Beverley walks the length of the aircraft with a HAND COUNTER. She checks spaces and scans faces as she tallies. Her trip complete, she checks the total.

CU: Counter total - 230

INT. AIRPLANE - FIRST CLASS CABIN

Visibly shaken, Beverley stares across the cabin at the empty seat and comes to a disturbing conclusion; Dr. Charles Hamilton was nothing more than a figment of her imagination.

EXT. CITY STREET - RETAIL SHOPPING DISTRICT - NIGHT

CHYRON: "3 Weeks Before Christmas"

WINDOW SHOPPERS bundled against the cold, enter, exit, and admire POSH STOREFRONT CHRISTMAS DISPLAYS (GUCCI, CHANEL, POLO, etc).

ANGLE ON: Shoppers deposit MONEY into a VOLUNTEER's CASH POT as he rings his BELL soliciting alms for charity.

VOLUNTEER

Thank you. God bless you. Merry
Christmas.

The camera rises towards the PENTHOUSE.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: Vivaldi's 'Winter'

The opulent suite hosts a FIREPLACE, ANTIQUES, SCULPTURES and FINE ART.

ASHLEY COOPER, a lithe, refined man in his mid 60's, wears a SILK ROBE and sits cloistered behind an ANTIQUE OAK DESK piled high with FINANCIAL PAPERWORK and RARE COLLECTIBLES.

Fixated on the DESKTOP COMPUTER SCREEN, he operates the KEYBOARD with virtuoso dexterity.

ANGLE ON: Screen filled with COMPLEX FINANCIAL DATA.

With much fanfare, he presses a final key.

CU: POP UP WINDOW showing progress of a TRANSFER OF FUNDS.

ASHLEY

Ha! Nine hundred twenty-three million, seven hundred forty-two thousand, eight hundred and sixty-eight dollars and fifty-nine cents!

He haphazardly swipes aside ITEMS littering his desk to better address his unseen guests.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

And that's just the liquid assets! When the bonds, trusts, real estate and crypto are dissolved, I should clear close to four billion!

CU: POP UP WINDOW shows TRANSFER OF FUNDS 'complete'.

He leaps up and prances about the suite.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Ha-haaaaa! I am officially broke! My father was right - poverty of purpose is worse than poverty of purse. For decades I've been squandering my very existence making more money than I could possibly spend in ten lifetimes. Now I feel like a child again!

His reverie slows. SWEAT begins to dot his brow.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Whew! Is it just me, or are you hot as well?
(a beat)
Must be the fireplace.

He opens a set of FRENCH DOORS that lead to a BALCONY and ushers in a cool, invigorating BREEZE.

EXT. PENTHOUSE - BALCONY - NIGHT

Ashley steps onto the BALCONY and takes in a renewing breath.

ASHLEY

I can't wait until tomorrow. The
look on my accountant's face will
be priceless when I tell him I gave
away all my money!

He stumbles, lurches, and catches himself on the WROUGHT IRON
RAILING. His breathing is shallow and sweat soaks his robe.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

My God, it's twenty degrees out
here and I'm sweating like a derby
winner.

ANGLE ON: Lighted, street level BLUE AWNING.

His delirium, combined with blurring vision, makes the awning
appear as...

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

A pool! I bet that feels wonderful
on a hot night like tonight.

He climbs the railing.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(re: unseen guests)
Last one in is a rotten egg!

He pinches his nose and does a cannonball dive off the
balcony, squealing happily all the way to sure death.

Two figures, seen only from their waist down, cross the
balcony to the railing. One is a STOUT WOMAN IN RED. The
other drifts beneath a RED CLOAK and leaves no footprints in
the LIGHT SNOW.

Screams from below rise to greet them. They retreat inside.

INT. PENTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A RED, GLOVED hand enters the frame and rummages through the
debris on the antique oak desktop to locate a CLEAR CASE
housing a signed TOM BRADY ROOKIE FOOTBALL CARD. The
collectible is admired, then deposited into a RED CLUTCH.

Moments later, a STIFF BREEZE arises and scatters DEBRIS
throughout the suite.

EXT: RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas"

BEGIN MONTAGE

Homes decorated for the Christmas holiday. They range from the spectacular, to the mundane, to the comically dismal.

END MONTAGE

EXT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

One half of the duplex sparkles with holiday cheer. The other half didn't bother to participate.

The camera approaches and pushes through the second-floor window of the barren half...

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - BEDROOM

...into the bedroom of 6-year-old AUSTEN FISHER. Neatly arranged BOOKS, DRAWINGS, and POSTERS point out the seriousness, creativity and interests of the organized occupant sitting at a DESK, writing a LETTER TO SANTA.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

Dear Santa, my name is Austen
Fisher. I am writing to you again
because you keep forgetting to
bring me what I want for Christmas.

Austen addressing the letter, 'Mr. Santa Claus, North Pole, U.S.A.'. She adds, 'For Mr. Santa only', then underlines it in red.

EXT. DUPLEX - DAY

The camera remains on the letter as Austen places it in the MAILBOX.

The MAILMAN retrieves her letter and tosses it into a BIN with other LETTERS TO SANTA.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

My teacher said you may have
forgotten about me because you are
busy this time of year and have a
lot of letters to answer. But if
you make a list and check it twice,
why do you always forget me?

EXT. MAIL FACILITY - DAY

The Mailman deposits the bin of letters into a RED, SEASONAL 'SANTA'S MAILBOX' set up outside the facility.

The camera follows Austen's letter as it tumbles inside.

INT. SANTA'S MAILBOX

After a few beats, the back of the mailbox opens and the bin of letters to Santa is removed by...

EXT. NORTH POLE MAIL FACILITY - NIGHT

...an ELF MAILMAN. He places the bin - along with others from a LINE OF SIMILAR MAILBOXES - onto a MOTORIZED MAIL CART and drives them into the MAIL PROCESSING FACILITY.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

My daddy says you can't answer
because you are not real. He said
you are a fairy tale like the
Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy.

INT. NORTH POLE MAIL FACILITY

THE CAVERNOUS FACILITY is a den of automation and teems with activity. The mailman empties the BINS onto a CONVEYOR.

Austen's letter is mechanically sifted, routed through gates, opened, flattened, QR-coded, time stamped and laser scanned.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

He said the North Pole is real but
no one lives there except for Polar
Bears because it is so cold people
would freeze like popsicles.

The scanner halts, reverses, rescans, then flashes.

SFX: An alarm

Austen's letter is stamped 'Review' and routed off-line.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

My mommy said you were real. She
used to help me write letters to
you, but since she went to heaven,
you stopped answering my letters.

A MAIL INSPECTOR inserts the letter into a STRIPED CANISTER that is PNEUMATICALLY TUBED skyward across the facility.

INT. NORTH POLE - MAIL PROCESSING - SUPERVISOR OFFICE

The canister drops into the STATION of an ELDERLY ELF. He reads the letter with concern, stamps it 'Urgent Review', then places it in a SOLID RED CANISTER and tubes it onward.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

I think my daddy is right. You are just a man with a fake beard and a pillow in your belly who is hired by stores every Christmas to sell toys.

INT. LIBRARY - HEAD LIBRARIAN STATION

The HEAD LIBRARIAN removes the letter from the canister, stamps it 'RECEIVED' and scans the QR code. She jots down a location and hands it to an ARCHIVIST.

AUSTEN

This is the last time I will write to you. If you are really real and live in the North Pole, then you will get this letter and bring me what I want for Christmas.

The Archivist navigates a route through voluminous stacks of archives and retrieves Austen's Christmas file.

CU: The file contains a picture and previous letters to Santa. All are stamped 'REQUEST DENIED'.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - RECEPTION

The Archivist enters and hands Austen's letter and file to VERNA, Santa's Executive Secretary.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

It is the same as last year, and the year before that. It is the only thing I want. If you don't bring it, I will stop believing in you and never ever write to you again.

She sighs wearily, and sadly places it in SANTA'S INBOX.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHYRON: "THE PRESENT"

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

The mythical metropolis known as North Pole, though submerged in the darkness of the winter solstice, nonetheless shines spectacularly. Colorful rainbow curtains of NORTHERN LIGHTS complement the breathtaking MONTAGE OF CHRISTMAS SIGHTS lifted from a Production Designer's most vivid imaginings.

The streets are filled with ELVES, SPIRITS, SPRITES, BANDS OF REVELERS, etc., all joyous and singularly focused on one thing - Christmas!

Amongst the hustle and bustle, a sole figure stands out amongst the rest. Wearing an immaculately tailored RED SUIT, WHITE SHIRT and STRIPED TIE, he cuts a jagged path through the crowd. Acknowledged by all, he responds in kind for he is none other than the beloved SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

EXT. NORTH POLE - TINSEL TOWERS - NIGHT

Christmas Present slows to admire TINSEL TOWERS, the architectural crown jewel of North Pole's city center. The towering complex sprouts from the icy plain at odd angles, reminiscent of raw quartz formations.

The DOORMAN, anticipating Christmas Present's arrival, sees him and snares the itinerant Spirit.

DOORMAN

Good day, sir. Merry Christmas!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Merry Christmas to you, too.

The Doorman hustles him inside.

DOORMAN

(pointing)

Keep straight ahead, sir.

INT. TINSEL TOWERS - LOBBY

The interior of the vast lobby is resplendent in its SEASONAL DECOR and equal to the exterior in its UNIQUE DISPLAYS.

Mirroring the Doorman's speech and actions, PASSERSBY in the busy lobby greet, guide and proffer directional assistance to Christmas Present.

PASSERSBY

Good day - head that way, sir /
Good to see you again - follow me /
Looking good as usual - almost
there...

As he approaches a BANK OF ELEVATORS, an ATTENDANT grabs and guides him towards and into a waiting CAB.

ATTENDANT

Right this way, sir. Merry
Christmas.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Merry Christmas to you, too.

INT. TINSEL TOWERS - ELEVATOR

The Attendant shoos away would be riders.

ATTENDANT

112th floor, sir?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Uh --

ATTENDANT

112th floor it is!

MUSIC CUE: Christmas Muzak.

Momentarily content with the ride, confusion soon creeps in.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Excuse me, but, uh, where exactly
are we headed?

ATTENDANT

112th Floor! Here we are, sir.

The elevator Attendant ushers the hesitant Christmas Present out of the cab...

INT. TINSEL TOWER - 112TH FLOOR

...and onto the waiting arm of his secretary, CLAIRE, a perky Elf half his height. She escorts him through a BUSY HALLWAY.

CLAIRE

Good day, sir.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Good day --

CLAIRE

Claire - your secretary. My, don't we look festive today, and no wonder, it's Christmas Eve!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Christmas Eve?

(a beat)

You're right! I nearly forgot.

She guides him into an office.

ANGLE ON: GOLD LEAF LETTERING identifies the occupant as: THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RELATIONS'.

INT. CHRISTMAS PRESENT'S OFFICE - RECEPTION

Christmas Present looks around trying to catch his bearings.

CLAIRE

And since it's Christmas Eve, you must know that Santa is on a very tight schedule, which is why you can't keep him waiting.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Santa wants to see me?

CLAIRE

Five minutes ago.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

What for? Am I in trouble?

CLAIRE

His secretary, Verna, didn't say.

(a beat)

Here, I prepared some notes.

She hands him a stack of INDEX CARDS. He thumbs through them.

CU: Each card contains a single statement: 'Today is Christmas Eve', 'I am the Director of Human Relations', etc.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

C'mon. You can study on the way.

She walks him to the door, checks his appearance and hands him a PEN.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

If there's anything you don't understand, or you think is important and need to remember - write, it, down. Okay?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Okay.

He exits, but returns a beat later - as expected.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Uh, how do I --

CLAIRE

(pointing to floor)

Follow the red line. It will take you directly to Santa's office.

He glances down, nods understanding, then departs straddling the RED LINE while reviewing his note cards.

EXT. CAROLINA STREET - DUPLEX - EVENING

Beverley arrives from a flight. She exits an UBER with her CARRY-ON and makes the trek to her front door.

Austen emerges from next door carrying a STACK OF MAIL.

AUSTEN

Hi, Ms. Beverley.

BEVERLEY

Hello, Austen. How've you been? I missed you.

AUSTEN

Fine. I missed you, too.

Beverley crouches and they hug. Austen hands her the mail.

BEVERLEY

Thank you! I have something for you, too.

She pulls a GIFT from her carry-on.

AUSTEN

Thank you - can I open it?

BEVERLEY

Nope. Not until tomorrow. Put it under your tree with your other gifts.

Austen's smile fades. The timer trips on Beverley's CHRISTMAS LIGHTS, illuminating only her side of the duplex. She silently curses the faux-pas.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

What if I keep your gift under my tree? That way you can come over tomorrow and we can bake Christmas cookies and open our presents together.

AUSTEN

(smile returns)

Okay!

They hug again.

BEVERLEY

Hey, I need to finish doing some Christmas shopping - you want to go?

AUSTEN

Yes! I'll ask my daddy.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

ARTHUR FISHER, an athletically fit man in his mid 30's, is enjoying a nap in a RECLINER when Austen runs in.

AUSTEN

Daddy...Daddy?

Arthur shifts but remains asleep. Austen pinches his nose and his mouth opens. She covers his mouth with her other hand and he gags awake.

ARTHUR

Huh? What?

AUSTEN

Ms. Beverley's home. Can I go Christmas shopping with her?

ARTHUR

Ah, what, who?

AUSTEN

Ms. Beverley. She's back home and is going Christmas shopping and asked if I wanted to go. Can I?

ARTHUR

Uhhhh, yeah, sure, okay. But take a shower, brush your teeth and change your shirt.

AUSTEN

(kiss - darts off)
Thank you, daddy.

INT. TINSEL TOWERS - HALLWAY

Christmas Present stands outside Santa's office. He puts away the notes, composes himself and enters.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - RECEPTION

Without bothering to acknowledge his entrance, VERNA, Santa's Executive Secretary, directs him inside...

SANTA'S SECRETARY

(pointing)
You're late.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE

SANTA CLAUS stands at the far glass wall, surveying an incredible PANORAMIC VIEW of the glistening NORTH POLE VISTA.

Christmas Present cautiously enters and eases forward like a teenager after curfew. Santa ends the illusion.

SANTA CLAUS

Beautiful, isn't it?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Ahem, yessir.

Santa turns, leans against the glass and eyes Christmas Present stoically for a few beats. The gaze causes him to shift uncomfortably.

This is not central casting's fat and jolly Santa Claus. He is a fit, silver haired executive with a matching goatee. Though casually dressed, he exudes corporate authority.

SANTA CLAUS

I'll assume Claire provided you with notes to save me reminding you where you are.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yessir, she did, sir.

He shows Santa the note cards.

SANTA CLAUS

As for why you're here...

He begins a casual tour of his office. Christmas Present falls in behind with PEN AND NOTECARD at the ready.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Christmas is changing, Present. It used to be simple - girls and dolls, boys and bikes. These days, it's all about video games and telephones. Things we don't make.

He stops at a DISPLAY CASE filled with MEMORABILIA.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

(re: photo)

That was my first workshop.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Is that you, sir?

CU: PHOTO of a FAT SANTA surrounded by ELVES, standing in front of a SHED, a WOOD SLEIGH and a single REINDEER.

SANTA CLAUS

Yeah. A hundred pounds heavier. Back then we only needed one reindeer and a wooden sleigh.

START PHOTO MONTAGE

The PHOTOS show the growth of Christmas Industries over the decades. Ribbon cuttings of large facilities, expanding groups of employee photos, raising of country flags and newer models of Santa's Sleigh.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

We now deliver to one hundred and forty countries. Through shell companies, we manufacture and distribute more toys than any other company in the world.

(MORE)

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If we weren't a non-profit, we'd be bigger than Apple, Amazon, and Disney, combined! Did you know that?

END PHOTO MONTAGE

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Uh, no, sir.
(re: picture)
Who's that?

ANGLE ON: Photo of Charles Dickens.

SANTA CLAUS

Charles Dickens. Remember him?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Uh, no, sir.

SANTA CLAUS

He's the reason you're here.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

How's that, sir?

SANTA CLAUS

The Christmas he loved and wrote about is fading. Like every one else, we've been so concerned with growth we've lost sight of what used to make Christmas the most special time of the year.

(a beat)

I used to climb down every chimney - now I have 'delivery specialists' using analytics and algorithms to blanket a subdivision from a single rooftop. I can't tell you the last time I caught a kid out of bed who should've been sleeping!

(frustrated)

We are losing the hearts and minds of both parents and children alike!

Santa retreats to his desk and examines a LETTER.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

(re: Austen's letter)

Each year I get more and more letters like this.

He hands it to Christmas Present. He quickly reads it.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

May I ask what is it she wants for
Christmas, sir?

SANTA CLAUS

(long contemplative beat)
That doesn't matter. What matters
is that you find a way to reverse
this trend.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Me?

SANTA CLAUS

As my Director of Human Relations,
this falls under your purview.

(a beat; grave)
Either you find a way to get some
results, or, I may be forced to
make a few changes in the coming
year. You catch my meaning?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yessir. I understand, sir. Anything
else, sir?

SANTA CLAUS

(into intercom)
Verna, send in the 'Urgent Review'
file.

A TEAM OF ELVES immediately enter and stack BOXES of letters
at Christmas Present's feet. He opens a lid.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

There must be --

SANTA CLAUS

Twenty-eight thousand, three
hundred and fifty two.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

How am I supposed to review this
many letters, sir?

SANTA CLAUS

Same way I used to. One at a time.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - KITCHEN

Arthur opens a BOTTLE OF WINE and is about to pour a glass.

SFX: The doorbell rings.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - FOYER

Arthur opens the door and hitches at the sight - the natural beauty of Beverley under the glow of his porch light.

ARTHUR

Hey.

BEVERLEY

Hey.

She steps inside and they share a smile and an awkward silence, then hug.

ARTHUR

Welcome home. Austen is upstairs getting ready. How was your flight?

BEVERLEY

My arms are tired, but other than that.

ARTHUR

Wow. Somebody went back in time for that one.

Arthur turns for the kitchen. She follows and eyes the decor.

BEVERLEY

No tree or decorations this year?

ARTHUR

Didn't get around to it.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - KITCHEN

Arthur pours a GLASS OF WINE.

BEVERLEY

That's what you said last year.

He offers her a GLASS.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Better not.

(a beat)

I'll just have a sip of yours.

(taking his glass)

You remind me of my Aunt Sandra - but just the opposite.

ARTHUR

How's that?

BEVERLEY

You never put up a Christmas tree
and she never takes hers down.

(a beat: sips wine)

She says that way she's always
ready for Christmas --

ARTHUR

And I'm always ready for it to be
over.

(a beat)

I can't believe you're crazy enough
to go shopping on Christmas Eve.

BEVERLEY

Contrary to popular belief, the
stores aren't that crowded and you
can get some pretty good late
minute deals.

ARTHUR

You'd get better deals if you
waited until after Christmas.

BEVERLEY

You are such a Scrooge!

Austen runs in.

AUSTEN

I'm ready!

ARTHUR

Come here.

He kneels, inspects her attire and zips up her jacket.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Do daddy a huge favor?

AUSTEN

What?

ARTHUR

Give Ms. Beverley a hard time.

AUSTEN

I'll do my best.

ARTHUR

That's my girl.

He shoots Beverley a satisfied grin.

AUSTEN

I love you, daddy.

ARTHUR

I love you too, sweetheart.

They exchange a kiss. Austen exits but Beverley lingers and they once again share an awkward smile.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

What?

BEVERLEY

Why don't you come with us? It'll be fun. Austen would love that.

ARTHUR

(a beat; contemplates)

Nah. You two go ahead. Make it a girls night out.

That awkward silence again. Beverley smiles and exits.

Alone, he turns and wistfully glances at a MAGNETIC PHOTO on the REFRIGERATOR DOOR.

CU: A woman holding a small child at the beach. A banner reads 'HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY'.

For the briefest of moments, the photo come to life and the woman flashes a contented smile...and a slight nod?

Arthur reaches for the wine glass and sees Beverley's LIPSTICK on the rim. He stares at it for a few beats, then closes his eyes and takes a sip from the same spot.

INSERT BROADCAST

EXT. NORTH POLE - GARLAND SQUARE - NIGHT

Reminiscent of network personalities hosting holiday parades, two perky morning show Elves, KRIS WINTER and HOLLY BUSH, broadcast from an ELEVATED BOOTH.

Their backdrop is a stately THEATER with a MARQUEE emblazoned with 'CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN CELEBRATION'. High above, a giant STAR sits atop a POLE WITH THE COUNTDOWN displayed.

In front of the theater runs a WIDE BOULEVARD lined with BLEACHERS filled with ELVES cheering and enjoying the PARADE and PERFORMANCES.

Surrounding the elevated booth is a ROWDY CROWD OF REVELERS with SIGNS and hand held FIREWORKS. They have been drinking and respond to any and everything.

KRIS WINTER

Welcome back to the Christmas Countdown Celebration here at Garland Square. We're less than two hours away from the long awaited appearance of Santa's sleigh which will be lifting off right here behind us. If you're just joining us, I'm Kris Winter --

HOLLY BUSH

And I'm Holly Bush. This is the one hundred and forty third Countdown to Christmas Celebration. And this year's theme, 'Past, Present and Future', honors the resilience and dedication of everyone who makes Christmas a special occasion.

KRIS WINTER

We've got floats, balloons, marching bands, singers, dancers and more performing tonight.

HOLLY BUSH

Yes we do, Kris, and next up is the multi Snow Globe award winning rapper, 'Ice Flow'. He will be joined by the 'Shelf Elf Dancers', as he performs his hit song, 'Ho-ho-ho', from his latest album, 'Sleigh da Bells'.

The camera swings to the street stage in front of the theater. ICE FLOW, backed by a TEAM OF DANCERS dressed like ELVES ON THE SHELF, launch into their performance.

After a few beats, the camera backs out of the broadcast and into...

INT. CHRISTMAS PRESENT'S OFFICE

Claire sings and dances along with the performance pulled up on her computer screen.

She mutes the sound at the sight of Christmas Present struggling to enter the office while carrying TWO LARGE BOXES. AUSTEN'S LETTER is clenched in his teeth.

CLAIRE
What's all this?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Homework.

He hands Claire the letter and wearily sits.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)
I have to...
(re: note card)
'Increase Christmas spirit in
humans', or this spirit may be
ghost next year.

CLAIRE
I see. Looks like I need to book a
flight south.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
(sits up; concerned)
Why? Where are you going?

CLAIRE
I'm not going anywhere - you are!
(re: his confused look)
Visitations. This isn't anything
new. It's generational. Kids get
frustrated, write a few letters,
leave bad reviews, and you end up
making house calls.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
House calls?

Claire sighs and crosses to the BOOKSHELF, pulls out a BOOK
and hands it to him.

CU: CHARLES DICKENS - 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL'.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (V.O.)
'A Christmas Carol' by Charles
Dickens. Hmmmm, that name sounds
familiar.

Claire flips it open it to a bookmarked page.

ANGLE ON: HIGHLIGHTED PASSAGES with copious NOTES in the
margins.

CLAIRE
It's pretty simple. Ebenezer
Scrooge lacks Christmas spirit.
(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You, Christmases Past and Future, visit and hit him with the 'good spirit, bad spirit' routine. By the time you all leave, he's scared straight, understands why Christmas is so special and turns his life around.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Does it work?

CLAIRE

Always.

Christmas Present stews for a bit. Then...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I like it! When can we start?

CLAIRE

Hard to say. Seeing how busy we are, it's probably best to wait until after the new year - let things settle down.

(a beat)

But, then again, in the book the three Spirits make their visits the night before Christmas --

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I have an idea. Let's do it tonight! That way I'll have some good news to report to Santa tomorrow morning.

CLAIRE

That's a great idea, sir. Why didn't I think of that?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

What about Christmases Past, and Future? Shouldn't we get together and coordinate, strategize, you know, synchronize our watches, that sort of stuff?

CLAIRE

No! Since we're having this discussion, Christmas Future already knows, and in a couple of minutes Christmases Past will know as well. They know what to do. Who we need to inform is Santa. I'll send a memo to his secretary.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

No! I want to tell him. That way
he'll know I'm taking this serious,
showing some initiative and getting
things done. Handling my business!

He launches for the door as Claire watches in amused silence.
He exits, then returns a beat later.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Uhhhh, which line do I follow?

CLAIRE

This one.

She holds up a PAPER STREET MAP with a red line drawn on it.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(glancing at clock)
Santa should be at the sleigh pad.
(handing him the map)
Here.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Thank you.

INT. MALL

Beverley, carrying a tired Austen, guides a CART LADEN WITH
PACKAGES through the EMPTYING MALL.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The mall is now closed. Please
complete your purchases and make
your way to the exits. Merry
Christmas.

EXT. MALL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD locks the mall doors behind Beverley and
Austen.

The Volunteer rings his BELL and calls for alms. Beverley
drops a FEW BILLS in the CASH KETTLE.

VOLUNTEER

God bless you. Merry Christmas!

The Volunteer watches them depart.

EXT. MALL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The Volunteer tosses his GEAR in the trunk of a DILAPIDATED WRECK and glances about suspiciously before getting in.

INT. VOLUNTEER'S CAR - NIGHT

He sits with the CASH KETTLE in his lap, rakes his hands through the illicit haul, then places it on the passenger floorboard next to FIVE more filled cash pots.

He guns the engine and peels out of the lot.

EXT. WAREHOUSES - ALLEY - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: 'It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year'.

The Volunteer's car is backed into a secluded space, partially hidden by DUMPSTERS and INDUSTRIAL SCRAP.

INT. VOLUNTEER'S CAR - NIGHT

The Volunteer drinks a BEER and separates BILLS while singing along with the radio.

VOLUNTEER

It's the most wonderful time of the year!

(a beat)

Definitely the most profitable,
that's for sure!

A breeze begins to stir and soon reaches gale force. It buffets the car and tosses DEBRIS throughout the alley.

VOLUNTEER (CONT'D)

What in the hell...?

The wind subsides as abruptly as it started and a deathly silence settles in.

Spooked, he turns down the music, then winds down the window, listens, and looks around. He tenses at a sound.

SFX: Footsteps.

The sound comes into view. It is a well dressed, buxom woman in red. She stops in the alley and stares in his direction.

Relieved, he turns up the music and exits the car.

EXT. WAREHOUSES - ALLEY

The Volunteer approaches the woman and eyes her seductively.

VOLUNTEER

Well what have we here? A sugar
plump fairy.

He pulls out a WAD OF CASH and shows it to her.

VOLUNTEER (CONT'D)

What say you and me go someplace
nice, and do something naughty.

WOMAN

Since you asked nicely...

She produces a SMALL VIAL of colorful liquid and sprays him with an atomized mist. He gags and staggers backwards.

Under her watchful eye, he twitches as he enters a private world of virtual insanity. From his P.O.V., GHOSTLY IMAGES OF THE NEEDY materialize. They beg for mercy and money and he bids them, come.

He dashes to the car, lugs out the cash kettles and begins sowing money to the imagined. He is soon surrounded by a surreal army of need accepting their share.

And then the money runs out.

Once thankful faces transform into hideous masks of greed that press in on him. He screams in horror as fingers morph into talons that rend his clothes and flesh.

The woman watches with disgust as the Volunteer, caught in a mental hell of his own making, literally tears himself apart.

She turns to exit and the whirlwind picks up again. BLOOD STAINED BILLS and debris fly skyward in the maelstrom before subsiding to the only sound in the alley - the car radio.

MUSIC CUE: 'Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow'.

EXT. FISHER HOUSE - NIGHT

Arthur opens the door to Beverley cradling a sleeping Austen.

ARTHUR

Awww, you tired my baby out?

BEVERLEY

We tired each other out.

They transfer Austen. He notices the BOXES and BAGS piled high in the back seat of her car.

ARTHUR

I see you did your part to help end the recession. Need a hand?

BEVERLEY

I'll manage. But if you feel like helping me wrap gifts --

ARTHUR

(re: his watch)

Whoa! Look at the time. I better get this girl to bed.

BEVERLEY

(laughing, retreating)

Merry Christmas, Arthur.

ARTHUR

You too, Beverley.

BEVERLEY

You too, what?

ARTHUR

You too tall to be one of Santa's elves.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - BATHROOM

Arthur exits the shower and dries off. A thought brings a grin to his face.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - AUSTEN'S BEDROOM

He peeks in and listens to Austen sleeping until he's satisfied she is in a deep sleep.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - KITCHEN

He enters carrying rolls of AGED WRAPPING PAPER and CRUMPLED BOWS. He grabs a CARTON of EGG NOG from the refrigerator.

EXT. DUPLEX - BEVERLEY'S DOOR - NIGHT

Arthur rings the DOORBELL.

BEVERLEY (O.C.)
Who is it?

ARTHUR
It's me, Arthur.

BEVERLEY (O.C.)
Arthur?

Beverley opens the door.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)
Hey? What's up?

ARTHUR
Nothing. Austen's sleeping, re-runs
on TV, so, I decided to accept your
offer.

He reveals the bag of gift wrapping accessories.

BEVERLEY
Is that your private stash?

ARTHUR
(re: Egg Nog)
And private stock.

BEVERLEY
(opens door wide)
You better get in here before
Santa's sleigh falls out the sky
and kills you.

INT. NORTH POLE - PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE

ANGLE ON: LARGE DIGITAL DISPLAY counting down: -1:10:03

With no floor markings to guide him, Christmas Present wanders aimlessly. He consults his map, turning it in every direction. MUSIC rising over the din turns him hopefully in its direction.

MUSIC CUE: Reggae dance hall Christmas song

A TATTOO'ED, DREADLOCKED, RASTA ELF appears. Music blares from a SPEAKER hanging around his neck. He dances while ROLLERBLADING and carrying a LARGE TEDDY BEAR and a CAGED PUPPY. He sees Christmas Present, sets the items down, and speaks with a decidedly Jamaican accent.

RASTA ELF

Christmas Present, wah ya ah seh,
fi youself? Wah gwaan, let mi
guess, yuh been fi loss again, eh?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I'm uh, looking for Santa.

RASTA ELF

Ahhhh, suh yuh wa Big Red?
(pointing)
Him ova there wi dem rude bwoi
looking all about fi him iron bird.
(a beat)
Dat been big man ting, ya know?

Christmas Present stares at him blankly.

RASTA ELF (CONT'D)

Nuh a clue inna dem head. Coo yah,
follow dis yuh bear. Him a guh lead
yuh strait way to Big Red.

Rasta Elf places the teddy bear on the CONVEYOR, then picks up the caged puppy.

RASTA ELF (CONT'D)

Mi a leff, inna di morrows.

The baffled Christmas Present stares at the elf as he skates off toward another CONVEYOR STATION labeled 'HAND DELIVERED GIFTS' and hands the caged puppy off to an ATTENDANT.

Christmas Present runs to catch up with the teddy bear on the conveyor and tracks alongside as it is 3-D LASER SCANNED. MECHANICAL ARMS cut and assemble a CARDBOARD BOX and place the teddy bear inside.

The box is seamlessly wrapped with COLORFUL PAPER, coordinating RIBBON and BOW. QUALITY CONTROL ELVES inspect the gift thoroughly before applying a hand written LABEL.

The gift enters a SEALED CHAMBER and EXTERIOR DISPLAYS show it being digitized into an energy pattern which flows through a large umbilical cable that leads in the direction of ...

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - SLEIGH PAD

... SANTA'S SLEIGH! Sleigh in name only, the glistening red futuristic space craft sits on an ELEVATED PLATFORM. A spaghetti nest of CABLES and HOSES feed onboard preflight preparations. The entire area is a hive of activity as ELFIN TECHNICIANS prepare the craft for launch.

Santa stands beneath a wing alongside SEBASTIAN, his MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR.

In the background, Christmas Present is nearing as he painstakingly traces and follows the path of the DATA CABLE towards the sleigh.

SEBASTIAN

Preflight diagnostics are nearly complete. The defroster had a slight duct leak that's been sealed, and we replaced two worn bushings that was causing that intermittent rub you were hearing. The modification to the auto pilot's hyper drive is --

The data cable enters the sleigh just above Sebastian's head causing Christmas Present to bump into Sebastian - rudely interrupting his report.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Excuse me. Santa! There you are!
I've been looking all over for you.

SANTA CLAUS

And now that you've found me?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Well, I wanted to tell you that, uh, that I listened to what you said and that I uh --

SANTA CLAUS

Was getting ready to fly south for the winter?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yes!

SANTA CLAUS

Excuse us, Sebastian.
(to Christmas Present)
What a coincidence. I'm flying south as well.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Really? Maybe we can go together.

SANTA CLAUS

Thanks, but my flight has a few layovers. Wouldn't want to hold you up.

Santa exits with Christmas Present in tow.

ANGLE ON: Sebastian wiping grease stained hands. His face is a mask of contempt as he watches them depart.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

MUSIC CUE: Christmas instrumental

Beverley's home is as imagined. The themed CHRISTMAS TREE, displayed CARDS, GARLAND, CANDLES, SCENTED PINECONES and STOCKINGS hung by a FIRE. The whole scene looks like it was lifted directly from a Christmas song.

She and Arthur sit across from each other on the floor at a COFFEE TABLE surrounded by GIFT WRAPPING DEBRIS.

A hideously WRAPPED GIFT sits between them.

BEVERLEY

How many bottles of wine did you drink after I left?

ARTHUR

Those who can't create, critique.

She places her PERFECTLY WRAPPED GIFT next to his.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Why do your gifts have to be so perfect?

BEVERLEY

Because I care about the person I'm giving it to.

ARTHUR

What's the point? They're just going to rip all your caring up in about three seconds.

BEVERLEY

I want them to. That tells me they're as excited about getting the gift, as I was giving it.

EXT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

The wind begins to pick up and quickly intensifies.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

SFX: Strong wind

They perk up at the sound of the gale.

ARTHUR
Is that the wind?

Beverley rises and looks through the BLINDS.

BEVERLEY
Yeah, but it's dying down.
(returning)
That was weird. While I'm up, you
want some more egg nog?

ARTHUR
Sure, thanks. You have any rum to
spice it up?

BEVERLEY
Hmmm, that sounds good.

Beverley grabs the glasses and exits.

BEVERLEY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Do you need to go and check on
Austen?

ARTHUR
Naw. I'm sure she's okay. I'd hate
to wake her up.

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - STOCKROOM

CU: Austen sleeping.

The camera pulls back to reveal she is not in her bed. She stirs, wakes, sits up and sees the SPIRIT OF CHRISTMASSES PAST standing over her.

CHRISTMASSES PAST
Hello, Austen.

AUSTEN
Hello. Who are you?

CHRISTMASSES PAST
I'm the Spirit of Christmases Past.

Austen looks around the stockroom filled with BOXES.

AUSTEN

Where am I? Am I dreaming?

CHRISTMASES PAST

In a way. You're at the North Pole.
Santa Claus read your letter --

AUSTEN

(standing)

Santa read my letter?!

CHRISTMASES PAST

Yes. And he wants to meet you.

AUSTEN

Is my daddy here, too?

CHRISTMASES PAST

No. Only you.

Initially excited, Austen grows suspicious and backs away.

AUSTEN

I'm not supposed to talk to
strangers or go anywhere with them
without my daddy knowing.

Christmases Past's tone and facial features soften and take on the kindness of a loving grandmother. She closes the distance with each word - her gaze, hypnotic.

CHRISTMASES PAST

But I'm not a stranger, Austen. I'm
your friend. You know my name and I
know yours. Strangers don't know
each others names, do they?

AUSTEN

No.

CHRISTMASES PAST

And if I was a stranger, would
Santa have let me read your letter?
The one reminding him to bring you
what you really want for Christmas
this year?

AUSTEN

No.

CHRISTMASES PAST

So we must be friends, right?

AUSTEN

I guess so.

She extends a gloved hand.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Of course we are. We're the best of friends. Come.

Austen takes her hand.

AUSTEN

Am I going to meet Santa?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Yes. But first we need to visit another friend who's been dying to meet you.

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - CONTROL ROOM

ANGLE ON: DIGITAL DISPLAY counting down: - 00:53:14

Overseeing a roomful of TECHNICAL ANALYSTS at their respective STATIONS, the LAUNCH SUPERVISOR eyes TECHNICAL DATA displayed on a wall of CONTROL ROOM MONITORS dedicated to sleigh status and launch protocols.

LAUNCH SUPERVISOR

(into headset)

Charging is complete. We are twenty-two minutes away from 'last present' loading. As soon as final gift is verified, delivery route protocol along with weather data will commence sequencing and flight status will be updated to 'go' and we will begin roll out and final countdown.

INT. SALON

Santa listens to the report while sitting in a STYLING CHAIR with a team of STYLISTS at the ready.

SANTA CLAUS

(re: phone call)

Thank you.

He hangs up and hair and make-up begin their tasks. A WARDROBE RACK is wheeled in.

INSERT BROADCAST - CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN CELEBRATION

A giant TOOTH FAIRY balloon tethered by elves is pulled through the main square.

HOLLY BUSH (V.O.)

It's the Tooth Fairy! Folklore states that when human children lose a tooth, they put it under their pillow and the Tooth Fairy visits while they sleep and replace the tooth with money.

KRIS WINTER

Where was she when I was a changeling, Holly? Our next performers turn back the hands of time and honors the past with their adaptation of the Nutcracker and the Mouse King. Written over two centuries ago --

ANGLE ON: A CASTLE BACKDROP is quickly set up and BALLETT DANCERS take their places on the street stage.

HOLLY BUSH

It tells the story of a young girl who is given the gift of a nutcracker in soldier motif that not only becomes her favorite toy, it comes to life on Christmas Eve!

INT. CHRISTMAS PRESENT'S OFFICE

ANGLE ON: Television monitor. The broadcast is muted.

Christmas Present stands before a FULL LENGTH MIRROR adjusting his appearance, while an exasperated Claire tries to brief him.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Hey, I was listening to that.

CLAIRE

Which is why I muted it. We need to go over --

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(re: neckties)

Which one do you like? The one I'm wearing or this one?

CLAIRE

They're both the same, sir.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

No, they are not.

CU: Identical STRIPED NECKTIES.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (V.O.)

This one is red with white stripes,
and this one is white with red
stripes.

CLAIRE

Silly me. I like the red with white
stripes.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Me, too.

He begins swapping out identical ties.

CLAIRE

Can we please review your itinerary
for the Fisher visit?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I've waiting on you.

CLAIRE

(sighs heavily)

Christmases Past will be finished
by eleven-fifty. You arrive at
midnight. Start wrapping up around
twelve-forty five, and leave no
later than twelve-fifty.

She places a PHONE on his desk.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

My cell and home numbers as well as
both locations, there and here, are
programmed in. What I need from you
is a promise not to lose it! The
last time it took us a week to find
you.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I don't remember that.

CLAIRE

You never do! There been a change.
Instead of visiting Austen, you'll
be visiting her father, Arthur.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Why's that? She wrote the letter.

CLAIRE

Because kids are born with Christmas spirit. It can only be ruined by an adult or legal guardian, and since he's the responsible party, you meet with him. His info is all here.

She places a new STACK OF INDEX CARDS next to the phone.

CU: Top card reads, 'Arthur Fisher, Age: 35, Marital Status: Widowed (3 years), Children: Austen, Female, Age: 6

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You have about a half hour, so try and spend some time reviewing. Any questions?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yeah.

He holds up TWO PAIRS of RED FORMAL SHOES.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Oxfords or Brogues?

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR

Christmases Past leads Austen through a winding, dimly lit ARCHAIC STONE CORRIDOR. They stop at an ANCIENT OAK DOOR.

AUSTEN

Is this where your friend lives?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Yes. He's waiting for us inside.

Christmases Past presses her palm to the door. The wood grain begins to twist and morph. Austen steps back in fear and amazement as it roils to life. It's wood grain previews a montage of knotted and tortured faces like Ashley Cooper's and the Volunteer's before the emergence of a relief in the form of the horned, anthropomorphic face of THE KRAMPUS.

The mischievous eyes open and the wood splintered fangs look deliciously at Austen before focusing on Christmases Past.

KRAMPUS

Yuletide ebbs once ev'ry year,
To all about and round yon sphere,
(MORE)

KRAMPUS (CONT'D)

Three Spirits know a secret cheer,
Bring forth by time, tense and tier,
Five words to grant thee access here.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

The present is future's past.

The eyes leer at a fearful Austen then quickly shut. The door eases open.

INT. LABORATORY

The space is filled with science. CHALKBOARDS thick with formulas overlook SHELVES flowing with BOOKS, MANUALS and JARS containing all manner of ANIMAL AND PLANT SPECIMENS. CONCRETE TABLES hold CHEMICALS UNDER HEAT and TUBES DISTILLING FLUIDS.

CAGED ANIMALS, once animated, cower and retreat deep into their cages at the sight of Christmases Past as she leads Austen into the lab.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

(re: chair)

Sit there and be quiet.

AUSTEN

When are --

CHRISTMASSES PAST

(vicious outburst)

I said sit and be quiet!

Austen cowers and does as she is told. Christmases Past scours the lab.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Doctor, come forth!

Dr. Charles Hamilton emerges from the tangle of science. Aged when last seen on the flight, he is now haggard and withdrawn.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Have you made the proper adjustments to the formula?

DR. HAMILTON

Yes, I think so.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

You think so?

She studies him while slowly removing her gloves.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

You're a brilliant man, Doctor. The best in your field - which is why I selected you for this research study.

(a beat)

After three years in development and two failed clinical trials, I can't help but wonder if you've been deliberately sabotaging the formula in order to manipulate outcomes in the hope of frustrating my plans.

(a beat)

Have you?

Silence. She nears and he begins to tremble with fear. Her features and tone soften. She lovingly embraces him.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Come, Doctor. No need to fear. I know, I know, you're tired. As are we all - all tired. But tonight marks the end of our long journey - and I can tell you without evasion, that no one is more appreciative of your efforts than I. No one.

(a beat)

So, how about a little incentive to help you focus on success?

She places a finger to his forehead. He falls into a dream.

INSERT: DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - SCIENCE LAB

Dr. Hamilton has been reduced in size and trapped in a GLASS CASE along with LIVE FROGS. He stares out at a handful of gregarious STUDENTS huddled around a dish as one dissects a live frog.

ANGLE ON: Live frog with exposed heart beating.

A biology TEACHER approaches with another GROUP OF STUDENTS. The frogs scatter leaving Dr. Hamilton to be plucked from the case. He struggles and pleads with the teacher who PITHS and paralyzes him - much to the delight and horror of the students.

Naked and pinned, he screams in terror at the glint of a SCALPEL nearing as a student prepares to dissect him.

DR. HAMILTON

No, no, nooooo.....

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. LABORATORY

DR. HAMILTON

No, no, nooooo.....

Christmases Past touches his forehead. He wakes and whimpers.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Humans believe their dreams can come true but often forget that nightmares are dreams, too.

(a beat)

Do I have your assurance that the formula will work this time?

He whimpers and nods weakly.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

Good. Make whatever adjustments are necessary, because you will be administering this dose yourself.

DR. HAMILTON

Me? To who?

Christmases Past steps aside and points out Austen.

CHRISTMASES PAST

You see, if it doesn't work this time - blood will be on your hands.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - NIGHT

Arthur and Beverley are seated close together on the floor staring into the fire and drinking egg nog.

BEVERLEY

Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?

ARTHUR

No.

BEVERLEY

What do you have against Christmas?

ARTHUR

Which one? Jesus' birthday, Santa's D-Day, or the corporate pay day?

She playfully elbows him.

BEVERLEY

You are such a cynic! I know it's gotten out of hand, I agree with you a hundred percent, but, Austen doesn't understand all that.

(a beat)

Childhood should be the best years of your life. Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, birthdays - those are the highlights. Those are the memories you carry with you forever.

(a beat)

I can still remember all of my Christmases since I was three.

ARTHUR

Since you were three?

BEVERLEY

Yep. When I get married and have kids I'm going to do everything I can to make sure each Christmas is so special they'll always remember them.

ARTHUR

What can I say, you're right.

BEVERLEY

Then what's wrong with letting her believe in Santa Claus? She's going to realize soon enough he isn't real. Why do you have to tell her? What's the harm?

Arthur stares into the fire for a long time.

ARTHUR

(distant)

I don't like lying to her.

INT. LABORATORY

Christmases Past stands behind the seated Austen, her hands gripping her shoulder. Dr. Hamilton slowly approaches with a VIAL OF COLORFUL LIQUID.

CHRISTMASES PAST

What are you waiting on, Christmas?
Let's go! Move it!

He locks eyes with a terrified Austen and balks.

DR. HAMILTON

I, I can't.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Do it!

DR. HAMILTON

I can't. I won't. She's a child for
God's sake! A child! No!

He backs away. Christmases Past releases Austen and stalks after him.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Give me that vial!

DR. HAMILTON

NO!

He retreats into the tangle of science with her in pursuit.

ANGLE ON: Austen steals for the door.

Dr. Hamilton does his best to elude Christmases Past, but quickly finds himself cornered with her closing fast.

He looks around and eyes a VAT of ACID. He hobble over, lifts the lid and holds the vial over it.

Christmases Past halts abruptly.

DR. HAMILTON (CONT'D)

Take her home or I swear I'll
destroy it! It will take weeks to
distill another batch! I don't care
what you do to me! I won't let you
use this on a child! Never!

Christmases Past studies his face, then calls his bluff and takes a step. He pulls the top and spills a generous drop. The acid sizzles. Christmases Past relents.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Alright, Doctor. You win. I'll take her home and return with a more suitable subject to whom you will - and I do mean will - administer the formula, or I promise you that you will re-live every single terrifying memory you possess!

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR

Austen steals into the corridor and freezes at the sight of CHRISTMAS FUTURE.

The red, floor length cape is topped with a large cowl obscuring a darkened face. Austen stares at its stillness, unsure if its real, or a prop.

She touches the cape, eases it open and peers into a dark swirling mist. She is mesmerized by the WISPY PROPHECIES of her many futures. One grows opaque and nears, its fear filled face tries to speak and warn her, then quickly dissolves.

Austen backs away - and into the grasp of Christmases Past.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - NIGHT

Beverley reaches under the tree and hands Arthur a GIFT.

BEVERLEY

Here, that's for you.

ARTHUR

You bought me a gift?

BEVERLEY

Last Christmas when I brought over Austen's gift, you looked like you were going to cry.

ARTHUR

I did not.

BEVERLEY

Yes, you did, and you know it.

ARTHUR

Thank you, Ms. Beverley. I'll put it under my tree.

BEVERLEY

You don't have one, silly. Go ahead, you can open it.

ARTHUR

But it's not Christmas yet.

BEVERLEY

Close enough.

ARTHUR

I guess I better rip it open, huh?

BEVERLEY

If you cared you would.

Arthur destroys the wrapping to Beverley's delight and reveals a LEATHER BOUND, 'CHARLES DICKENS - A DICKENS CHRISTMAS COLLECTION'.

ARTHUR

Thank you! I watch 'A Christmas Carol' every year, but I've never read the book.

BEVERLEY

This has all of Dickens' Christmas stories like, 'The Chimes', 'The Haunted Man & The Ghost's Bargain'.

ANGLE ON: Arthur flips through the pages and stops on the image of the Ghost of Christmases Past visiting Scrooge.

ARTHUR

Thank you.

He lifts her hand and places a kiss on it.

BEVERLEY

You're welcome.

She in kind returns the kiss on his hand.

ARTHUR

I'll have to read this with Austen.
(rising)
Speaking of which, I need to go check on her. Is it okay if I come back, or is it getting too late?

BEVERLEY

I'll be up for awhile.

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - UNDERGROUND STOCKROOM

Christmases Past pushes Austen inside the same stockroom she woke up in.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Remain here until I return. Don't worry, this is all a dream. Soon, you will wake up on Christmas morning and won't remember a thing.

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR

Christmases Past paces, thinking, while Christmas Future hovers nearby. She comes to a decision.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Present's future must come to past.

Christmas Future nods and fades from view.

INSERT: TELEVISION BROADCAST - NIGHT

Chris Winter and Holly Bush offer commentary on a colorful PARADE FLOAT decorated to look like a PILE OF PRESENTS under a tree.

HOLLY BUSH

Nothing represents the present like presents, Kris, and lots of them. Presented by the LGBTQ coalition, this colorful float features presents wrapped in ribbons whose rainbow colors represent life, healing, sunlight, nature, harmony and spirit.

KRIS WINTER

Those six colors also represent the six continents where LGBTQ rights are recognized. At least one of those colors can be found in every flag from the one hundred and sixty countries that currently celebrate Christmas.

HOLLY BUSH

Uh-oh, and who is this popping out of the big box?

ANGLE ON: The lid on the featured present lifts open and the head of a smiling 'Baby New Year' pops up.

KRIS WINTER
Surprise, it's Baby New Year!

The broadcast is switched off.

INT. CHRISTMAS PRESENT'S OFFICE

Claire has her POSSESSIONS packed to leave. Christmas Present is seated behind his desk.

CLAIRE
Are you studying?

Christmas Present shows her his STACK OF NOTECARDS.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Good. I'm headed over to the press conference and after that I'm meeting family at the countdown celebration. Have a safe trip.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Okay.

CLAIRE
And don't worry, sir, you'll be fine. Call me as soon as you get back, I want to hear how it went.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
I will. Enjoy.

CLAIRE
Study your notes!

Claire exits. He holds the stack for a couple beats, then peeps to make sure she is gone. Satisfied, he opens his desk drawer, pulls out a BOOK, and resumes 'studying'.

ANGLE ON: Book cover - "Humans for Dummies".

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - UNDERGROUND STOREROOM

The muffled sounds of production calls Austen's attention towards a GRATED VENT high on the wall.

She surveys her surroundings, then begins climbing. She maneuvers VARIOUS SIZED BOXES to create crude steps as she ascends.

Perched precariously at the top, she has a floor level view of the production facility. Her eyes grow wide at the sight of Elves busy about their work.

AUSTEN

Santa's Elves! I am at the North Pole!

She yells but the din of machinery cancels out her voice.

ANGLE ON: Christmases Past walking briskly through the facility.

Austen flinches and tries to duck at the sight of Christmases Past. The sudden move causes her to lose her grip on the vent, as well as her balance. She tumbles backwards.

Her fall is broken by a large BOX whose taped lid is breached. With the contents agitated, a muffled voice emanates.

CLEOSISTAH (O.S.)

Hi, my name is Cleosistah.

Curious, Austen opens the box and stares at the face of CLEOSISTAH - a life sized doll based on the Egyptian namesake. She reaches in and pulls it from the box.

CLEOSISTAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What's your name?

AUSTEN

Austen.

She squeezes it again.

CLEOSISTAH (O.S.)

Hi, Austen. Do you want to be my friend? I want to be yours.

AUSTEN

I want my daddy. I want to go home.

She takes a seat, hugs the doll and begins to cry.

INT. SOUND STAGE - PRESS CONFERENCE

REPORTERS await Santa's entrance. DEPARTMENT HEADS and DIGNITARIES mill about.

Santa's entrance sends a buzz through the assembly. He acknowledges department heads and sees Claire.

ANGLE ON: Christmases Past spying through an opening in the curtains from the back of the sound stage.

SANTA CLAUS

Is he ready?

CLAIRE

Yes, sir. He should be leaving shortly. He'll do a great job.

SANTA CLAUS

Always does.

Santa climbs the stage and crosses to the PODIUM. He motions for all to sit.

INT. / EXT. - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

MONTAGE: The PRESS CONFERENCE is broadcast throughout North Pole. It is seen in homes, bars, outside screens, workplaces, cell phones, etc.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

Thank you. I would like to thank the wonderful staff, represented here by the various department heads, for another outstanding year. Their commitment to maintaining the high standards of service to a grateful world is why the Christmas tradition continues to captivate and excite children of all ages.

INT. SOUND STAGE - REAR

Sebastian quietly enters and rendezvous with Christmases Past behind the sound stage. Both survey the area suspiciously.

Sebastian hands Christmases Past a REMOTE CONTROL displaying a flashing green light.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

Our efforts continue to succeed because of the love and support we receive from you, the community of elves, fairies, pixies, spirits and sprites, who work tirelessly throughout the year to make this night a special one.

INT. PRODUCTION FACILITY - SLEIGH PAD

The camera drifts past WORKERS watching Santa's speech on the overhead monitors and approaches the sleigh.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

We've been through a lot together.
We've experienced tremendous growth
and often times, that growth seems
inconsistent with our stated goals.

The camera enters the sleigh's undercarriage, follows pipes and wiring to a BLACK BOX wired into the frame. It displays the same flashing green light seen on the remote.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

But I can assure you that in the
coming year, our focus will remain
true, our resolve strengthened, and
the collective desire to share our
cherished family values will
continue to expand until 'peace on
earth, good will towards men', is
no longer a seasonal catch phrase,
but a year round reality.

INT. SOUND STAGE - REAR

Christmases Past lifts the remote and pushes the button.

CU: The remote indicator light turns solid green.

INT. PRODUCTION FACILITY - SLEIGH UNDERCARRIAGE

The black box's display light turns solid green.

INT. SOUND STAGE - REAR

Christmases Past shows Sebastian the remote status and shoots him a sly smile.

SANTA CLAUS

Thank you, and to all, Merry
Christmas!

SFX: Loud applause

Sebastian and Christmases Past silently applaud - each other.

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE

The PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR anxiously glares at one of the many digital readouts hanging throughout the facility.

ANGLE ON: Digital readout - 00:18:23.

PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR
Alright, alright, lets start
wrapping this up! We got a sleigh
to load! Let's go! Let's go!

He hands out ORDERS to an assembled group of STOCK PICKERS. They enthusiastically dart off after receiving their assignments.

The Supervisor hold two final orders and looks to the only picker remaining - Rasta Elf. The Supervisor eyes him begrudgingly, then hands him the tickets. Rasta Elf grabs a HAND TRUCK and skates off.

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR

Off the main floor, Rasta Elf pauses to fire up a JOINT and switch the music from EARBUD to SPEAKER.

MUSIC OVER: Hip Hop Christmas classic.

He continues along his winding route, toking and rapping - the music echoing throughout the corridor.

INT. PRODUCTION WAREHOUSE - UNDERGROUND STOREROOM / CORRIDOR

Austen hears the music, creeps to the door and listens. She backs away when the sound holds steady on the other side.

SFX: The jangle of keys.

Austen frantically searches for a place to hide.~

Rasta Elf searches the RING OF KEYS while continuing to rap and dance.

Austen eyes the open cardboard box. She ditches Cleosistah, climbs inside and pulls the flaps inward.

Rasta Elf locates the right key and enters. He checks his orders, looks around and scans the label on the box hiding Austen, then another nearby. He stacks one on top of the other, lifts both with the hand truck, and exits.

INT. PRODUCTION FACILITY

Rasta Elf retraces his path. He places the first box with ease on the conveyor, but struggles unexpectedly with the weight of Austen's box.

Job completed, he settles back to relight and enjoy his joint. Behind him, the boxes move along the conveyor and are scanned.

SFX: Alarm.

The conveyor halts on the box containing Austen. A monitor flashes 'Hand Deliver!'

Rasta Elf sighs with annoyance, which is further exacerbated by the sight of the Production Supervisor signaling Rasta Elf and animatedly pointing to the digital read display of the remaining time.

RASTA ELF

(sotto)

Hol u medz. Breathe easy, mon.

Rasta Elf lazily glances at the frenetic activity surrounding the 'Hand Delivery' station located a short distance away. He then eyes the label on Austen's box and sees the 'Cleosistah Life Size Doll' label and picture.

Rasta Elf hits the 'CONVEYOR OVERRIDE' BUTTON. The alarm stops and the conveyor restarts. He fires up and tokes as Austen's box is gift wrapped, inspected, tagged, digitized, and streamed onto Santa's sleigh.

PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

(announcing)

That's the last of it, start
shutting it down!

INT. FISHER HOUSE - VARIOUS

Arthur stands in the foyer and takes a moment to smile to himself, then excitedly takes the stairs two at a time. He stands outside Austen's bedroom door, eases it open, and is greeted with a doubtful sight - her empty bed.

ARTHUR

Austen?

He turns on the light, enters fully, and checks the bedroom.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Austen!?

He looks in the bathroom. No Austen. Panic grows as he searches each room. It fully sets in when he realizes that she is indeed, missing.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Oh, God. No!

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Beverley sits smiling and staring into the fire.

Arthur bursts in - his face a portrait of fear.

ARTHUR

Austen's gone!

BEVERLEY

What?! What do you mean gone? Gone where?

ARTHUR

I don't know! She gone! She not in her bedroom or the bathroom or the -
- I searched the whole house and she's gone!

Beverley leaps up, grabs him and runs out of the house.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - FOYER

BEVERLEY

She has to be here somewhere!
Search the house again, I'll look outside. Go!

EXT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

Beverley races into the street frantically calling Austen's name and checking locations. She hugs herself against the cold as the wind begins to pick up.

EXT. GARLAND SQUARE - NIGHT

KRIS WINTER and HOLLY BUSH announce the anticipated moment.

KRIS

This is what everyone has been waiting for! Santa's Sleigh ride and the final countdown!

A block away, SPOTLIGHTS dance over the huge NORTH POLE LOGO emblazoned on HANGAR DOORS. They slowly open and the crowd erupts.

Like the mighty Budweiser Clydesdales, a ceremonial team of EIGHT MUSCLED REINDEER, led by a HANDLER dressed in a RUDOLPH MASCOT UNIFORM, tow the sleigh towards Garland Square.

HOLLY BUSH (V.O.)

They are the ninth generation of Santa's reindeer, and even though they were retired from flight a decade ago, it looks like Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen, can still power the sleigh if needed, Kris.

KRIS WINTER (V.O.)

Lucky for them they won't have to because it is clearly the future of flight. One hundred and forty feet long, eighty feet wide, three stories tall, and capable of circling the globe at sub light speed on a single charge, it is the world's largest sustainable aircraft.

HOLLY (V.O.)

It may be painted red, Kris, but it is definitely green powered!

The sleigh sits at center stage and the reindeer are unhitched and led off.

EXT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

Beverly holds herself against the cold and continues to search the surrounds.

BEVERLEY

Arthur? Where are you? Arthur?! We need to call the police! Arthur!

INT. CHRISTMAS PRESENT'S OFFICE

Christmas Present pockets his notes, then fades out of his office as the clock turns 11:55. A beat later, he returns.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Almost forgot.

He grabs the phone from his desk and fades out again.

EXT. GARLAND SQUARE - NIGHT

The Christmas Star atop the tower on the historic theater begins its final descent.

Led by Holly and Kris, the crowd chants in unison with the digital countdown.

KRIS / HOLLY

Ten, nine, eight, seven,....

The sleigh emits a blast of steam and slowly rises to a safe height above the square.

The clock hits zero and the sleigh shoots off into the night sky to a raucous send off from the crowd.

EXT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

A defeated Beverley, shivering against the cold, makes her way back to the Fisher home.

BEVERLEY

What the heck is going on? Where is everyone?

INT. FISHER HOUSE - KITCHEN

Beverley staggers in and stiffens at the sight of the smiling Spirit of Christmas Present.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Hello. I am the Spirit of Christmas Present. Merry Christmas.

Beverley eyes him with disbelief. He gleefully steps forward, hand extended, to shake. She counters his offer with a well executed self defense maneuver that drops him immediately.

He moans and writhes in pain as he struggles to his knees. She grabs a SKILLET from the HANGING RACK and brains him.

BEVERLEY

Don't move! I'm calling the police!
(a beat)
Spirit, my ass.

She grabs the PHONE, dials '9-1' then freezes in place, her thumb hovering over the final number.

Unable to move her body, her eyes grow wide as he painfully regains his feet.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Uhhhnn, my head! Why did you do that? I wasn't going to hurt you.

He gently wrenches the pot and phone from her hands, and hangs both up.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about this. There's nothing wrong with you, you're just frozen in the moment - for my safety. If I release you, will you promise not to try and hurt me?

(a beat)

Blink your eyes if you do.

She flutters her eyes.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Okay. Now, you promised.

He backs away warily and she reanimates. Off balanced by the release, she grabs the island counter for support.

BEVERLEY

What did you do to me - how did you do that?!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I have the power to freeze things in the present. I didn't want to, but you were going to call the authorities, and maybe hit me - again.

BEVERLEY

Who are you? What are you?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I'm sorry, didn't I say? I'm the Spirit of Christmas Present.

BEVERLEY

A spirit? If you're a spirit, how could I hit you?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

As the Spirit of Christmas Present, I occupy the present. That makes me as real as you.

BEVERLEY

Where is Arthur and Austen? What
did you do with them?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(looking at notes)

I'm assuming you are referring to,
Mr. Arthur Fisher and his daughter,
Austen Fisher?

Beverley nods.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

I didn't do anything with them.

(a beat)

Who are you?

BEVERLEY

Beverley. I live next door.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(a beat - re: notes)

Ahhh. You're the one with excellent
Christmas spirit. It's a pleasure
to meet you.

He smiles warmly and extends his hand. She backs away.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

I came here from North Pole because
of Austen's letter to Santa.

(a beat)

See?

ANGLE ON: He holds up Austen's letter.

Beverley edges closer and snatches it from his grasp. She
inspects it and begins reading.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Her Christmas spirit has been
ruined by...

(re: notes)

Her father, Arthur. I'm here to
meet with him. The Spirit of
Christmases Past has come and gone,
so now it's my turn.

BEVERLEY

Are you trying to tell me that you
are the Spirit of Christmas
Present, like in the book, 'A
Christmas Carol', by Charles
Dickens?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yes! You know Mr. Dickens, too?

It's all too much. Beverley grabs the wine bottle on the island and drains it while he checks his itinerary.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I don't mean to be rude - I'm enjoying our talk since I don't get a lot of chances to talk with humans, I think - but, I do have a lot to go over with Mr. Fisher. Do you happen to know where he is?

BEVERLEY

No. He's gone.
(sotto)
First Austen, now Arthur.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

What do you mean, gone?

BEVERLEY

(on the verge of tears)
Gone! Disappeared. I don't know! He was just here. Austen is missing and we were out looking for her. Now I can't find him and then all of a sudden you show up claiming to be a spirit from the North Pole. I don't know what's going on and I think I'm about to lose my mind!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Oh my. This is highly irregular - I think. Maybe you ought to start at the beginning and tell me all that's happened so far.

EXT. SUBDIVISION - NIGHT

Light snow coats the ROOFTOPS of a suburban subdivision. A flash of light marks the appearance of Santa's sleigh.

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - NIGHT

It is a well tuned operation. Gifts are digitally 'remastered' and quickly BAGGED by INVENTORY ELVES who then hand them off to DELIVERY ELVES.

EXT. SUBDIVISION - ROOF TOPS - NIGHT

Like a well trained band of Christmas commandoes, Elves carrying their bags drop onto rooftops and disperse with lightening speed. They disappear with FULL BAGS into CHIMNEYS and VENT PIPES and quickly reappear again with EMPTY BAGS.

INT. DR. HAMILTON'S LABORATORY

Arthur is seated in the center of the lab - his hands bound behind him. The Spirit of Christmases Past approaches.

CHRISTMASES PAST
Welcome, Mr. Fisher.

ARTHUR
Who are you? Where am I?

CHRISTMASES PAST
I am the Spirit of Christmases Past
and you're at North Pole.

ARTHUR
What? I'm at the North Pole and
you're a Spirit?
(a beat)
You can't be serious.

CHRISTMASES PAST
Why is that? Because spirits and
North Pole aren't real? Just fairy
tales like the Easter Bunny and the
Tooth Fairy?

The Spirit of Christmas Future materializes and hovers behind Christmases Past. Arthur recoils at the visage.

ARTHUR
I must be dreaming.

CHRISTMASES PAST
That's a theory. Since we're in a
lab, let's test it.

She slaps him hard.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)
Not dreaming - wide awake. No
longer a theory - fact.

ARTHUR
You took Austen, didn't you? Where
is she?

CHRISTMASES PAST

Around.

ARTHUR

You didn't hurt her, did you?

CHRISTMASES PAST

Do I look like I'm capable of hurting a child?

(a beat)

As for you....

ARTHUR

Why did you kidnap us? We haven't done anything. There has to be some kind of mistake.

CHRISTMASES PAST

The only mistake was made by you. Your past actions and attitudes towards the Christmas season have qualified you to participate in - how shall I put this - a clinical trial of sorts.

ARTHUR

A clinical trial?

Arthur looks around the lab. He deflates.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Can I please see Austen?

CHRISTMASES PAST

Cooperate fully and as soon as we're finished, not only can you see her, you can both return home and enjoy Christmas with the zeal it deserves.

(a beat)

Doc?

She motions for Dr. Hamilton to bring the formula.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

More facts, Mr. Fisher. Did you know that humans become more anxious and depressed during the Christmas season than at any other time of the year? Psychologists say its the stress caused by the pressures of family gatherings, parties, gift buying, loneliness. Imagine that.

(MORE)

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

A holiday designed to bring so much
joy causing so much adversity.

(a beat)

What if there was a magic elixir of
sorts, something that could cure
seasonal anxiety and make humans so
intoxicated with Christmas, that
not only would it be anticipated,
they'll never want it to end?
Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Dr. Hamilton stands ready with the vial.

ARTHUR

What's that?

CHRISTMASES PAST

The good chemist here has been kind
enough to distill something I call,
'L'esprit de Noël' parfum. To an
ignorant peasant like you - that's
french for 'Christmas Spirit'.

ARTHUR

What's it going to do to me?

She motions for the Doctor to proceed.

CHRISTMASES PAST

It's going to help you,
(singing)
*Have yourself, a merry little
Christmas....*

Dr. Hamilton sprays Arthur. He holds his breath for a beat,
then inhales a lung full.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

*Let your heart be light, from now
on, your troubles will be out of
sight.*

ARTHUR'S POV: The Doctor and Christmases Past fade to black.

BEVERLEY (V.O.)

...and now both of them are gone.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - KITCHEN

Christmas Present feverishly takes notes.

BEVERLEY

That's when I decided to call the police. I came in here, and here you were.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Uh-huh, okay. Wow. That is strange.
(a beat)
What was your name again?

BEVERLEY

Beverley! How many times are you going to ask me that?!

Christmas Present winces. She immediately regrets it.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I apologize. Really, I do.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

It's okay. I understand.
(a beat)
I need to tell you something.

BEVERLEY

What?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I suffer from a condition of sorts.

BEVERLEY

What? What condition?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Since I live in the present, I don't have a past. I mean, I have one - we all do, but, mine belongs to, it's not like she owns it, but, it gets transferred to her.

BEVERLEY

Her? Her who? What are you talking about? Arthur and Austen are missing and instead of doing something about it you're sitting here doodling and babbling like the village idiot!

His recoil causes Beverley to once again apologize.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I didn't mean it.
(MORE)

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Look, I'm tired, I'm scared and I'm worried about Arthur and Austen.

(a beat)

Go on, I'm listening.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Because I live in the present - I run a little short on memory.

BEVERLEY

How short?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Uhm, I'm not sure. Maybe about one to five minutes. A few things I remember just fine, others, well - most, it depends on how stressed I am. And to tell you the truth, I'm kinda stressed right now, uhm...

BEVERLEY

Beverley.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(writing)

Bev-er-ley. Got it.

(a beat)

Do you spell Beverley, with an 'L-Y' or 'L-E-Y'?

She literally bites her hand with frustration.

EXT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The sleigh slowly drifts over ROOFTOPS.

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH

Presents materialize and are BAGGED. Elves come and go with astonishing speed.

We follow one on his mission.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The Delivery Elf lands on the rooftop and springs up onto the CHIMNEY. He hops in with his BAG trailing, but it won't fit.

INT. CHIMNEY - NIGHT

The Elf dangles from the bag and tugs on it without success.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

He re-emerges and tries to push the bag down. It won't go.

DELIVERY ELF

(into headset)

Little Green Four to Big Red One.

(a beat)

Sir, we have a problem.

INT. DR. HAMILTON'S LABORATORY

Dr. Hamilton monitors Arthur's vitals. The effects of 'L'esprit de Noël' is in full effect. Arthur is grinning and looks as if he is high on the most wonderful drug imaginable.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Well?

DR. HAMILTON

It's working, ma'am. Synaptic response to the stimulant is duping brain chemistry into synthesizing inordinate amounts of endorphins, resulting in a virtual sensory experience consistent with clinical goals and your stated expectations.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Will it be permanent?

DR. HAMILTON

The trial dosage was limited to induce temporary euphoria. However, without interventions to mitigate self regulation, increased systemic exposure will result in prolonged sensory experiences, and from early indications - rapid physical and emotional addiction.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Excellent! You da man, Doc!

She unties Arthur. He smiles through dream filled eyes.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas, Mr. Fisher. Tell
me, how does it feel to finally
have a little Christmas Spirit?

He stands, pulls her close, leans her back and kisses her.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - KITCHEN

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
(re: notes)
I should call my secretary, Claire.
She'll know what to do.

Christmas Present pulls out his cell phone.

ANGLE ON: The phone screen is shattered.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)
Awh, man.

BEVERLEY
What's wrong?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
My phone is broken. Geez, she is
going to kill me.

BEVERLEY
I'm sorry. It's my fault.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Huh?

BEVERLEY
It must have broke when you fell
after I hit you.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
You hit me? Why would you do that?

Beverley suddenly remembers his memory issues.

BEVERLEY
Did I say hit? I meant slip. It
probably broke when you slipped and
fell.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Slipped and fell?

BEVERLEY

There was some water on the floor,
but I wiped it up.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yeah. That makes sense. That would
explain this knot on my head.

Anxious to deflect, Beverley hands him her PHONE.

BEVERLEY

Here, use my phone.

He takes it and stares at the blank screen.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Don't remember the number. So what
are we supposed to do? We have to
find them!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Who? Find who?

BEVERLEY

Who have we been talking about?
Arthur and Austen!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Oh, them. Yeah. Just relax. I'll
head back to the North Pole, call
my secretary --

(re: notes)

Claire, and find out what's going
on. I'm sure there's a simple
explanation for all of this.

BEVERLEY

What do you want me to do?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Just wait here --

BEVERLEY

Oh, hell no! I am not staying here
by myself. I'm coming with you!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You can't do that. Humans aren't
allowed in North Pole!

BEVERLEY

Why not?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Because...uhm...

(thumbs through notes)

There has to be a reason, or a law
against it. I just can't remember
what it is right now.

Beverley grabs him by the collar and jerks him close.

BEVERLEY

Well, Mr. Christmas Present, until
you remember what it is, you are
not going anywhere without me. You
need my help to find them, because
you don't even know who to look
for.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yes, I do!

BEVERLEY

Who, then? Who are you looking for?
What are their names?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I'm looking for - I have it right
here.

He holds up his index cards. Beverley snatches the lot and
stuffs them in her bra.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Hey, give me those!

BEVERLEY

You can get them back when we get
to the North Pole.

Christmas Present searches for a response.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

And don't even think about freezing
me and putting your hand in my
pocketbook.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Pocketbook?

She cups and bounces her breasts.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Alright, alright, I'll take you.
But if Santa says something, I'm
blaming everything on you!

BEVERLEY

Santa Claus is real?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I should hope so, he's my boss.

(a beat)

You're gonna need a jacket. You might find it a little cool.

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH

Santa and his CREW gather around the offending GIFT.

SANTA CLAUS

What's in it?

DELIVERY ELF

(re: manifest)

One life-sized, Cleosistah doll, sir.

SANTA CLAUS

New item. Is this the first one we've delivered?

DELIVERY ELF

No, sir. Thirty-five so far. Twenty by vent pipe and fifteen by chimney.

SANTA CLAUS

I suppose the best thing to do is open it up. If we have to, I'll walk it in.

Santa opens the box.

AUSTEN'S P.O.V: Stunned faces peer down on her.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Austen Fisher, is that you?

Austen nods. Santa lifts her from the box. She is wide eyed at the sight of his elves.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Have a replacement sent out and continue with the deliveries while I have a word with my little friend here.

DELIVERY ELF

Right away, sir.

Santa takes a seat with Austen on his knee. He wraps a SHAWL around her.

AUSTEN
Are you the real Santa Claus?

SANTA CLAUS
Yes, I am.

AUSTEN
Why aren't you fat?

SANTA CLAUS
That question is naughty, not nice.

AUSTEN
I'm sorry.

SANTA CLAUS
I'll make a deal with you. Tell me how you got into that box and I'll tell how I lost weight.

AUSTEN
I hid in there.

SANTA CLAUS
Okay, but -- how did you get to North Pole?

AUSTEN
Ms. Christmases Past brought me.

SANTA CLAUS
What! Are you sure it was her?

AUSTEN
She said you read my letter and wanted to meet me.
(a beat)
Don't you have presents to deliver?

SANTA CLAUS
Don't worry about that. I have all the help I need delivering gifts. You must be hungry.
(Austen nods)
Let's get you something to eat and then you can tell me everything.

EXT: SANTA'S SLEIGH - UNDERCARRIAGE

As Santa carries her forward, the camera drops beneath the floor of the sleigh and reminds us of the black box with the green light, wired to the undercarriage.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - KITCHEN

An excited Beverley runs in dressed for heavy weather.

BEVERLEY

Okay, I'm ready. How do we do this?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I don't know.

BEVERLEY

Uhm, let's see. In 'A Christmas Carol', you told Scrooge to touch your robe. Maybe that's how we do it?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Okay.

Beverley rubs his sleeve, hugs herself and closes her eyes.

Christmas Present disappears. Beverley remains.

She fidgets nervously for a few beats.

BEVERLEY

Are we there yet?

(a beat)

Christmas Present? Can I open my eyes now? Christmas Present?

She eases open her eyes and looks around. Disappointment and fear cross her face.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Christmas Present, where are you?

He reappears.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Any other ideas?

BEVERLEY

Yeah.

She wraps herself around him, nearly choking him.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Okay, let's go.

The pair fade from view.

EXT. ARCTIC REGION - DAY

A line of EMPEROR PENGUINS march by in their customary single file alignment, totally oblivious to the two figures that materialize a short distance away.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(sotto)

Oh, dear.

Beverley releases her grip on Christmas Present and surveys the barren wasteland disapprovingly.

BEVERLEY

Is this it?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Kinda.

BEVERLEY

What do you mean, kinda?

(a beat)

Christmas Present? I may be mistaken, but, isn't it supposed to be dark at the North Pole this time of year? And don't penguins live on Antarctica - the South Pole?

(off Present's look)

We're lost, aren't we?

INT. PRODUCTION FACILITY - UNDERGROUND STOREROOM

Christmases Past enters and scans the space.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Austen? Austen Fisher?

(a beat)

Child, I have no time for games, come forth, now!

After a beat, she searches the room, discovers the discarded Cleosistah doll, and emits a snort of disgust.

She stands in the center of the room and raises her arms like an orchestra conductor. The air ripples around her. She moves her hand as if flipping back the pages of a giant book and time begins to reverse.

Rasta Elf re-enters, unstacks the boxes and departs. Austen's hand pushes open the box top.

She has seen enough. She violently slams the imaginary book shut, causing time to quickly reset to the present.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

Foolish child! Now your fate is
truly sealed!

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH

Santa is deep in thought as Austen wraps up her tale.

AUSTEN

Then I heard music and someone
singing outside the door, so I hid
in the box and that's the last
thing I remember.

SANTA CLAUS

Did you hear what Christmases Past
said to Christmas Future?

AUSTEN

No, sir.

Santa nods knowingly, but smiles reassuringly.

SANTA CLAUS

Austen, you are a very brave girl.
To answer your question, the face
you saw on the old door was that of
the Krampus.

AUSTEN

Who?

SANTA CLAUS

The Krampus. He's a disgruntled
employee that I'll deal with later.
(a beat: checks the time)
I promise you we'll get to the
bottom of this, but first, we've
got presents to deliver! C'mon, you
can ride up front with me.

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - COCKPIT

He lifts her into the co-pilot seat.

AUSTEN

Did you get me the Christmas gift I asked for?

SANTA CLAUS

(a beat)

It's not nice to ask someone what they got you for Christmas. You'll have to wait and see when you wake up tomorrow morning.

AUSTEN

Okay. I'm sorry.

He secures her in the co-pilot seat. She looks searchingly outside the cockpit window.

AUSTEN (CONT'D)

Where are your reindeer?

SANTA CLAUS

We don't use reindeer anymore.

AUSTEN

You don't? Why?

SANTA CLAUS

Mrs. Claus is a big supporter of animal rights. So we retired them.

AUSTEN

But don't you get lost without Rudolph guiding you?

SANTA CLAUS

No. We use GPS technology. Where would we be without it?

EXT. GDANSK, POLAND - NEPTUNE'S FOUNTAIN - DAY

Christmases Past and Beverley materialize next to the famous Polish landmark. An ELDERLY TOURIST notices and openly stares. Beverley ushers Christmas Present along while surveying the surroundings.

BEVERLEY

This isn't it, either. Where are we?

Christmas Present is forlorn.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I don't know.

Beverley consults her phone. She uses location services to discover that they are in --

BEVERLEY

Gdansk, Poland!?

(a beat)

South Pole, North Palau, Portugal,
now Poland? I don't travel this
much on my job - and it's my damn
job to travel!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I'm sorry --

BEVERLEY

Now I know what lost luggage feels
like.

(a beat)

Wait, one, minute.

She pulls up a display on her phone.

ANGLE ON: Phone map. Lines trace the route traveled.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Give me your phone.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(handing it over)

Why? It's broken.

She removes his SIM CARD and inserts it into her phone.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

BEVERLEY

Swapping SIM cards. Before it
broke, hopefully your phone tracked
your route to Arthur's place.

(manipulating phone)

There it is!

ANGLE ON: Phone screen. Locations markers at North Pole and Arthur's home.

She selects the North Pole location and coordinates pop up.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

(showing him)

See this? That's where we need to
go. C'mon.

She embraces him and the pair fade out again, leaving the elderly tourist to check his GLASSES.

INT. LABORATORY

Arthur sits under a harsh interrogators light. His euphoria is waning and he squirms like an addict withdrawing.

Christmases Past stalks around the perimeter of the beam.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Before I can declare this clinical trial a success and return the good doctor to his frivolous life, I need to conduct an exit interview.

ARTHUR

Can I get another whiff of --

CHRISTMASES PAST

Shut-up and sit still.

(a beat)

State your full name for the record.

ARTHUR

Arthur Fisher.

CHRISTMASES PAST

And as promised, exactly whom will you be reuniting with, soon?

ARTHUR

My daughter, Austen.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

The effects of 'L'esprit de Noël' is waning. How did it make you feel?

ARTHUR

It made me feel great - like a kid on Christmas morning.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Excellent. You're doing very well, Mr. Fisher. Very well. Just a few more questions.

INT. CHRISTMAS PRESENT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Christmas Present and Beverley materialize. Anxious, he looks around the room for recognition and spots his discarded wardrobe choices. It triggers his awareness and he breathes a deep sigh of relief.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Much better. We're here.

He turns to find Beverley frozen, staring out his window at North Pole at night. The symmetrical sea of shimmering lights laid out like sparkling snowflakes beneath the luminescent curtains of NORTHERN LIGHTS has left her speechless, mouth agape.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

(poking her)

Hey. Are you okay?

BEVERLEY

Oh. My. God. This is the most incredible thing I have ever seen in my entire life!

Sporadic bursts of fireworks draws her eyes to a GLOW OF LIGHTS in the distance.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

What's going on over there? Some sort of party or concert?

He shrugs.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

I want to go.

(a beat; excited)

Ooooo, come here, come here.

She grabs Christmas Present, pulls him toward the window and raises her phone.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I know we're on a mission, but I have to do this. Selfies at the North Pole! Who's going to believe this?

INSERT: Shots of their silly selfies.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

I can't wait to show these to Austen.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Austen? Isn't that who we're supposed to be looking for - or did you forget?

BEVERLEY

Really?

INT. CHRISTMAS PRESENT'S OFFICE - RECEPTION

Beverley enters and studies Claire's DESK.

BEVERLEY

(re: family picture)
Is that your secretary?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I think so. That's uh --

BEVERLEY

(re: nameplate)
Claire. Let's give her a call.
(re: his confused look)
Don't remember the number. Gotta be here somewhere.

Beverley takes a seat behind her desk and notices a FLYER.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Christmas Countdown Celebration. So that's what's going on. I am so there as soon as we get this thing straightened out!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Get what straightened out?

BEVERLEY

You are a piece of work, you know that?

She folds and puts the flyer in her pocket and flicks the head of a BOBBLE HEAD SANTA CLAUS next to the keyboard.

BOBBLE HEAD SANTA (O.C)

Ho-ho-hooooo.

She bumps the mouse and 'wakes' the computer.

BEVERLEY

Hey, look! Arthur's file is on screen!

Christmas Present leans in as she navigates the file.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Birthday, birthplace, family info,
teacher remarks, letters to Santa.

(a beat)

Is there anything ya'll don't know
about us?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Apparently not.

BEVERLEY

Oooh, photos.

ANGLE ON: Computer screen. She clicks on the PHOTOS LINK and laughs while panning through the PICTURES of Arthur as a child.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

That's who we're trying to find?

BEVERLEY

Yep.

(a beat)

Here we go. Find. Maybe this will
tell us where he is.

ANGLE ON: Computer screen. 'Google Earth' pops up. A 'currently located at' marker indicates somewhere in North Pole.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

According to this...he's here!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Where?

BEVERLEY

5820 Pinecone Parkway. What's at
that address? Never mind.

(re: screen map)

We're here and the building is,
(pointing)

Four blocks in that direction.

(typing)

Now....where is Austen?

ANGLE ON: Computer screen. The globe spins awkwardly and the search reveals 'No Location Found'.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Well, at least we know where Arthur is. When we find him, maybe he'll know where Austen is. Come on.

INT. PRODUCTION FACILITY - CORRIDOR

The Krampus looks on as Christmases Past looks at the screen of a HAND HELD TABLET and listens via HEADSET. She smiles, closes the display and hands the items to Sebastian. She pulls open the door and calls inside.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Bring him.

Two burly SECURITY TROLLS escort Arthur from the lab.

ARTHUR

Are you taking me to see Austen?

CHRISTMASES PAST

You'll be joining her soon.

Christmases Past, followed by Sebastian towing a WHEELED CASE, lead the way as the trolls frog march Arthur through the corridor.

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Christmas Future materializes behind Sebastian and Christmases Past. The trolls march Arthur to a STRIPED POLE in front of an IVY COVERED WALL and bind him to it.

ARTHUR

What are you doing? You said I could see Austen and we could leave.

CHRISTMASES PAST

Yes, I did. But that was before I learned our security forces were searching for a dangerous intruder. One matching your description.

ARTHUR

An intruder? Who? Me? You brought me here!

CHRISTMASES PAST

To interrogate you. And after hours of questioning, I finally uncovered your heinous plot.

ARTHUR

What plot?!

CHRISTMASES PAST

The one you've been meticulously planning for years, waiting until your daughter was old enough to aide and abet before executing. After all, you couldn't trust just anyone to help you assassinate Santa Claus!

ARTHUR

Assassinate Santa Claus? What!? That's crazy!

CHRISTMASES PAST

I agree. You would have to be crazy to poison a child's mind with so many lies about Santa that she would sacrifice her life to sabotage his sleigh.

ARTHUR

You said she was here!

CHRISTMASES PAST

She was, until she cleverly slipped past our security and stowed away on Santa's sleigh. I have to give it to you, Mr. Fisher, your planning and execution was, I dare say, most impressive, especially for a human. I would never have imagined such a crime was even possible - had you not confessed to it!

ARTHUR

I did not confess to anything!

CHRISTMASES PAST

Are you sure about that?

Sebastian hands her the tablet. She crosses to Arthur and cues up the video for him.

INSERT: VIDEO

The harsh lighting and expertly edited cuts has created a visually devastating piece of evidence.

CHRISTMASES PAST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What is your name!

ARTHUR (O.S.)
Arthur Fisher.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (O.S.)
You couldn't have pulled off a
crime of this magnitude without an
accomplice! Who helped you?

ARTHUR (O.S.)
My daughter, Austen.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (O.S.)
You are an unspeakably evil man to
involve a child in your wicked
plans. Surely there must be some
regret on your part. How do you
feel knowing that you are
responsible for the death of Santa
Claus?

ARTHUR (O.S.)
It made me feel great - like a kid
on Christmas morning.

END VIDEO INSERT

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - COURTYARD - NIGHT

ARTHUR
You manipulated my words! You're
trying to frame me! I want a
lawyer! I'm not saying anything
else unless I have a lawyer
present. I know my rights!

CHRISTMASSES PAST
You don't need a lawyer. Lawyers
are for trials. You're not going on
trial. You're not even being
charged with a crime.

ARTHUR
I'm not?

CHRISTMASSES PAST
No, doofus! How can you be charged
with a crime and go on trial - when
you were shot and killed trying to
escape!

Christmases Past and Sebastian enjoy a hearty laugh. Even the
stoic faced security trolls manage a snicker.

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Beverley and Christmas Present stand outside the main entrance.

ANGLE ON: Business moniker and address.

BEVERLEY

Christmas Industries. 5820 Pinecone
Parkway. Arthur's in here
somewhere.

Christmas Present tries the GLASS DOOR.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Locked. What do we do now?

BEVERLEY

(looking around)
There's got to be another way in.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Why don't I just transport us
inside?

BEVERLEY

Because the Captain has turned on
the 'Fasten Seat Belts' sign, so
everyone needs to remain seated.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

What does that mean?

BEVERLEY

It means, no!
(a beat)
Explain something to me. I know
you're real...
(she pokes him)
But you can also disappear. So,
can't you fade out just enough to
reach through the glass and unlock
the door?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Hmmm, I don't know. Never thought
about it, at least I don't think I
have.

BEVERLEY

Well? Try it?
(a beat)
But do it slow.

He begins to incrementally fade.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)
Okayyyy...keep going...a little
more, and stop! That ought to do
it.

She waves her hand through him.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)
Eww. That's weird. You feel that?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
No.

BEVERLEY
(re: door)
Okay, try it.

He reaches through the glass door to both of their delight.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)
Boom. Now just walk inside and open
the door.

He passes through, but once inside, cannot manipulate the
lock in his semi-transparent state. Beverley shouts
instructions.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)
You gotta get real - to grab and
open the lock, get real.
(re; his confused look)
Make yourself present! You're see-
through. Get solid!

He finally understands and solidifies.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)
Yes! Good. Now open the door!

He unlocks the door and ...

SFX: Security alarms sound.

Spooked by the ALARM and SECURITY LIGHTS, both panic. He
tries to run, but forgetting his solid state, slams headlong
into the glass door, nearly knocking himself unconscious.

Beverley rushes in and helps him to his feet. Both flee into
the night.

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - ALLEY - NIGHT

Beverley holds a large SNOWBALL to Christmas Present's forehead while trying to stifle a laugh.

BEVERLEY

I gotta give it to you, Present.
You know how to show a girl a good
time.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I'm glad you find this amusing.

BEVERLEY

(laughing)
I'm sorry.

She removes the snowball and kisses the spot.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Better?
(a beat)
There's gotta be another way in.
Arthur is around here somewhere.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Who?

BEVERLEY

(a beat; sigh)
C'mon, let's find another way in.

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Sebastian removes an ORNATE WOODEN BOX from his wheeled case. He opens it and hands Christmas Past a VELVET SACK.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Thank you, Sebastian.
(re: Arthur)
You know what the biggest perk of
living and working in North Pole
is?

ARTHUR

Let me guess - the weather?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Now that is funny! Even in the face
of sure death, you maintain a sense
of humor. I like that. Humor is the
refuge of the damned.

(a beat)

(MORE)

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

Nope, it's not the weather - it's the toys! You wouldn't know it to look at me, but I love toys, especially, what do you humans call them - the 'old school' ones.

She opens the sack and beams at the sight of a VINTAGE NUTCRACKER in SOLDIER MOTIF.

CU: Nutcracker Soldier.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

These are my favorites. Look at the details. Hand carved, hand painted, such a handsome little devil!

(a beat)

Can't buy this at Walmart.

She removes a NECKLACE holding a KEY, winds the nutcracker and sets him down.

To the cadence of a NUTCRACKER DRUMMER set up by Sebastian, the soldier shoulders his rifle, marches into position, faces Arthur, and snaps to attention.

She claps and screeches with delight.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

Omigod! He is so friggin' cute!

ARTHUR

Do squirrels use your head to store their nuts? Because you are certifiably crazy. You're going to order toy soldiers to shoot me?

CHRISTMASES PAST

Of course not. Quit being stupid!

Sebastian hands her a LARGER VELVET SACK. She opens and shows Arthur a NUTCRACKER GENERAL wielding a sword.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

He's giving the order.

She hands Sebastian the General and he in turn hands her a BLINDFOLD.

CHRISTMASES PAST (CONT'D)

Blindfold?

ARTHUR

No, thank you. I want to see everything so that when I wake up, I'll have a great story to tell Austen. I just hope I remember everything.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Well at least one of us will. You know what happens when you die in your dreams?

(a beat)

You wake up dead.

The Nutcracker Drummer plays a rimshot.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Any last words - musings, confessions...reflections? How about something witty for the head stone like - 'Here Lies Ebenezer Screwed'?

The Nutcracker Drummer plays another rimshot. She laughs at her own joke as Sebastian winds the General and sets it down. It marches into position to the drum cadence. They retreat to a safe spot alongside Christmas Future.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Time is the thief of memories, Mr. Fisher. Unfortunately, you sir, are out of both.

Arthur takes a deep breath and steels himself.

ARTHUR

(sotto)

I love you, Austen. Wherever you are.

The General raises his sword and speaks in a raspy, mechanical voice.

NUTCRACKER GENERAL

To the ready...

The line of nutcracker soldiers raise their weapons.

NUTCRACKER GENERAL (CONT'D)

Take your aim...

(a beat)

Fuh..., fuh..., fuh...

He is stuck. His raised sword arm jerks with each attempt to say 'Fire'. Sebastian picks up and inspects the toy. He finds nothing amiss.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Hand it here.

She inspects the toy, then a realization crosses her face. She scans the courtyard.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Christmas Present!? I know you're there, come forth, show yourself!

(a long beat)

If you don't come out, I will give the order to blast this fool myself. Your silly little parlor tricks have no effect on me!

After a beat, Christmas Present and Beverley emerge from the tangle of ivy.

ARTHUR

Beverley!

Both are immediately surrounded by SECURITY TROLLS.

EXT. GARLAND SQUARE - BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

Kris Winter and Holly Bush sit on their familiar platform overlooking the crowd. Hand held FIREWORKS are everywhere.

KRIS

This crowd is ready for the fireworks finale!

HOLLY

Organizers promise this year's display will be the biggest and most spectacular, ever!

KRIS

Santa should be wrapping up his deliveries in a matter of moments. And the light show is slated to begin the instant his sleigh touches down.

CROWD

Touch-down! Touch-down! Touch-down!

EXT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - AFRICAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

The sleigh drifts away from a GROUP OF HUTS.

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH

The atmosphere is that of a championship winning locker room. PLASTIC SHEETING cover the CONSOLES. The crew dons GOGGLES in preparation. A delivery elf leaps onboard and announces...

DELIVERY ELF

Last gift delivered!

MUSIC CUE: "What You Want For Christmas" by Quad City

Let the after party begin! They celebrate with sprays of CHAMPAGNE, music and dance.

JUMP CUTS: The elves form a 'Soul Train' style dance line and perform. Austen is right at home with them and joins in the festivities, as does Sana.

INT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - COCKPIT

AUSTEN

Are you taking me home, now?

SANTA CLAUS

After I drop off the crew we need to let your daddy know where you are. Then you and I can sort a few things out.

(a beat; pointing)

I'll let you do the honors. See that switch right there? It's on 'delivery' mode. Flip it to 'cruise' and we'll be on our way home.

CU: Austen flips the switch.

EXT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - UNDERCARRIAGE

The light on the ubiquitous black box turns from green to solid red and reads 'ARMED'.

EXT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - AFRICAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

The sleigh darts off into the night sky.

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Christmas Present angrily pushes through the security trolls.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You want to explain what's going on here?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Gladly. Justice is being served. Mr. Fisher is about to be executed for his part in a criminal conspiracy to assassinate Santa Claus!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Oh.
(a beat)
Okay.

BEVERLEY

NO, Christmas Present - it's not okay! It's a lie! Arthur wouldn't hurt anyone!

CHRISTMAS PAST

Then why did he confess?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT / BEVERLEY

He confessed?

ARTHUR

I did not confess!

BEVERLEY

Then what's she saying?

ARTHUR

She wants Santa dead and is trying to frame me and Austen for it. Why would I try to kill him? I don't even believe in Santa Claus!

Everyone - sans Beverley - let's out a gasp of horror. Even the soldiers furrow their eyebrows in disapproval. Christmas Present is particularly offended.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

That sentiment may be common place in your cynical world, Mr Fisher, but denial of Santa's existence is considered a serious matter here in North Pole!

(MORE)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

You would do well to never utter
such blasphemous and slanderous
words, again!

(to Beverley)

Even I remember that!

ARTHUR

Okay, okay, I'm sorry, he's real.
But why would I want to kill him?
What's my motive?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Your lack of Christmas spirit!
That's why Christmas Present
decided to visit you in the first
place and enlisted our aide. Isn't
that right, Christmas Present?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Yes.

(to Beverley)

She is right about that.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

I'm right about everything. But, in
the interest of justice, I will
delay his execution until you have
a chance to review the evidence.
Unlike Mr. Fisher, it does not lie!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Fair enough.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Sebastian, please take Christmas
Present and give him full access to
all of the evidence.

SEBASTIAN

Right away, ma'am.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(to Beverley)

Stay here, I'll be back in a little
while. Don't worry, I'll get to the
bottom of this.

BEVERLEY

Are you sure? I can come with you
if you want.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

No. It's okay, I'll be back soon.

Sebastian departs with Christmas Present in tow. Christmases Past eyes Beverley quizzically.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

I don't believe you've had the pleasure. I'm --

BEVERLEY

The Spirit of Christmases Past, I know who you are! Why are you doing this?

ARTHUR

She's planning to market some kind of spray that gives humans Christmas spirit.

BEVERLEY

What? Humans already have lots of Christmas spirit.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

(re: Arthur)
He doesn't.

BEVERLEY

Well, maybe not all, but, enough. What's this really all about?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Power. Control.

BEVERLEY

Control? Of what?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

The biggest brand in the world, darling, Christmas!

BEVERLEY

You can't control Christmas. It belongs to everyone.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Yes, it does. And what has everyone done with it? Christmas used to be twelve wonderful days of festivity. It was a time of joy and renewal of spirit. It was a time for charity and caring for your fellow man. Those twelve days have now turned into twelve weeks!

(MORE)

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Christmas is no longer a holiday - it's a 'holiday season' with displays in stores before Halloween candy. The most anticipated time of the year starts so early and last so long it has become loathsome and most humans can't wait until it's over.

ANGLE ON: Arthur dips his head knowingly.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Our sole purpose here is to serve mankind. But your souls are so twisted with greed that Christmas is nothing more than another opportunity to make money. Our greatest gift is hope for tomorrow, but since you humans no longer appreciate our gift, we'll just take a page from your book - return it and keep the money!

BEVERLEY

You're right. Christmas is over commercialized. We are selfish and greedy and have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas. But that's no reason to ruin it. We can change.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Change?! Why would I want you to change when I can profit from it? You think Christmas starts earlier and earlier each year? Wait until I take over - it's never going to end, and you won't want it to.

ANGLE ON: The bottle of 'l'esprit de Noël' parfum.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Look upon your future, child. With this, everything changes. It will hasten humanity's turn into what they are already becoming, mindless corporate cash machines happily spending their way into debt, because after all, what is Christmas without expensive gifts? With Santa out of the way, and Christmas Industries under my control, we will drop the non-profit status and enter the marketplace.

(MORE)

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

We have the technology to manufacture and distribute more goods in a day than all of China and Mexico in a year! We'll go public and be bigger than the top ten of the Fortune 500 combined! And little old me will be the majority stockholder.

(a beat)

If you're nice, I might gift you a few shares of the initial public offering.

BEVERLEY

That's a stupid plan. It will never work.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Don't think so? Ask Ebenezer, he's sampled the goods.

Christmases Past lifts the bottle for Arthur to see and shakes it.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Yoo hoo. Want another whiff?

He eyes it with obvious desire. Beverley's spirit fades.

BEVERLEY

Oh, Arthur.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Ahhhh, Dr. Hamilton is right, the scent is quite addictive.

BEVERLEY

(a beat - thinking)

Dr. Hamilton? Dr. Charles Hamilton?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Yes - your lost passenger. Good memory.

BEVERLEY

Where's Austen?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Stowed away on Santa's sleigh.

BEVERLEY

What's going to happen to her?

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Sadly, she will suffer the same fate as Santa. Had she listened to me, both she and her father would be home by now.

BEVERLEY

No, no, no. This cannot be happening. This has to be a dream, it can't be real.

CHRISTMASSES PAST

But it is.

Christmases Past's face grows hard and cold. She leans in close and extends a laced finger for emphasis.

CHRISTMASSES PAST (CONT'D)

Unfortunately this isn't a movie, a video game, book, or a dream - it, is, life, and will soon be death for Mr. Fisher, Santa, and regrettably, Austen. As for you and the brilliant Dr. Hamilton, you will be returned to your past where neither will be the wiser and join my flock of sheep to be forever fleeced.

BEVERLEY

No, you're wrong. Christmas Present will never let that happen!

CHRISTMASSES PAST

Christmas Present? Is that who you're depending on to save you?

INT. PRODUCTION FACILITY - UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR

Christmas Present follows Sebastian through the maze of stony corridors.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Excuse me, what was your name again?

SEBASTIAN

Sebastian, sir.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Weren't you supposed to be showing me something, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN

Yes, sir. I'm showing you the shortcut to the launch pad to see Santa's return.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

That's right! Santa should be returning any minute now. I don't want to miss that.

Sebastian stops and points out the directions.

SEBASTIAN

And you won't if you follow this corridor until it ends, go up the stairs and through the door. Can't miss it. You should have an excellent view from there.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Follow this path, up the stairs and...?

SEBASTIAN

Through the door and straight ahead.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Follow the path, up the stairs and through the door. Got it. Thank you!

SEBASTIAN

My pleasure, sir. Merry Christmas!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Merry Christmas to you, too, uhhh...

SEBASTIAN

Sebastian.

Sebastian watches him depart.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

(sotto)

What an idiot.

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Sebastian returns and takes his place next to Christmases Past.

BEVERLEY

Where's Christmas Present?

SEBASTIAN

Chasing a Christmas goose.

Christmases Past and Sebastian laugh. Beverley runs to Arthur, hugs him tight and begins to cry.

ARTHUR

Hey, hey, stop that. This is just a dream.

BEVERLEY

It doesn't feel like it.

ARTHUR

That's because it's my dream and you're in it. Right now, I'm sitting next to you in front of the fireplace where it's cozy, and warm. I drank a little too much rum and dozed off and as soon as I wake up, I'll tell you everything.

BEVERLEY

Promise?

ARTHUR

I promise.

(a beat)

I'll even tell you how much I enjoy having you as a neighbor, and how I miss you when you're away, and how I count the days until you return - because I'm in love with you - and have been for a long time.

Beverley is stunned, but knowing.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'll leave that part out.

BEVERLEY

Don't. You. Dare.

She kisses him hard.

EXT. GARLAND SQUARE - NIGHT

The crowd is going wild. The official countdown to Santa's return has begun on the LARGE DISPLAY.

Kris Winter and Holly Bush lead the crowd as they countdown in unison with the display.

EXT. PRODUCTION FACILITY - COURTYARD - NIGHT

The security trolls escort Beverley away as Christmases Past resets the Nutcracker General. He marches into position.

The countdown from the crowd can be heard rising in the background.

NUTCRACKER GENERAL

To the ready!

Arthur looks skyward and tracks a bright light streaking across the sky.

NUTCRACKER GENERAL (CONT'D)

Take your aim!

Beverley's hands are clasped tight and her tear filled eyes shut as she rocks in place and intones...

BEVERLEY

Remember Arthur and Austen,
remember Arthur and Austen,
remember Arthur and Austen...

CROWD (O.S.)

...three, two, one...

GENERAL

FIRE!

An IMMENSE FLASH, SONIC BOOM, FIREWORKS and a LARGE EXPLOSION coincide with the soldier's rifle reports - and mark the end of Santa, Arthur and Austen.

EXT. NIGHT SKY

The camera rises above the smoke from the fireworks and finds an airplane creeping along high in the clear night sky.

CHYRON: The 'Past'.

INT. AIRPLANE - GALLEY

Beverley holds the PASSENGER MANIFEST while staring trancelike across the cabin at the seated Dr. Hamilton.

PENNYE

Bev? You okay?

BEVERLEY

Huh? Yeah, I'm fine. Just a little
deja-vu.

PENNYE

Your deja-vu have a friend? I'll
settle for a crazy cousin if he's
fine.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - LATE NIGHT

Beverley and Penny, along with a TRIO of other FLIGHT
ATTENDANTS, pull CARRY-ON'S through the emptying terminal.
The walls are lined with PRINT ADS and DISPLAYS hawking the
Christmas season and events.

PENNYE

We're going out for drinks later
on. You ought to come with us.
We're thinking about going to that
new bar that just opened on King
Street....

Penny's voice fades as Beverley slows at the sight of a
print ad showing a woman holding a bottle of holiday
fragrance in much the same way Christmases Past held
'l'esprit de Noël'.

PENNYE (CONT'D)

...I heard it's pretty cool and
people say that the sushi there is
incredible. I can pick you up if
you want...

The next ad stops Beverley dead in her tracks. A solitary
ornate Nutcracker Prince is featured on a POSTER for
Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite ballet.

CU: The face of the Nutcracker.

PENNYE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Bev? Beverley!?

BEVERLEY

Huh?

PENNYE

You okay? I'm worried about you,
girl. You've been out of sorts the
entire flight.

BEVERLEY

I know. I'm just --

PENNYE

You should come with us tonight,
have some fun, unwind.

BEVERLEY

Thanks, but, I think I'll stay in.
Maybe I just need to rest.

PENNYE

Alright. I'll call you later to
check on you. See if you change
your mind.

INT. UBER - FREEWAY - NIGHT

Beverley sits listlessly in the back seat. Christmas music plays on the radio as she stares aimlessly at the city drifting by.

A bump jiggles the head of a BOBBLE HEADED SANTA CLAUS on the dashboard and draws her attention.

CU: Santa's bobbling head.

BOBBLE HEAD SANTA (O.C)

Ho-ho-hooooo.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - BATHROOM

She remains lost in thought under the SHOWER.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - KITCHEN

She pours a GLASS OF EGG NOG and after a beat, adds a SHOT OF RUM.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

She turns on some CHRISTMAS MUSIC, STARTS A FIRE, sits amidst UNWRAPPED GIFTS and tries to wrap one. The outcome is hideous. Frustrated, she stares at the mess and gives up.

She turns off the music, turns on the TELEVISION and channel surfs. An old B&W version of 'A Christmas Carol', starring Alistair Sim catches her attention.

INSERT: TELECAST

JACOB MARLEY

I am here tonight to warn you. You
will be haunted by three Spirits.
For your own sake, remember what
has passed between us! Remember!
Remember!

ANGLE ON: Beverley staring intently at the broadcast.

BEVERLEY

(sotto: hypnotic)
Remember. Remember.

SFX: Home phone rings.

The ring snaps Beverley out of her trance. She lets the
ANSWERING MACHINE pick up.

ANSWERING MACHINE (O.S.)

Hey, this is Bev. At the sound of
the tone, leave a message.

PENNYE (O.S.)

Hey, Bev, it's Penny. Been trying
to text and call your cell. Must
have it off. Call me if you're
still up and want to hang out. Bye.

Curious, she locates her CELL PHONE and sees that it is
indeed off. She turns it on.

CU: The screen displays, 'Network Unavailable - Invalid SIM
Card'.

Confused, she removes the SIM CARD and examines it.

CU: It contains a white logo on a red background that reads
'NPNet' and a snowflake graphic.

She replaces the SIM card, intent on accessing its contents.
The info is sparse and only reveals three apps - 'CONTACTS,
MAPS, and PHOTOS'. She opens 'Contacts'.

CU: Screen shot of a single entry for 'Claire', home and
work, followed by digits that make up no phone number
combination she is familiar with.

She opens 'MAPS' and sees the various locations traveled by
Christmas Present.

CU: Screen shot of Maps location arrows. She selects the
Charleston location and sees the address.

BEVERLEY
(sotto)
51 Carolina Place?

Next, she pulls up PHOTOS and gasps at the sight.

CU: Her SELFIES with Christmas Present.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)
What the --

Disbelieving, she zooms in for a closer look and scans the background details. Her attention is drawn to the jacket she is wearing in the photo.

She rises and heads for the foyer.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - FOYER

She uneasily approaches the COAT RACK and removes a COUPLE GARMENTS until the jacket in the photo is revealed.

She stares at it, then apprehensively reaches into a pocket.

CU: A folded piece of paper.

She slowly unfolds the 'Christmas Countdown Celebration' flyer and studies it for a few beats.

Spurred on, she searches another pocket and pulls out a SIM card and then - a stack of index cards.

CU: Christmas Present's INDEX CARDS.

She thumbs through the cards and inhales sharply at the card containing Arthur's information: His name, address, age, marital status, and child, daughter - Austen Fisher - Age 6.

Beverley is shaken to her core by the revelation.

BEVERLEY
Arthur Fisher, Austen Fisher.
(a beat)
Remember Arthur and Austen.

Fear and anticipation takes hold. She reaches for the last clue to the unravelling mystery that she knows is there.

She retrieves Austen's letter to Santa. Tears accompany the revelation.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Omigod. It wasn't a dream. It was real. It was real. It really happened.

EXT / INT. - STREETS / CAR - NIGHT

Beverley speeds through a familiar traffic route to a future destination - her home on Carolina Place. She turns onto the street and slows.

EXT. DUPLEX - STREET - NIGHT

A FIRETRUCK and AMBULANCE block the street. NEIGHBORS huddled in ROBES and COATS against the cold watch with grave concern from their front lawns and the sidewalk.

Beverley parks and smirks at the irony. The Fisher side of the duplex is brightly lit and decorated, while her future half displays only a single porch light.

Beverley perks up as the front door opens and TWO EMTs wheel out a GURNEY hosting an ADULT BODY. They load it into the AMBULANCE and depart.

Arthur, carrying a SMALL CHILD, races to his CAR and follows the ambulance.

Beverley tails in behind him.

EXT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Beverley parks and watches as Arthur rushes into the HOSPITAL ER with Austen.

She contemplates her next move for a few beats.

BEVERLEY

Don't do it, Beverley. Don't do it.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - CHECK-IN DESK

Beverley enters the ER.

BEVERLEY

Excuse me.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you?

BEVERLEY

I'm looking for Camille Fisher. She was just brought in by ambulance.

RECEPTIONIST

Are you a member of the immediate family?

BEVERLEY

Yes. Arthur and Austen should be here already.

RECEPTIONIST

They are. She's in pod fifteen.

She hands Beverley a VISITORS PASS.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

There's a waiting room a few doors down the hallway.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM

Beverley enters and sees Austen seated nearby with a COLORING BOOK under the watchful eye of a CONCIERGE.

She approaches cautiously and takes a seat close to Austen that allows her to spy Arthur through a window, pacing outside an EXAM BAY. NURSES and DOCTORS enter and exit.

BEVERLEY

Hi, what's your name?

AUSTEN

Austen.

BEVERLEY

I'm Beverley. You doing okay?

AUSTEN

My mommy's sick.

BEVERLEY

I know.

AUSTEN

Is she going to be okay?

BEVERLEY

I don't know. The doctors here are really, really good. They are going to take good care of her.

ANGLE ON: A DOCTOR exits the bay and escorts Arthur a short distance away. Physically deflated personnel exit the bay and avoid his eyes. The body language from both is painfully obvious - Camille has died.

Beverley moves quickly to distract Austen.

BEVERLEY (CONT'D)

Hey, there's a Mother Goose book.
Do you want to read this together
while we wait for your daddy?

AUSTEN

Okay.

Beverley repositions Austen to block her line of sight and begins reading. While she reads, she steals quick glances at Arthur as he comes to grips with what has happened.

Crippled with emotion, Arthur begins the agonizing trek towards his daughter.

BEVERLEY

Austen, I need to make a call, but
your daddy should be here soon.

AUSTEN

I can see my mommy?

BEVERLEY

I hope so. Bye.

AUSTEN

Bye.

Beverley moves a few seats away, but remains within earshot. She turns her back, pulls out her PHONE and feigns making a call.

Arthur enters, kneels and begins putting on Austen's JACKET.

AUSTEN (CONT'D)

Is mommy okay?

ARTHUR

(a long beat)
Mommy's going to be fine.

ANGLE ON: Beverley's face as she eavesdrops.

AUSTEN

Can I see her?

ARTHUR

No, not right now, sweetie. It's late and the doctor wants her to rest. She wants you to know that she loves you.

AUSTEN

Is she coming home for Christmas?

The weight of the question crushes Arthur. He hugs her close to hide his face and fights back tears.

ARTHUR

Don't worry, sweetie, she'll be there with us.

ANGLE ON: Beverley is devastated. She understands now.

BEVERLEY

(sotto)

I don't like lying to her.

Arthur exits carrying Austen. She looks over his shoulder, sees Beverley and waves good-bye. Beverley puts on a brave face and waves back, then breaks down in tears.

EXT. DUPLEX - STREET - NIGHT

Beverley sits parked down the street watching Arthur. He stands silhouetted against his elaborate Christmas display.

He begins to methodically unplug the lights, section by section, until the exterior goes dark.

He reenters the home, and a couple beats later, the Christmas tree is turned off.

Christmas in the Fisher home has been extinguished.

ANGLE ON: The porch light illuminating a 'FOR SALE' sign on the other half of the duplex.

INT. BEVERLEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

MUSIC CUE: 'The Piano Guys - O Come, O Come, Emmanuel'

Beverley sits at her COFFEE TABLE with a GLASS OF WINE and a LEGAL PAD. Sprawled next to her is Christmas Present's index cards, the SIM card, the Christmas Countdown Celebration flyer and Austen's letter.

ANGLE ON: Beverley begins writing, "Dear Santa, my name is Beverley Tynes. I live at ...

When finished, she inspects the MANY PAGES, and along with everything else, places it into a LARGE ENVELOPE addressed, 'Santa Claus, North Pole'. She adds in red marker, 'Urgent Review', and underlines it.

EXT. MAIL FACILITY - NIGHT

Beverley places the LARGE ENVELOPE in the seasonal 'SANTA'S MAILBOX' outside the mail facility, then looks skyward, searching the clear night sky.

CHYRON UP: "THE PRESENT"

EXT. CHRISTMAS INDUSTRIES - COURTYARD - NIGHT

The camera pans down from the night sky to a familiar sight. The countdown from the crowd rises in the distance. The Nutcracker General marches into position to the drummer's cadence.

NUTCRACKER GENERAL

To the ready....aim....

CU: A large BLACK BOOT crushes the toy in the snow.

Everyone turns to see an angry Santa holding Austen.

ANGLE ON: A look of absolute terror crosses the face of Christmases Past and Sebastian. Security trolls rush forward and surround the traitorous trio.

Austen and Beverley rush to Arthur's side and reunite in hugs and kisses.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Beverley, using her hands to blindfold Arthur from behind, leads him into the living room.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Okay, open your eyes.

Arthur is astonished at the sight of a CHRISTMAS TREE. It has no decorations on it beyond natural LUMINOUS CONES and GLOWING NEEDLES that radiate vibrant color.

ARTHUR

Wow! That is gorgeous!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

This is not just any Christmas tree. It's an eternal Christmas Pine from the Festive Forest. It never dies. After Christmas, wrap it in a sheet and stow it in a cool, dark place. Each year at Christmas, water it, and it regenerates and grows these fragrant, cinnamon scented cones.
(plucking one)
Take a whiff of that.

ARTHUR

Is the scent addictive?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Definitely!

BEVERLEY

Ummm, that smells wonderful. This is so cool! I want one!

ARTHUR

Where's Austen? I want her to smell this.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

She's upstairs with Santa.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - AUSTEN'S BEDROOM

Santa and Austen are seated on the edge of her bed. The mood is somber. She is subdued and stares into her lap.

Santa reaches into his BAG and hands her a GIFT.

SANTA CLAUS

That's a little something special I made just for you.

AUSTEN

Thank you.

Austen takes the gift, smiles politely, holds it for a moment, and then sets it beside her.

SANTA CLAUS

Aren't you going to open it?

AUSTEN

Later.

Santa takes a few beats, searching for words.

SANTA CLAUS

Austen, I've been Santa for a very long time. And I can't remember ever getting a request quite like yours. There are some people that will have you believe I can do a great many things. Most of them I can, and as for the rest, I simply do the best I can. But this gift, this thing that you wish for - it is beyond my power to give.

AUSTEN

I understand.

He holds her hand and they sit quietly for a few beats.

SANTA CLAUS

You really miss your mother, huh?

AUSTEN

(nods, cries)

I didn't get a chance to say good-bye and tell her how much I loved her.

Santa lifts her onto his lap and wipes her tears. He picks up the gift and hands it to her.

SANTA CLAUS

Open it.

Austen reluctantly opens the gift. She immediately brightens at the sight of a CAMEO engraved with a PROFILE IMAGE of her mother, Camille. She runs her finger across the carved face.

AUSTEN

Mommy.

Santa hangs it around her neck.

SANTA CLAUS

Do you really believe in me and the true spirit of Christmas?

AUSTEN

Yes.

SANTA CLAUS

And I know how much you love and miss your mother.

(a beat)

(MORE)

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Take this cameo, and cup it in your hands like this.

He gently squeezes her hands around the jewel.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Now close your eyes and think of her.

Austen closes her eyes.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Feel for her. Reach out, search the darkness for the light that was her life and listen for her voice. Remember how it felt when she held you and kissed you and told you how much she loved you. Call out to her with your heart and find her. Find her within you.

AUSTEN

(whispering)

Mommy...

CU: Austen's closed eyes dart back and forth.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

Yes, that's it. Keep thinking of her and how much you love and miss her.

AUSTEN'S POV: Amidst the darkness, mists swirl and begin to take shape. The face of Camille is in there, forming.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

Mommy? I see her. I see her.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

Then open your eyes and look.

Austen opens her eyes. A WISPY GLOW hovers before her. A vision tries to form, but soon fades.

SANTA CLAUS

You must believe, Austen. You must believe! Concentrate!

She closes her eyes tight and squeezes her palms around the cameo. The mist brightens and the form becomes clearer.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Yes, that's it...yes...

ANGLE ON: Santa taps her hand lightly.

Austen opens her eyes and sees the hovering VISION.

AUSTEN'S VISION: A baby lies in a crib, crying.

Austen slides from Santa's lap and creeps forward.

AUSTEN

That's me.

AUSTEN'S VISION: Camille enters.

AUSTEN (V.O.)

Mommy. Mommy, it's me.

Santa places a light hand on her shoulder.

SANTA CLAUS

She can't hear you. She is but a
vision of what was, brought here by
your love for her focused through
the cameo.

AUSTEN'S VISION: Camille lifts the baby from the crib.

CAMILLE

Oh, sweetie, what's wrong? Don't
cry, mommy's here.

The crying subsides. She kisses the baby and rocks her as she quietly sings.

CAMILLE (CONT'D)

*Silent night, Holy night,
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon Virgin, mother and child,
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

The child is asleep. Camille lays her in the crib, kisses her finger and touches it to the child's forehead.

Camille backs away, but before exiting, looks around and searches the room as if sensing a presence. Her gaze settles on Austen.

Austen edges closer to the vision.

AUSTEN

Mommy...I miss you. I love you.

Can Camille hear and see Austen? Camille smiles the acknowledgement and the vision slowly fades.

Austen turns to Santa with tears in her eyes.

AUSTEN (CONT'D)

Bring her back! Please, bring her back!

Santa lifts her onto his lap. She buries her head in his neck, crying. He quiets her, then reaches for the cameo.

SANTA CLAUS

Austen, this is a very special gift. I made it myself, just for you. Whenever you miss your mother and want to see her, find a secret place, close your eyes and hold it tight like I showed you. As long as you truly believe, it will always be filled with happy memories of you and your mother for you to cherish.

He turns her to face him, and looks directly into her eyes.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Now, listen to me very carefully. Do not lose this, it's the only one of it's kind and cannot be replaced. And don't tell anyone, not even your dad or Beverley about it's power. That will be our little secret, okay?

AUSTEN

Okay. I won't. Thank you, Santa.

SANTA CLAUS

No, Austen.
(he kisses her)
Thank you.

INT. FISHER HOUSE - FOYER

Santa escorts Austen down the stairs and is met by everyone.

SANTA CLAUS

Christmas Present, I think it's about time we leave these people to enjoy their Christmas.

ARTHUR

Santa, Christmas Present - I don't know how to thank you enough for everything.

SANTA CLAUS

Don't thank me.
(re: Beverley)
Thank her.

Arthur gives Beverley a loving look and holds her hand.

ARTHUR

I will.

SANTA CLAUS

Oh, before I go, I have a little something for the both of you.

He pulls a GIFT from his BAG and hands it to them.

ARTHUR

I guess we should rip it open, huh?

SANTA CLAUS

If you cared, you would.

They rip it open, together. It is a SNOW GLOBE ORNAMENT.

CU: Frozen inside are FIGURINES of Christmases Past, Christmas Future and Sebastian in a courtyard scene.

BEVERLEY

Right where they belong!

AUSTEN

Can I hang it on the tree?

SANTA CLAUS

You sure can, little lady.

Austen takes the ornament and exits.

SANTA CLAUS (CONT'D)

Well, Christmas Present, time for us to leave. You remember how to get back?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

How could I possibly forget?

BEVERLEY

You're not letting him drive, are you?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

It's quite alright. Since a certain someone whose name I won't mention has no use for her memory anymore, Santa let me use it.

BEVERLEY

Congratulations!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Thank you, Beverley, B-E-V-E-R-L-E-Y, Beverley.

She laughs at their little joke and gives him a hug.

Santa and Christmas Present wave good-bye and fade away. Moments later, Santa's torso reappears.

SANTA CLAUS

I nearly forgot. Imagine that!

He points toward the ceiling and a GARLAND OF MISTLETOE mysteriously appears. He winks at them, and fades away.

BEVERLEY

You know, I had a strange dream that seemed so real, and you were in it. If I remember correctly, you were tied up to a candy cane pole and were saying something about a dream you were having...

He kisses her hard under the mistletoe. Austen returns and catches them.

They share a group hug as the camera pulls back, drifts into the living room and closes on the trio in the ornament.

CU: The frozen face of Christmases Past.

ORNAMENT FIGURINE P.O.V.: The imprisoned trio stare out at the new family celebrating in the foyer.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END...?