

Operation: Milk and Cookies

written by

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PRELAP - BELLS, JINGLING.

A red and white puffball hat is positioned to the side. A gold belt buckle is shined. A white beard is groomed. A red velvet sack is CINCHED. A .38 special is checked and CHAMBERED. *Ah yes... It's that time of year...*

INT. 1ST REGIONAL BANK - LOBBY - DAY - DEC 1ST

A small town bank. Two teller windows. Everyone knows each other.

Christmas garlands are being hung as HAROLD THE BANK MANAGER decorates a tree in the corner.

Busy CIVILIANS wait in line- A TIRED FATHER balances packages as his LITTLE GIRL skips in circles around the lobby. A WOMAN takes out money from the ATM. An ELDERLY WOMAN counts coins at the teller window.

The door SWINGS open as two SANTAS march into the lobby. Everyone pauses at the odd sight, including the SECURITY GUARD.

The Little Girl stops and the FEMALE SANTA WAVES.

Then, the MALE SANTA pulls out a pistol and FIRES a shot into the air!!

MALE SANTA

Ho-ho-ho, this is a robbery!

He PISTOL WHIPS the Guard as the Female Santa handles the crowd. *They're having fun with this.*

FEMALE SANTA

Nobody tries to be a hero and we all make it home for eggnog.

The Male puts the red velvet bag on the counter.

MALE SANTA

Empty the drawers. Leave out the dye packs or we come back for you.

The Teller starts FILLING the bag with cash. Across the way, Harold the Manager PRESSES the silent alarm as the Female Santa finds him.

FEMALE SANTA

Tsk, Tsk, Tsk. You're gonna get coal in your stocking.

She drag him to the center as the Male Santa joins her.

The two Santas MAKEOUT PASSIONATELY. It's weird.

MALE SANTA
You're so hot.

FEMALE SANTA
When we get home, I'm roasting your chestnuts.

MALE SANTA
Oh yea, what about the yule log?

The Manager CLEARS HIS THROAT.

HAROLD THE MANAGER
Are we still being robbed or-?

FEMALE SANTA
Mind your business!

SIRENS appear in the background. The Santas turn back to the hostages.

MALE SANTA
Alright little elves. Close your eyes and count to a hundred. You know what they say, Santa won't visit if you're awake.

BLAM BLAM BLAM- shots into the ceiling! They run out the front as the Little Girl looks up to the escaping Santas.

EXT. 1ST REGIONAL BANK - CONTINUOUS

They exit the building to find a muscle car waiting. A THIRD SANTA in the drivers seat watches *Mele Kalikimaka* (Hawaiian Christmas Song).

THIRD SANTA
(sotto)
...the thing to say on a
briiiiight, Hawaiian Christmas
daaaay...

The Robbers jump in and pull off their beards-

MALE SANTA
What are you waiting for?? Go. Go!

The Third Santa BOBBLES his phone and SHIFTS gears!

The TIRES SQUEAL as the Security Guard runs out and levels his pistol at the car! BLAM BLAM! The car SCREECHES around the corner and disappears. The Guard drops his gun.

GUARD

Bah, humbug.

TITLES:

OPERATION: MILK & COOKIES

EXT. BRIAN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

A small town with brightly decorated colonials. We zero in on a well-lived home with few strings of lights, peeling paint and off-center shutters.

NADIA (O.S.)

Brian! Have you seen my Hanukkah scrunchy?? There might be boys there!

BRIAN (O.S.)

Henry! Can you help the kids get ready?

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - SAME

Cozy and messy. Children's drawings and unkept toys fill up the space. In a cozy chair near the window we see HENRY (12, good kid, world on his shoulders) reading a comic book. He SIGHS -

HENRY

Nadia! I haven't seen it. Have you checked the pony mansion?

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - KID'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bunk beds along with tween posters.

In the closet, a small body TOSSES out ballerina uniforms and sparkle dresses. She comes up for air. This is NADIA (11, a little chubby, ALLLL the makeup, believes she is living on 'Real Housedaughters of the Midwest'). Nadia checks a horse playhouse- finding the blue and white scrunchie.

NADIA

Yessss!

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Henry walks into the living room where he sees a large kid sitting on the couch. This is TOMAS (13, 6-feet tall, sparse mustache, Hispanic, shy and nervous). Tomas stares longingly at a Target underwear catalogue on the coffee table as Henry bounds in and jumps onto the couch.

TOMAS

Ah! Oh Henry... I was...

He covers the catalogue with other mail.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

Sup?

HENRY

Hey Tomas. Your letter ready for Santa?

TOMAS

Yea.

HENRY

So, what are you asking for this year?

TOMAS

Uh... I was thinking maybe a weighted anxiety blanket, a bathroom nightlight, and an anatomy textbook... For science.

HENRY

Ah. Good thinking.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Henry enters to see a little kid writing a crayon letter at the dining table. This is ASTRID (9, cute, precocious, dark weirdo, Nadia's younger sister).

Henry watches the TV for a moment-

REPORTER

The two Santa robbers got away with an estimated twelve thousand dollars in a brazen day-time robbery. Sources say-

Before he clicks it off.

HENRY

Alright, Astrid. Whatcha got for the big man?

ASTRID

Ahem. "Dear Santa Claus, I have been a very good girl this year. I would like a hand grenade. A bag of snakes. And a sweater for the man who lives in my closet."

HENRY

Uh. What's that last one?

ASTRID

A sweater. For Paul, the man who lives in my closet.

Henry glances around the table-

HENRY

Ummm. Is Paul here right now?

ASTRID

Yea. He's sitting in the chair right there.

Henry breathes a sigh of relief.

HENRY

Oooh. "Imaginary Paul." New friend. Good. Ok.

Astrid skips off as Henry tentatively waves his hand across the chair, checking for Imaginary Paul. Nothing. *Whew.*

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - STAIRWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The kids and Henry throw on jackets-

HENRY

Mr. D! We're ready to roll!

BRIAN (O.S)

Coming!

We see BRIAN DARLINGTON (40's, Paul Rudd type - kind, frazzled, out of his depth) head down the stairs, tying his scarf.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Just have to toss the trash and we're off.

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

Brian quickly exits with a bag of trash, trying to not make too much noise...

GLORIA (O.S.)
Hello, Mister Darlington.

A small face appears atop the fence. This is GLORIA (60's, local disgruntled lady, perpetual scowl).

Ahh, he's caught.

BRIAN
Ahh, hello Gloria.

GLORIA
Your children are a menace.

BRIAN
Yes, so I have heard...
(under his breath)
Several hundred times.

He tosses the trash and starts backing into the house, trying to escape the convo-

GLORIA
Now they've made an inappropriate snowman on my yard!

BRIAN
I will be sure to talk to them about it...

She GLARES at him.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
A strong talk. Very strong.

GLORIA
You need to find a priest, they're demons.

Brian squeezes himself into his door.

BRIAN
Ok. Sorry gotta go, byyyye Gloria!

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - BASE OF STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Brian hustles into the room.

BRIAN
Ok. Do I have everything?

Henry hands him a sack of items.

HENRY
Keys, wallet, cellphone.

BRIAN
What would I do without you, Henry?

HENRY
Probably go to the grocery store in
your bathing suit again, Mr. D.

BRIAN
You know Henry, you've lived here
almost a year now. You can call me
Brian if you want?

HENRY
Yea. I know.

Brian doesn't push it.

BRIAN
(to everyone)
Alright! On Donner, on Dasher! On
Dancer and Blitzen! And Flasher and
Glancer and Pasture and Nixon!

Nadia rolls her eyes.

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

He ushers the kids into a shoddy mini-van.

BRIAN
Did you guys make a snowman in
Gloria's yard?

NADIA
YES! Tomas made it have boobs!!

He glances over to see a snowwomen with HUGE boobs and
pepperoni nipples. One of the pepperonis FALLS off.

Tomas shrugs sheepishly.

BRIAN
(sotto)
We're gonna have to get her a
muffin basket or something...

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - LATER

A beautiful snow covered town square. FAMILIES laugh and scurry with packages while KIDS throw snowballs. At one end, a line stretches from a hut where SANTA CLAUS meets KIDS and takes pictures.

Brian pulls up in a dented mini-van and the kids pour out.

BRIAN

You guys get in line to see Santa.
I'm gonna go park. Henry, you're in charge.

As Brian pulls away a smartly dressed little boy runs up - this is OLIVER (10, British, Indian, precocious but not worldly).

OLIVER

Guys! There you are!

The kids DEFLATE.

TOMAS

Ah, dude. It's Oliver.

NADIA

Hiiiiii, "Know-It-Oliver"

OLIVER

You're late! My nanny and I have been waiting for an hour for you to show up!

Oliver motions to his Nanny who absent-mindedly texts.

HENRY

We never told you when we were coming?

OLIVER

We just guessed! Also, just so you know, if you pull out a filling eating one of those candied apples, you can apply tarragon root to the hole until you can see a dentist.

HENRY

How do you always know all that stuff? Have you done it?

OLIVER

Well, no. But I have read about it!

He pulls out a 1950's book-THE FIELD GUIDE FOR THE MODERN BOY.

The others start toward the Santa Hut and Oliver follows like a half-tolerated puppy.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Are you guys excited to see Santa Claus?

NADIA
I can't wait to see him!

OLIVER
Aren't you and Astrid Jewish?

NADIA
So? A girl likes a man who gets her gifts! Plus, we get our picture taken!

She motions to a FLASH as a CRYING KID is lifted off Santa's lap.

TOMAS
What did you ask for Oliver?

OLIVER
It doesn't really matter what I ask for, he kinda just gets me one of everything.

HENRY
We usually get like, an orange and some hand-me-down jeans...

NADIA
I asked for a full set of BTS body pillows, two horse brushes for when I get a horse, a professional microphone, a-

ASTRID
What'd you ask Santa for, Henry?

HENRY
Ehhh, I didn't make a list this year.

ASTRID
Why not?

He hesitates. He no longer believes but wants to protect her.

HENRY

Eh, I just think Santa knows what I want already. But you guys go ahead. I'm gonna go watch the ice skaters.

The kids shrug as they head toward the hut.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Henry shuffles past the BUSTLING SHOPS and HAPPY FAMILIES. He glances inside a coffee shop where a LAUGHING MOTHER and FATHER playfully BOOPS their SON's nose with whipped cream.

Henry pulls out a faded picture of a young couple holding a baby around Christmas-time. On the back- *"We'll all be together soon. Love, Mom and Dad."*

Henry sneers and throws a snowball at the window with a BANG!

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - ICE RINK -LATER

Henry watches FAMILIES and FRIENDS skate and do tricks on the ice.

Then he spots Brian talking to the Harold the Bank Manager across the rink. Brian looks more agitated than usual...
Hmmmm.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - ICE RINK - MOMENTS LATER

Henry sneaks up behind a bush, watching Brian and the Bank Manager.

BRIAN

There really isn't anything else you can do?

HAROLD THE MANAGER

I'm sorry, Brian. After the robbery, the regional director decided to shore everything up, including mortgage extensions. There's nothing I can do.

BRIAN

It's just that, Sarah used to handle the payments and since she... I just haven't been totally focused, but I can be now!

HAROLD THE MANAGER

I really am sorry. You know how much I adored Sarah and you. But, unless you can pay the eighteen thousand by the twenty fifth, you'll have to be out of the house.

HENRY

(sotto)

We're gonna be homeless? On Christmas??

HAROLD THE MANAGER

Listen, you guys will land on your feet. I know it.

BRIAN

Thanks Harold. I know you have a lot on your plate with the robbery last week. I appreciate you fighting for us... I'll figure something out.

Henry stands as they leave. A BEAT, then Henry pushes over a trashcan!

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

THREE TOUGHS lean against a lamppost and sip coffees as they watch the cheery town.

PIP (30's, tough guy, needs to be in control, Sam Claflin)
MARGO (30's, cute but psycho, crime is just a game to her, Ayden Mayeri), and JERRY (20's, lanky, stoner, just likes being included, Nicholas Braun type). We recognize these are the Santas Robbers from the bank!

PIP

Jerry, you gotta start steaming your shirts. You look unprofessional.

Margo sticks out her foot and TRIPS a YOUNG MAN.

MARGO

Babe, we got into this so we didn't have to be professionals.

Henry, in a daze, RUNS INTO Pip spilling his coffee all over him!

PIP

Ah! Watch it kid!

HENRY

Oh! Sorry.

The other kids and Brian spot the scene and hurry over.

PIP

Your kid spilled a coffee all over
my leather jacket!

JERRY

Oh yea, that's gonna stain.

BRIAN

Here let me get you some napkins.

Henry stares up at the badass Pip as Brian grabs a stack of
napkins from a VENDOR.

MARGO

Are these all your kids?

BRIAN

Uh, oh yes.

JERRY

(elbowing Brian)
Heh. Busy fella, eh?

BRIAN

Oh no. They're fosters. I'm their
foster father.

PIP

Oh yea?
(softens)
I was in the system too. What your
name, kid?

HENRY

Henry.

Margo notices Tomas staring at her.

MARGO

(weirded out)
What's happening with you right
now?

TOMAS

(to Margo)
You just... You look like you smell
nice.

MARGO

Just a tip, never tell that to another woman.

Pip finishes wiping and leans down to Henry.

PIP

Listen, I remember how the holidays could be... Trust nobody and you'll be alright.

Henry looks down into his hand and sees a hundred dollar bill. Pip WINKS at him. Henry's enamored.

HENRY

Whoa.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - KIDS ROOM - LATER

Henry, now in PJ's, lays in bed and admires the hundred.

NADIA

I can't believe he just gave you a hundo. What should we spend it on?

ASTRID

I wanna buy a potion that turns me into a frog so I can hide in toilets and scare people's butts.

Brian enters and starts tucking them in.

BRIAN

Alright, alright guys. It's Henry's money. He gets to spend it on whatever he wants.

Henry holds out the money to Brian.

HENRY

I want you to have it.

BRIAN

What? No, Henry, it's your money.

Astrid watches Henry suspiciously. Brian finishes tucking them in and stands at the door.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Only a few more sleeps till Christmas. Love you guys.

ALL/HENRY
Good night Brian./Night Mr. D.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Brian walks to the kitchen table and sits down with financial documents... *PAST DUE. FINAL NOTICE. FORECLOSURE.*

Under the financials, he pulls out an old drawing that Astrid made. The four kids and a happy couple. Brian has a GIANT BAT EARS and FANGS.

The drawing of the woman next to him is pretty with long hair and big brown eyes. He SIGHS.

BRIAN
(sotto)
What am I gonna do, Sarah?

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - KIDS ROOM - LATER

Henry lays awake in bed, staring at the ceiling, wondering what to do. Astrid APPEARS next to him!

HENRY
Ah! Astrid!

ASTRID
I know you have a secret...I can smell it. Tell me what it is.

HENRY
It's... nothing just go back to sleep.

ASTRID
Tell me or I tell Brian about your magazine...

HENRY
(lying)
Uh, what magazine?

ASTRID
The one you and Tomas keep in your trumpet case. Full of swimsuit ladies.

Henry considers...

HENRY

Fine. Get the others up, we'll meet
in the clubhouse.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Brian SNORES on the couch as the kids CREEP through the darkened room. On the TV, another TELLER is interview outside a bank. CHYRON: *Santa Claus Robbers strike again.*

EXT. CLUBHOUSE - LATER

A handmade clubhouse built in a backyard tree. Snow falls as lantern-light shines brightly through the window.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SAME

Oliver, in his custom PJ's, watches the clubhouse through a set of expensive binoculars. *Hmmm.*

INT. CLUBHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Pillows and contraptions adorn the homemade clubhouse. Nadia, rubs her eyes under her sleeping mask.

NADIA

Why'd you wake us up? I was
dreaming that I was better singer
than Olivia Rodrigo and everyone
wanted to be my boyfriend.

ASTRID

SHH! Henry has a secret to tell us.

Henry takes a moment.

HENRY

We're gonna lose the house.

TOMAS

What? What does that mean?

HENRY

After Sarah... I just think Mr. D
forgot to make the payments or
something. We have to be out on the
twenty-fifth.

TOMAS

Oh my god! We're gonna be on the street and sleep on cardboard. We'll get sucked into the sewers when it rains!

ASTRID

But... the twenty-fifth. That's Christmas? Santa would never let someone take away their home on Christmas, right?

HENRY

I don't think we can rely on Santa for this one, Astrid.

ASTRID

Are we gonna get split up??

Henry can't answer.

TOMAS

What if we did chores or something?

NADIA

YEA! We'll sell our toys and do chores around the neighborhood. I'm sure we can make enough to give us an extension or something.

HENRY

Ehh...

ASTRID

We've gotta try!

The others brainstorm while Henry sits back. *They're screwed.*

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MORNING

Brian sits at the kitchen table, contemplating how to tell them the news.

The girls HUSTLE downstairs with a full black trash bag, throwing on boots and coats.

BRIAN

Where are you guys going?

ASTRID

We'll be back in a few hours!

BRIAN
Where's Henry?

NADIA
He's upstairs. He doesn't want to come.

BRIAN
(yells)
Henry! You know the rules! They can't go out unless you're watching!

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - KIDS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In bed, Henry broods.

HENRY
(yells back)
Seriously!?

BRIAN (O.S.)
Seriously!

HENRY
Ugh.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - BASE OF STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Henry walks downstairs and begrudgingly puts on his coat.

BRIAN
Alright. You guys be safe. And I wanna talk to you all about something when you get back.

They all head out as Tomas hustles past Brian, carrying a snow shovel, a rake, and an axe.

TOMAS
Bye Brian!

BRIAN
(after them)
Ok. Don't talk to strangers!... Unless Tomas has the ax, I guess.

He SIGHS returns to the kitchen table.

INT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Gloria sips tea and watches through her front window as the Kids whip past her house.

As soon as they pass... her mailbox FALLS to the ground.

GLORIA

Grrrrrrr.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MONTAGE OVER SEVERAL DAYS

-Door opens to see Henry and Tomas ready to shovel snow.

-Door opens, the girls holding toys from the trash bag.

NADIA

Good morning mam. Would you like to
buy any of these used Barbie Dolls?
Most have their original hair.

A POLITE MOTHER waves them away.

-Henry and Tomas start digging out a driveway.

TOMAS

Oh man. How is snow so heavy? It
literally floats in the sky.

-LATER: Tomas and Henry are exhausted, they must've done a whole parking lot by now. They glance up to see... they've only done about 10 percent of the driveway. OH NO.

-Kids walk into the house, exhausted and pitiful. Brian opens his mouth to say something, then stops himself.

-NEXT DAY: Another door opens. The girls model plastic jewelry and have a sign that says "2-for-1!"

NADIA

Mam! Are you tired of looking like
trash with your regular jewelry?

ASTRID

If you don't buy them, my friend
Imaginary Paul will haunt you
forever.

The door SLAMS in their face.

-Henry and Tomas walk out to the partially finished driveway to see... IT SNOWED AGAIN and filled in their shoveled part. FACEPALM.

-Kids go home again, even more dejected.

-NEXT DAY: The girls stand as Gloria opens the door.

NADIA

Hello, Ms. Gloria. We noticed your mailbox had fallen off and wondered if you wanted to pay us to put it back on?

Gloria SLAMS the door!

-The boys FINALLY finish and walk up to the front door, exhausted. The OWNER hands them a five dollar bill.

END MONTAGE

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT BEFORE XMAS EVE

Henry, Tomas, and Astrid reconvene.

HENRY

Ok. Counting the hundred from the other day? We made a hundred and five dollars. How about you guys?

ASTRID

No one really wanted to buy our stuff. Except this one lady who bought jewelry for her cats.

Nadia comes bounding up. She is wearing a FULL, CROCHETED FACE MASK WITH CAT EARS.

HENRY

Where were you?

NADIA

(nervous)

Nowhere.

HENRY

Nadia... Did you spend the money you made on a cat mask for yourself?

NADIA

No...

A beat.

NADIA (CONT'D)

I spent it on cat masks for ALL of us!

She shows off the multi-color masks. Henry SIGHS.

ASTRID

I can't believe you, Nadia!
Christmas eve is tomorrow!

NADIA

HISS!

TOMAS

I guess that's it, then.

ASTRID

Wait! Can we pleeeeeease try one more house?

HENRY

Fine. Astrid, you choose.

ASTRID

That one!

They turn up the street to see a beautiful old house COVERED in CHRISTMAS LIGHTS and SANTA DECORATIONS.

EXT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

They approach the fence. It's almost like an exhibition of electrical Christmas decorations.

TOMAS

This... seems like a fire hazard.

HENRY

Alright. Game faces.

Henry pushes the gate and the WIND PICKS UP slightly. The others follow and notice that the snowfall is coming down a little harder.

They push forward as the wind GUSTS and BLOWS SNOW in their faces. As they reach the steps, the wind is BLISTERING and they hold their coats against the cold. CHATTERING TEETH as Henry raises his hand to knock on the door.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

It opens revealing - THE OLD MAN (Rail-thin, old, white beard, in a tattered sport coat and slippers.)

THE OLD MAN
Welllll, hello there.

HENRY
(shivering)
Hello s-sir. Do you have any c-c-c-
chores you need d-done?

THE OLD MAN
Hmm. Not that I can think of.
(noticing)
But you all look awfully cold! Come
in and warm up!

Henry glances to the others.

TOMAS
(whispers)
Henry, we just watched Dateline
last night... You know how this
will end!

NADIA
Well, I'm freezing my tuchus off.

Nadia pushes past Tomas into the house as the others file in
behind her.

TOMAS
This house just screams I own a
'white van.' Just saying!... Ugh.

Tomas reluctantly follows.

INT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Velvet chairs, immaculate paintings, beautiful rugs. And of
course, a giant, roaring fireplace.

TOMAS
I don't think I've ever been in a
house this nice.

HENRY
I don't think I've ever *seen* a
house this nice.

Tomas stares at the beautiful painting of a FAMILY.

Astrid finds a folded sweater on a chair and PLUNGES her face
into it, BREATHING DEEPLY.

ASTRID
Ahhhh. It's smells like like
cinnamon rolls!

Nadia fingers a beautiful music box- the dancer looks kinda
like HER.

NADIA
You know what I think? I think we
died in the snow today and we're in
Christian heaven.

Henry marvels at the wood furniture and fluffy pillows. Then,
he spots an ornate box. On the lid, a crest with a pine tree
and a bell reads "*nox et omnia bona*".

Henry gently lifts the lid and inside... Is a ruby and
emerald ring!

HENRY
Whoa.

The others join him.

ASTRID
Do you think it's cursed?

NADIA
That's gotta be worth like, a
million dollars.

The others continue inspecting the house. Henry lingers on
the ring.

HENRY
A million dollars...

His hand begins to reach for it when-

THE OLD MAN
Please make yourselves comfortable!
I was hoping I might have visitors
tonight.

The Old Man enters and presents a plate of fresh chocolate
chip cookies. The kids grab the cookies hungrily.

TOMAS
(aside)
Are you serious? You're eating
cookies from a stranger?? Do you
wanna die?

NADIA

Oh my gosh. This is, no lie, like,
the best cookie I've ever had in my
whole freaking life.

HENRY

It is *really* good.

Tomas SIGHS and takes a cookie.

THE OLD MAN

I'm glad you like them. They're my
wife's secret recipe!

A CUCKOO CLOCK goes off behind him.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Ah, there's Taffy, right on time.
Don't pay too much attention to him
though, he's such a drama queen.

Astrid and Nadia giggle at this silly old man.

ASTRID

I'm Astrid. And this is Tomas, and
Nadia and Henry.

THE OLD MAN

A pleasure indeed! So, what brings
an entrepreneurial group of
children like you out to the cold
this time of year?

NADIA

Oh, we're gonna lose-

Henry jumps in-

HENRY

We're just trying to make some
extra money for presents.

They glance at Henry, who shakes his head subtly.

TOMAS

(posturing/worried)

Also, it's to feed our attack dogs.
If anything happens to us, they're
trained to find the scent of our
bodies and tear apart who ever did
it.

(takes a bite)

No matter how good their cookies
are.

ASTRID
(to Old Man)
Why do you have so many Christmas
decorations outside?

THE OLD MAN
Well, because if I had them inside,
I wouldn't have anywhere to sit!

The others LAUGH again, while Henry is trying to decide if
The Old Man is funny or simply insane.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)
But the root of the decorations,
that's quite a story.

The Old Man grabs an old leather journal from the bookshelf.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)
When I was just eight years old, I
was obsessed with catching a
glimpse of Santa Claus. So all year
long I researched and eventually
found a very old legend from
Turkey... It recounted three items
that Santa finds irresistible... "A
delicious treat, the promise of the
following Christmas and, most
importantly... the Christmas
Spirit."

The kids watch as he opens the book and pulls out a weathered
piece of notebook paper. He shows them the page- "*OPERATION:
MILK AND COOKIES*". *There's writing and a drawing of a cookie
and a shiny pinecone.*

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)
On Christmas eve, I set about
enacting my plan... I left out my
offering, and when the clock struck
midnight, he appeared in a flash!
He didn't say a word, but I had
never felt such comfort and joy.
And when he disappeared, a present
appeared under the tree. It was
exactly what I wanted. A whirly gig
and a peppermint stick!

NADIA
How old are you?

ASTRID
What did you use for your offering?

THE OLD MAN

Well, number one. Cocoa-butterscotch cookies, no larger than a half dollar. His favorite flavor. Number two. A freshly fallen, Golden-Fir pinecone. To plant for next year's Christmas tree, of course. And three...

The Cuckoo CHIMES AGAIN.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Ah, hush up you old buzzard!
(back to kids)
Anyway, it was so lovely to have you all here this evening.

ASTRID

Wait! You didn't tell us what number three is!

THE OLD MAN

Ah, of course! My mind wanders these days. Well, number three.. Well, number three is the problem.

They look at the sheet and NUMBER 3 is TORN OFF.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)

I can't remember what I used for Christmas Spirit!

The kids DEFLATE.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)

I've wracked my brain for years but I just can't recall. So I've resigned to putting out decorations in hopes that Ol' Saint Nick will come for one last visit before Marley rattles his chains in my direction.

NADIA

Maybe the Christmas Spirit is twerking?

TOMAS

Maybe it's respecting tradition and going to bed early?

ASTRID

Maybe it's a special necklace that
lets you bring your hamster back
from the dead?

A BEAT.

THE OLD MAN

Maybe all of the above! You know,
perhaps you could figure it out.

He holds out the paper. But, before Astrid can take it, Henry
stands.

HENRY

Thank you but we really have to be
going. It's getting dark and I'm
sure Mr. D is worried about us.

THE OLD MAN

Ah, of course.

Dejected, Nadia and Tomas follow Henry to the hallway as
Astrid secretly pockets the paper.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I keep odd hours these
days, but if you happen to gather
the items, please bring them by! I
wouldn't want to miss out on the
fun.

The Cuckoo GOES OFF AGAIN.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)

(to the Coo-Coo)

Alright, alright! They're leaving.
We can get back to our game of
checkers. And I memorized the board
so I'll know if you've been
cheating...

EXT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The door shuts and several locks are BOLTED behind them.

HENRY

Well that was... weird.

ASTRID

I thought he was nice.

HENRY

He's just a crazy old man, Astrid.
Come on. Let's get back home.

The others shrug and follow.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The kids enter and Brian rises to greet them.

BRIAN

Hey guys, you have time to talk?

HENRY

We're really tired, Mr. D. Can we
just talk tomorrow?

BRIAN

I need to talk to you. Now.

The kids SIGH and walk into the living room.

HENRY

(aside to the kids)
Act natural.

They all take their seats.

BRIAN

I'll just come out and say it. In
two days... on Christmas Day. We're
gonna have to leave the house.

They stare at Brian. He is unnerved at their silence. Tomas
squirms with his secret.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

(confused, unnerved)

There were some mistakes made with
the bank... They're my fault. But I
promise we'll be ok and figure this
out. Together. I know this must be
quite a shock.

He looks at Tomas who looks like he's going to explode.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Tomas, you ok?

TOMAS

(starting to sweat)

Yes. I just...

(MORE)

TOMAS (CONT'D)
 I can't tell you something so I need to go to
 the bathroom!

Tomas runs out of the room.

BRIAN
 (sotto)
 That boy loves the bathroom.
 (then)
 Anyone else have anything to say?
 Nadia?

NADIA
 (acting it up)
 What are we going to do??

She starts thrashing around the room, really acting it up.

NADIA (CONT'D)
 Homeless? On Christmas? Dirty
 orphans in the gutter?

She slams the table dramatically.

NADIA (CONT'D)
 We'll starve. We'll be street rats!
 Fighting dogs for a can of beans!
 We can't beat dogs!

She collapses into Brian's lap. Brian doesn't know what to
 make of this outburst and pats her shoulder. She glances to
 the other two and WINKS.

BRIAN
 (to Astrid and Henry)
 You guys ok?

HENRY
 (angry)
 Yea... We'll be fine.

Henry takes Astrid upstairs. Brian SIGHS. *That could've gone
 better.*

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Henry sleeps on the couch as the TV plays local news.

REPORTER
 The police ask to keep a lookout
 for their getaway car, a striped
 nineteen seventy four GTO.

JINGLE JINGLE JINGLE.

Henry wakes up with a start and glances around. *Did he just hear something?*

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Henry looks around. Nothing. He glances down the street to The Old Man's GLOWING yard and rubs his finger where a ring would go... Then he hears a THUNK from the back.

HENRY

What the-?

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

Henry runs into the backyard and spots the treehouse light on.

TOMAS (O.S.)

(faint)

Three hundred for a horse brush?

Henry CLIMBS the ladder and BANGS on the trap door.

HENRY

Who's up there?

He hears a SHUFFLING and VOICES. Then- the trapdoor FLINGS OPEN revealing Tomas, Astrid and Nadia, looking GUILTY.

NADIA

Uhhhh, hey Henry. What's up?

INT. CLUBHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Henry pulls himself up.

HENRY

What are you guys doing out here?

NADIA

We are ummmm... sleepwalking! Don't wake us up or we'll die or something!

Henry stares them down.

TOMAS

We're gonna talk to Santa Claus.

HENRY

What??

ASTRID

Tomas, snitches get stitches!

TOMAS

He was gonna figure it out anyway.
Besides, I can't handle the tension
of all these lies in the air.

NADIA

(to Henry)

Astrid took this from The Old Man.

She hands Henry the paper- *Operation: Milk and Cookies.*

ASTRID

Betrayed by my own sister.

Henry leans down to Astrid.

HENRY

What was your plan?

ASTRID

We're gonna gather the offering,
make Santa show up, and have him
save the house.

NADIA

We figure that since he's never
really got us presents, he owes us.

ASTRID

Twenty seven thousand five hundred
thirty dollars. Approximately.

ASTRID (CONT'D)

Way more than needed to save the
house, right?

HENRY

First off, I don't think Santa
gives out cash. And you don't even
know what number three is on the
list?

NADIA

We can figure out the Christmas
Spirit!

A BEAT.

HENRY

I just don't think it's the best idea to follow a Christmas treasure map made by a guy who talks to his clock.

ASTRID

We didn't tell you because we knew you'd think it's a bad idea.

Henry's heart breaks as their last hope evaporates...

Then, he spots a cigar box holding some of the girls costume jewelry. Including a large plastic ring. And has an idea.

HENRY

(sotto)

The ring...

(then)

Didn't The Old Man say he'd let us back into his house if we brought him the offerings?

TOMAS

Yea. He wants to see Santa too.

Henry considers...

HENRY

Ok. Let's do it! We'll gather the items, bring them to The Old Man... and ask Santa to help us save the house.

ASTRID

Really??

HENRY

Yea.

Astrid jumps and HUGS Henry

HENRY (CONT'D)

Hah. Ok ok. Let's get back to sleep though, we'll have to get up early and-

Then outside, they hear a SNAP and a YELP!

TOMAS

Oh no. It's a kidnapper! We're sitting ducks.

Nadia pokes her head out the window-

NADIA
It's not a kidnapper. It's worse.

INT. CLUBHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Henry drags in Oliver! Astrid gets up in his face with a stick-

NADIA
What are you doing spying on us in our treehouse, Know-It-Oliver?

OLIVER
I -I wasn't spying! I swear!

Astrid MENACES HIM with the stick!

ASTRID
We skewer spies in this treehouse!

HENRY
Alright Astrid, settle down.
Oliver, what were you doing outside?

OLIVER
I saw the light from my house so I came over to see what's up. And I... happened to overhear what you guys were talking about. Are you really gonna ask Santa to save your house?

Astrid GRABS her stick.

ASTRID
SPY!

NADIA
I say we let Astrid kill him.

HENRY
(to Oliver)
Yes we are. But it has nothing to do with you.

TOMAS
Unless you wanna give us the money Oliver. You are super rich.

OLIVER

It's not my money, It's my parents.
Besides, they're super leveraged in
crypto right now.

They all stare in confusion.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Whatever, just please let me go
with you? My parents never let me
do anything except *READ* about cool
stuff. I need life experience!

ASTRID

What about the experience of
getting stabbed in a treehouse?

OLIVER

Plus, I have tons of gear and
survival knowledge that you guys
WILL need. Like double layering
your clothes, and wearing leather
shoes so that you can boil the
soles for valuable calories. Or...

Henry considers as Astrid fingers her stick.

HENRY

Fine. Oliver comes with us.

NADIA

Ah, man.

The kids circle up.

HENRY

Alright. We meet at Oliver's house
at nine am...

NADIA

Gather the treasures...

TOMAS

Meet up with The Old Man...

ASTRID

Kill the spy...

OLIVER

Teach me the value of real world
experience!...

HENRY
And meet Santa Claus to save our
house.

They all put their hands in the center and BREAK!

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - KIDS ROOM - NEXT MORNING (XMAS EVE)

Brian cracks open the door.

BRIAN
Kids?

He pushes the door open and sees all the kids wrapped in
their sheets. He sits on the foot of Henry's bed.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Hey guys. I know we had a hard time
with the conversation last night. I
just love you all so much and I
know that we will get through this
and be stronger than ever.

He begins to stroke Henry's hair.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Hey. We can still have a good
Christmas Eve though, right?
Maybe turn on some music? Make
cookies while we pack? Whaddya say?

He pauses.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Guys?

He pulls back the sheet to discover a wig taped to a soccer
ball.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
What??

He pulls Tomas' sheets off to reveal a mound of pillows. He
tears off Nadia's. It's a pile of barbie dolls.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Oh no.

He pulls off Astrid's - it's a bunch of dirt and sticks.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
AH!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

Brian runs out of the house in his robe and slippers, FALLING in the snow. He RUNS up to Gloria's door and BANGS LOUDLY. She groggily opens the door in her robe-

BRIAN

Gloria! Have you seen the kids?!

GLORIA

Have you checked to see if they're helping the Grinch steal the town's Christmas lights?

BRIAN

Gloria, seriously. They made dummies in their beds and left before I woke up this morning. I think they ran off after I told them we're losing the house.

GLORIA

So what you are saying is... if I help you find them, you'll all leave forever?

Brian nods.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Lemme get my coat.

She shuts the door, leaving Brian to realize he's in his underwear out in the street. He closes his robe and quickly runs back home.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION GATE - NEXT MORNING

A 1920's mansion. Gables and spires stretch to the sky as snow covered hedge animals dot the yard. The kids stand AGOG.

ASTRID

I say we kill Oliver and take his place.

Henry hits a button on the gate and Oliver's face POPS up on the screen.

OLIVER

GUYS GUYS GUYS! Wait, I'll buzz you in!

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

The kids approach. A big tarp lays next to the house. Oliver walks out dressed in a full safari outfit.

OLIVER
Hey guys! Welcome to my 'crib!'

NADIA
Why are you dressed like that,
Know-It-Oliver?

OLIVER
I'm dressed for adventure!

TOMAS
What's with the tarp, dude?

OLIVER
Oh! It's a tiger pit. My parents
won't get me a tiger but I
sometimes put my cat Snickerdoodle
down there to test it. Here, come
in!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - FOYER - LATER

The kids enter the house and gawk at the decorations.

OLIVER
Welcome! Don't worry, my nanny
won't bother us.

They glance into the kitchen where the Nanny dances to BING CROSBY and pours OLSON'S PEPPERMINT SCHNAPPS into a coffee mug.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
She loves Christmas.

NADIA
Your family isn't here? On
Christmas eve?

OLIVER
My parents are in Asia for business
and I get the whole place to
myself. Lemme show you around!

Oliver bounds off and the others follow except for Tomas who inspects a set of armor in the corner. It RATTLES.

TOMAS
GUUUUYS! Wait up!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

An ENORMOUS Christmas tree stands in the corner of a beautifully decorated room.

OLIVER
We got the biggest tree in the whole lot. Isn't she beautiful? She has to have support ropes!

TOMAS
(staring, weird)
How do you know it's a 'she'?

OLIVER
So in preparation for today, I looked it up on the NORAD website. Santa will pass over our town at precisely twelve twenty-two AM.

Oliver crosses to the Christmas tree and holds up a present.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
And look! I hid a camera in a present so when Santa comes we can record it and put it online as proof for the world!

They continue through the house.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Oliver opens a MASSIVE PANTRY.

OLIVER
This is my snack closet.

Inside every kind of junk food. Oreos, gummies, chips, soda.

NADIA
You guys go save the house without me.

Henry yanks her away as they check out-

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Oliver walks up to an iPad on the wall.

OLIVER

So that was the aquarium. And then there's this.

He swipes the pad and all the lights turn off. He SWIPES again and a disco light appears and MUSIC PLAYS!

OLIVER (CONT'D)

The whole house is wired. You can control doors, lights, music, all from this iPad.

(then)

Let's go to my room. I wanna show you something!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - OLIVER'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A four poster bed with tons of gizmos laying around.

OLIVER

Careful, I have a bunch of boobie traps around here too.

TOMAS

Heh. Boobie.

OLIVER

This is where I make my survival inventions!

He motions to a table. On it is a drone, marbles, rubberbands, good sticks, walkie talkies, spy cameras.

Then a few built items. The kids hold them up-

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Moosedart./Firestarter./Fire extinguisher./ That's just poison.

Oliver's phone BEEPS.

NADIA

Oh my gosh. You have a phone!

OLIVER

Oh yea. I get a new one every six month or so. You can borrow this one if you want?

NADIA

(playing it cool)

I mean, I don't need it cus I have a bunch of phones at home too.

(MORE)

NADIA (CONT'D)

But if you're gonna throw it out I
guess I could take your dork phone
or whatever.

OLIVER

Sure, it's all backed up to the
cloud.

Nadia snatches it and stifles a SQUEAL of joy. She
immediately starts taking SELFIES.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

But, lemme show you to the coolest
part of the house!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - BASEMENT - LATER

Oliver leads them down into a rickety basement.

OLIVER

Apparently this house was built in
the twenties. Right when
Prohibition was booming and there
was lots of smuggling in the area.

They push through cobwebs and dust. Tomas WINCES-

TOMAS

Do you think there are bugs down
here?

OLIVER

Oh yea. I tried to start a
collection but they were too big to
fit in the jars I had.

TOMAS

Ah dude.

ASTRID

Cool!

Tomas and Nadia jockey to PUSH THE OTHER in front. Oliver
stops in front of a wall.

OLIVER

So this house was owned by some of
those smugglers and-

Oliver PRESSES on a BRICK. It CLICKS! He pulls on the wood
panel and reveals a hidden hallway!

ASTRID

(staring at Oliver)

This would be a great place for
dead spies...

HENRY
That actually is really cool
Oliver. Where does it go?

OLIVER
All over the house. I spent like
three months putting little 'x's
next to all the entrances. You can
basically get into every room.

TOMAS
I would like to not be in the
haunted smuggler part of the house
any longer.

HENRY
Yea, we should probably load up and
get going anyway.

Oliver locks the panel and they head upstairs to grab their
bike helmets.

EXT. INTERSECTION - LATER

A snowplow passes as the bikes come to a stop.

TOMAS
So, where to first?

Henry looks at the list.

HENRY
Looks like the first thing on the
list is cocoa-butterscotch cookies.
So I guess, the grocery store?

They all take off down the street.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

The kids park the bikes on the rack. On the window of the
grocery are two rough police sketches of Pip and Margo.

OLIVER
(finishing story)
And that's why you shouldn't use
aluminum based deodorants.

NADIA
Gahhhhh. Shut up shut up SHUT UP!

TOMAS

Actually, this one is really interesting. I have started to have create some... smells that I probably need to be attending to.

INT. GROCERY STORE - MOMENTS LATER

They search the aisles.

HENRY

Hey guys. The cookies are over here!

The group inspects the wall of cookies.

NADIA

I don't see any cocoa-butterscotch?

TOMAS

Here's some peanut butter ones?

ASTRID

No. We have to get the exact ones! The Old Man said so!

NADIA

Maybe we should try a few to see if they're butterscotchy?

HENRY

(shrugs)
Alright. I guess.

They all grab a box of cookies and RIP in.

INT. GROCERY AISLE - LATER

The kids sit on the ground. Ripped packaging and crumbs surrounding them. Astrid holds up a cookie to the size chart on the treasure map as Nadia TOSSES another cookie-

NADIA

Nope. Another cinnamon.

Jerry, the getaway driver, turns the corner, his arms full of junk food and his eyes glazed.

JERRY

Hey little kids. I don't think you can eat on the floor like that? At least, that's what they told me.

The kids share glances and shrug.

OLIVER

Excuse me sir, do you know any brands that are butterscotch flavored?

ASTRID

No bigger than a half dollar!

JERRY

Uhh, nah. You maybe just have to google it.

The kids stand and wipe crumbs.

HENRY

Thanks for the help.

JERRY

Anytime!

They leave and Jerry turns to see a SCOWLING CLERK looking at him and then all the bags of cookies.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Oh no, I didn't eat these. There were just a bunch of kids here...
(beat)
Right?

The Clerk crosses his arms and stares. Jerry SIGHS and reaches for his wallet.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

The kids regroup outside as Nadia pulls up her phone.

NADIA

Ok, here. The only cocoa-butterscotch cookies I can find were by a company called Mrs. Dimples. "Mrs. Dimples. Now with twice the sugar!"

OLIVER

Oh wow! And looks like their factory is just outside town!

ASTRID

What are the odds?!

TOMAS

The pictures are from the eighties?

We see the image of a factory from 1980's - hypercolor decorations presented by EXECUTIVES with big hair and shoulder pads.

HENRY

Alright. Let's check it out.

INT. BRIAN'S MINI-VAN - LATER

Brian and Gloria drive around the town square, peering for the kids in silence.

BRIAN

So... It's been unusually cold this winter huh? I wonder if-

GLORIA

Don't do that... We're looking for your kids. So look.

BRIAN

Yes. It's about the kids.

She points out the window-

GLORIA

The kids.

BRIAN

(annoyed)

Yea. The kids.

The KIDS pull out on their bikes in front of of the mini-van.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

THE KIDS!

Brian SLAMS on the BRAKES!

EXT. STREET - SAME

The kids watch as BRIAN's mini-van SKIDS PAST THEM.

NADIA

(slo-mo)

Brrrrriiiiaann? Glooooooriaaaa??

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - SAME

Brian SWERVES the car and sends it into a SKID! Toys and fast food fly around the car!!

AHHHHH! BRIAN HOLY SHHHH-! GLORIA

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The mini-van SKIDS into the ditch and stops with a CLUNK.

NADIA
Are they dead?

TOMAS
We're gonna be so grounded if
they're dead.

Then the car door PUSHES open and Brian exits.

HENRY
Ok, they're fine! Let's go!

OLIVER
Now this is an adventure!!

EXT. ROADSIDE - LATER

Brian and Gloria walk along the side of the road.

BRIAN
Are you sure you're ok? That was
quite a crash. I can call you an
Uber.

GLORIA
I'm fine. Don't mention it again.

Beat.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
I have been meaning to say... I am
sorry about Sarah.

BRIAN
Oh... uh, thanks. She was... a
really wonderful person.

GLORIA
(hardens again)
Maybe. I don't know. I just enjoyed
her roasts.

Beat. Brian SHIVERS.

BRIAN
Gah. It's so cold.

GLORIA
You think this is cold? This is
nothing compared to when I served
in Korea.

BRIAN
You served in the military?

GLORIA
No. I was a waitress on a cruise
line during one of their coldest
winters.

Beat.

BRIAN
It feels a little like you were
intentionally misleading with your
phrasing... but it is nice to talk.

Gloria SHRUGS and they continue down the road.

EXT. MRS. DIMPLES COOKIE FACTORY - AFTERNOON

The kids SKID their bikes to a stop in front of a derelict
factory. Even the Mrs. Dimples sign is missing teeth and an
eye- it looks terrifying.

NADIA
Looks like there was a reason the
pictures were in the eighties.

HENRY
I guess we'll just have to get some
other cookies.

ASTRID
No! There could still be some
inside! You never know.

Henry SIGHS.

HENRY
Ok, we'll look real quick.

As they head inside, Henry spots a muscle car partially covered by a sheet. *Hunh... Where have I seen that before?*

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - LOWER FACTORY - LATER

Dusty conveyor belts and cobwebbed hoses hang from the ceiling. The kids creep through the aisles- Oliver is wearing a head lamp.

TOMAS
Is anyone else like... very scared
right now?

NADIA
Do you think we'll see a ghost?

OLIVER
I think it is more likely that
these machines will turn on and
kill us in an industrial accident.

TOMAS
Oh dude.

A Beat. They look around.

HENRY
Astrid, I don't think there's any
cookies in here.

Astrid points to a window on the second level.

ASTRID
There! The office. I bet they have
some up there.

HENRY
Come on. Let's just-

ASTRID
Please? Paul's not here. And I
don't wanna go alone.

HENRY
Alright, we'll check it out
together.
(to the others)
You guys stay here.

Henry and Astrid head up the stairs. Oliver gets tangled in a hose and tries to pull himself out as Nadia begins taking SELFIES.

NADIA

(to camera)

It's ya girl Nadia. We're here, hunting ghosts in this haunted cake factory. It's super creepy and I heard a guy died and got mixed into the frosting.

TOMAS

Is that true?

Behind her a NOISE RATTLES. Tomas and Oliver turn.

NADIA

(to camera)

Oh my gosh. Did you hear that? I think I saw something!

They duck behind some boxes as Pip, Margo, and Jerry enter the warehouse and begin loading sacks of money and Santa outfits into the trunk. Jerry carries the wanted posters and a bag of groceries.

JERRY

(re: Police sketch)

Pip, I didn't say your wanted poster's ugly. I'm just saying that some guys can pull off a beard and some can't and maybe you're not a beard guy.

PIP

Jerry, you're an idiot.

MARGO

(teasing)

I dunno Pip. I think my picture is pretty good.

She vogues with the Santa beard.

Unaware, Henry and Astrid come out of the office!

ASTRID

Guys! You'll never believe it! We found a box of cocoa-butterscotch cookies. And they're smaller than a half dol-

Astrid stops when she sees the robbers holding the Santa outfits, money, and wanted posters.

Then a FLASH and a SHUTTER SOUND. The crooks look down to see Nadia pointing the phone camera at them.

JERRY

You guys see them too, right?

MARGO

Babe. I think those kids just took a picture of us...

PIP

(to Nadia)

Hey kid, lemme see that phone for a second I just wanna take a look.

HENRY

(AHA!?)

Wait, you guys are the Santa Robbers!

A BEAT.

HENRY (CONT'D)

PIP

Run!

GET 'EM!

The kids TAKE OFF!

Pip and Margo JUMP across the conveyer belts as Tomas, Oliver and Nadia SCATTER into the factory! Henry grabs Astrid and runs across the scaffolding! Jerry doesn't know which way to run so he spins and SLAMS into into a beam!

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - LOWER FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Nadia searches high and low for a place to hide. She OPENS up a locker to find TOMAS already in there!

TOMAS

It's every man for himself!

He slams the door as she runs off!

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - UPPER FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Pip jumps up to the catwalk and corners Henry and Astrid.

PIP

It's cool. Let's just go get your friends phone and we'll letcha go.

ASTRID
We don't negotiate with terrorists!

She KICKS him in the shin and they RUN PAST.

PIP
AH! You little-

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - FACTORY OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER

Nadia and Oliver creep down a row of offices. Margo APPEARS at the end of the alley.

MARGO
Hey little girl. And tiny safari man.
(to Nadia)
I like your Sparkle Pony coat. Is that cashmere?

NADIA
I - I think it's plastic?

MARGO
Oooh, nice. Now can I see that cell phone for a sec?

NADIA
It was a gift!

She GRABS a can of 80's hairspray from the desk and SPRAYS Margo!

MARGO
Ah! Are you kidding me?! I complemented your coat!

Nadia and Oliver sprint past.

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - LOWER FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Tomas peeks out of the locker. All clear.

TOMAS
Whew.

He steps out and leans against an old lever. It TRIPS! Above, a metal pipe SWINGS and SMASHES into a pulley! The chain links begin to crack!

TOMAS (CONT'D)
Oh no.

He looks up to see the chain holding a *FROSTING CAULDRON*.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
It's happening. The machines...

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - LOWER FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Henry and Astrid run into Nadia and Oliver.

HENRY
You can't go that way, the guy is
there!

OLIVER
Well the girl is over there!

They turn to see both STUMBLING toward them- Margo rubbing
her eyes and Pip LIMPING. Jerry sits up rubbing his head.

PIP
Come here you little trolls.

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - UPPER FACTORY - SAME

Tomas finds a series of levers and chains. He starts pulling
them! But they're too old and more links begin to break and
conveyer belts start LURCHING FORWARD and UNRAVELING!

He pulls more levers. The whole link system PULLS off the
wall and is LAUNCHED out the window!

INT. MRS. DIMPLES - LOWER FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Margo, Jerry, and Pip close in on the kids.

PIP
What should we do with them, Margo?

MARGO
We could bake them into pies. Sell
them to the town.
(to Nadia)
Starting with her.

NADIA
Ah!

PIP
Mmm.

Pip reaches for them. But above, the FROSTING CAULDRON chain CRACKS!

PIP (CONT'D)

Oh no.

BOOM! The Frosting CAULDRON SMASHES down, sending the Robbers flying as the emergency sprinklers BLAST on.

EXT. MRS. DIMPLES COOKIE FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

The kids meet outside as BOOMS erupt, sending dust mushrooming out of the factory.

HENRY

Is everyone ok? How did that happen??

TOMAS

(covering, heart racing)
I have no idea. Probably faulty wiring or something. Are we alive?

HENRY

Guys, we gotta keep moving!

They skedaddle as dust BLOWS OUT the windows.

EXT. MRS. DIMPLES COOKIE FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

A side door is KICKED open. Three dust and muck covered figures emerge from the factory.

PIP

Dig out the car, Margo. I'm gonna murder some kids...

A BEAT.

MARGO

Why would I do that? What do you think we have have Jerry for??

JERRY

Guys, remember. It's not "us against each other" It's "us against the problem."

MARGO

Jerry, get the car!

PIP

Shut up, Jerry!

Jerry goes to dig out the car.

PIP (CONT'D)
(to Margo)
Gimme your phone.

MARGO
(sotto)
"Margo, dig out the car. Margo,
gimme your phone. Margo, don't hit
the hostages." You're so
controlling!
(then)
What are you doing now?

PIP
Calling the cops. I think it's time
for a 'Cincinnati.'

MARGO
(anger evaporates)
A 'Cincinnati?' Really? For me?

PIP
Yup. 'Cincinnati.'

Margo GRINS, then pulls out a rag, bottle of booze, and a
lighter from the car.

PIP (CONT'D)
(to phone, in nerdy voice)
Hello, police? Yes, I live nearby
and I just saw a group of kids, I
think they may have set the cookie
factory on fire?

Margo LIGHTS the molotov and WHIPS it at the building! FOOSH!

EXT. CROSSROAD - EVENING

The kids finally stop, glancing behind them.

HENRY
I think we're safe.

TOMAS
Do those people live in that
factory? Is that our future?

ASTRID
Those were the Santa Robbers from
TV!

TOMAS
We have to go tell the cops!

HENRY

Wait. Nadia, you got a picture of them, right? We could send that to the cops?

NADIA

Oh yea!

She fishes out her phone... it's DRIPPING water.

NADIA (CONT'D)

Ah man... I had so many ideas for Tik-Tok dances...

Henry takes Nadia's phone and puts it in his backpack.

TOMAS

So we go to the cops, right?

HENRY

They'll be gone by the time they get there anyway. Besides, we only have till midnight to get the pinecone and the Christmas Spirit.

The others hem and haw.

NADIA

I really think we should go tell the police, Henry.

HENRY

Fine. We find a cop and tell them, but then we're on our way, ok?

The others nod and they all set off on their bikes.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

A POLICE car idles in a side lot as DAVE THE COP listens to *JINGLE BELL ROCK* and dips his donut in hot cocoa.

The Kids park their bikes and start walking toward the car.

RADIO (O.S.)

Attention Car Seventeen. Dave, you there?

DAVE THE COP

Yea Mags, go ahead.

RADIO (O.S.)
Some anonymous caller just said
some kids set fire the old Mrs.
Dimples cookies factory. Comeback.

Henry pulls them out of sight as they listen-

RADIO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Said it was five of them on bikes.
One of them may be in his mid-
thirties.

They glance at Tomas. He SHRUGS.

DAVE THE COP
Alright I'll check it out.

The Cop puts the car in gear as the kids SQUEEZE to the corner. He passes by without seeing them.

HENRY
Whew.

TOMAS
I can't go to jail. They're think
I'm an adult and make me join a
gang! An adult gang! I'll have
to... skank people or something!

HENRY
(lying)
Maybe Santa can help us with the
cops too?

ASTRID
Exactly. There is obviously magic
going on here. I mean what are the
odds that that there is a full
package of coco-butterscotch
cookies just laying around a
factory that has been out of
business for like, a hundred years!
It's a sign!

Henry considers... *that is actually a weird amount of
coincidences?*

HENRY
Yea. Exactly.
(then)
So now, according to the list, we
need a "Golden Fir Pinecone." Where
do we find one of those?

Oliver grins.

OLIVER
I have an idea...

EXT. ROADSIDE - SAME

Brian and Gloria walk on the shoulder.

GLORIA
(grimacing)
Ah. I should've worn better shoes.

BRIAN
Do you need to rest?

GLORIA
Do you?

A Beat.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
I once hiked the Camino de Santiago
in eighteen days. Most people take
at least a month.

BRIAN
Wow. That's incredible. That's in
Spain, right?

GLORIA
Yes. Don't look so shocked.

BRIAN
Sorry. You just strike me as more
of a... homebody.

GLORIA
There's a lot you don't know about
me.

BRIAN
Except that you hate children and
cook a truly unimaginable amount of
fish... I really don't. Were you
ever married?

Gloria bristles, but...

GLORIA
Yes. I was married. But we never
had children.

BRIAN

Ah.

A BEAT.

GLORIA

He wasn't the child-raising sort...
Actually, turns out he wasn't the
husband sort either when he ran off
to Florida with a twenty-year-old
llama farmer

(hardening again)

But we all have stuff in our lives.
Whatever.

Brian HUGS Gloria.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

No. Stop this right now. Oh, I hate
this.

He lets her go. She checks her pockets for theft.

BOOM! Ahead, they see a plume of smoke rising from the
treeline.

BRIAN

What is that??

EXT. MRS. DIMPLES COOKIE FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

They arrive to FIREFIGHTERS SPRAYING DOWN the factory. Mrs.
Dimple's face is MELTED.

Dave the Cop holds back ONLOOKERS.

BRIAN

What's going on here?

DAVE THE COP

Some kids burnt down the old cookie
factory. This generation is really
twisted.

Brian spots bike tracks leading down a path...

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - ENTRANCE - LATER

Christmas lights twinkle at the entrance with animatronic
Elves WAVING to customers as XMAS MUSIC BLASTS. FAMILIES
LAUGH on a tractor-ride through the decorated fields.

Other FAMILIES get trees wrapped in nets as TEENAGERS and YOKELS help cut and tie them to cars.

RADIO REPORTER (O.S.)
And in other news, we're just now hearing reports of Santa being sighted just off the east coast. Only a matter of hours now, so get snuggled in those beds!

Oliver reveals the scene to the crew-

OLIVER
This is where my nanny took me to get our GIANT tree!

Henry watches the HAPPY FAMILIES pick out trees.

HENRY
(ruffled)
Great, let's grab a pinecone and get outta here.

ASTRID
It HAS to be a Golden-Fir pinecone that hasn't opened yet. Or else it won't work!

HENRY
Got it. Let's get going. We only have a couple hours before it gets dark.

Everyone nods and sets out into the farm.

EXT. TREE FARM - BACK LOT - LATER

In the back area of the farm, the kids peer into pine trees.

TOMAS
Nada over here.

OLIVER
Did you know that tree sap can be used as an anti-inflammatory to heal wounds. So if you break your leg in a forest, just cut down a tree and rub sap on it!

ASTRID
How do you cut down a tree with a broken leg?

NADIA

Gah! Know-it-Oliver, don't you know
any facts about like, cool stuff?
Like hypnotizing boys to fall in
love with you or something?

A BEAT. Oliver blushes.

NADIA (CONT'D)

What are you staring at? Is my
makeup smeared?

OLIVER

Oh, no. It's... good.

HENRY

I think we should fan out a bit.
We'll go faster that way. Tomas and
Oliver, you take that side. I'll go
with Astrid this way.

NADIA

What about me?

HENRY

You stand guard.

NADIA

Guard?? Superstars don't guard!

Nadia sits down and POUTS as the others spread out.

JERRY (PRE-LAP)

Look, there's their bikes!

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - ENTRANCE - SAME

The muddy muscle car PULLS UP and CRUNCHES the kids bikes.
The WINDSHIELD WIPERS struggles against the gunk, WHIPPING it
at FAMILIES.

Jerry exits the driver seat and surveys the car.

JERRY

You know, it kinda camouflages it.

Pip steps out, still filthy, as Margo tries to comb the muck
from her hair.

PIP

Ugh. All this cheeriness gives me
the creeps.

MARGO
Do you hear yourself when you talk?
You're like, SO negative.

A YOKEL approaches the car.

YOKEL
You know y'all are covered in mud,
right?

Margo grabs his face and PUSHES him into a bin of wreaths.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - BACK LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Pip, Margo and Jerry search through the trees.

PIP
You see anything, Margo?

MARGO
I want a Christmas tree this year.

PIP
What?

MARGO
We never get a tree. It might be
fun. Like a little one for the
motel room?

PIP
Ugh. You know I hate Christmas.

MARGO
(aside, to Jerry)
He's a total Grinch because he
almost got adopted on Christmas and
the family backed out at the last
minute, blah blah blah. It's like,
get over it!

JERRY
Margo. I think what Pip is saying
is, when you diminish his traumas,
it makes him feel small.

MARGO
Ok, Jerry. You're officially banned
from watching Dr. Phil anymore.

JERRY
Aw.

PIP
(listening)
Wait. What's that?

Then, from across the field-

NADIA (O.S.)
(singing)
Is that my bessy in a tussy?

Pip nods toward Nadia.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - BACK LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Tomas pulls out an old birds nest and drops it, FREAKED OUT.

NADIA (O.S.)
GUYS! Come help! I'm in terrible
trouble!

OLIVER
Is that Nadia?

They TAKE OFF toward Nadia's voice!

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - BACK LOT - SAME

Astrid tries to climb branches while Henry peers into trees.

NADIA (O.S.)
Help, guys!

HENRY
Huh?

ASTRID
My sister requires help. Caw-CAW!

They start running.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

The Kids reconvene just before the clearing-

NADIA (O.S.)
Guys, help! Theres a huge possum
and it's coming toward my feet.,
Oh! It's eating my toes. Oh the
blood. The humanity!

HENRY
(whispered)
Wait!

TOMAS
What??

HENRY
Something's off.

NADIA
Oh it's coming up the legs. My
ankles! My poor, beautiful ankles!

TOMAS
You're right. She sounds...
unnatural.

ASTRID
She must be acting.

HENRY
Exactly.

They PEER through the clearing and see Pip holding Nadia by
the scruff of her neck!

PIP
Come on, convince them to come save
you.

NADIA
I'm sorry but I just don't feel
like this character is motivated.

Pip rolls his eyes.

HENRY
(to other kids)
I have an idea...

He looks to a sign on a fence: "EMPLOYEES ONLY"

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - BACK LOT - LATER

The Robbers march Nadia through the trees.

NADIA
Oh heavens! The Possum has brought
friends. Soon there will be nothing
left of me but gorgeous clothing!

HENRY (O.S.)
Hey! You dorks looking for us?

They SPIN around, looking for the disembodied voice.

HENRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You better get over here!

ASTRID (O.S.)
And let my annoying sister go!

The Robbers YANK Nadia toward the voices.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - REPAIR SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Haphazard Christmas lights lay across fences and hay bales as unkempt ANIMATRONIC SANTA VILLAGERS function near the path.

Margo eyeballs a BROKEN WAVING ELF as they pass.

PIP
(to Margo)
So you're telling me this isn't
creepy ?

HENRY (O.S.)
So you found our hiding spot!

The Robbers spin around.

PIP
Come out or we plug your friend!

MARGO
(quietly, to Pip)
Plug?

HENRY (O.S.)
No way. We brought the cops!

Margo and Jerry glance around in fear.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - REPAIR PILE - CONTINUOUS

We see Tomas hiding behind a barrel.

TOMAS
(deep voice)
Yea. This is the authorities! And
we're... very upset!
(to Henry)
I told you I'm not good at this!

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - TRACTOR PATH - CONTINUOUS

PIP

Oh thank goodness the police are
here. We caught those kids who
torched the factory!

MARGO

They're real sickos, officer!

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - DITCH - CONTINUOUS

Oliver lays prone, watching them with mini-binoculars.

OLIVER

(unsuccessfully aging-up
voice)

We are trained on your position. At
our signal we will fire our machine
guns!

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - TRACTOR PATH - CONTINUOUS

PIP

Machine guns?

MARGO

(revved up)

You ready to blast your way out of
this, baby?

JERRY

Wait, what are we doing?!

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - SHED ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Astrid peeks over the Santa hut roof.

ASTRID

(aging up voice)

And when you are dead the crows
will eat your fingers!

Henry WINCES. None of them sound like adults. He glances at
the nearby snowplow.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - TRACTOR PATH - CONTINUOUS

PIP

Ok, that one was definitely not a
cop...

Margo takes the gun!

MARGO

(yelling, pissed)

Ok, I'm cold and I'm tired and this
game is starting to piss me off. SO
whoever is out there, you have
three seconds to come out or your
friend doesn't see New Years...
One. Twooooo...

BOOM! A SNOWPLOW crashes through the ANIMATRONICS, with HENRY
in the driver seat!

Pip DIVES out of the way as Margo FIRES at the tractor
BARRELING DOWN on them!

Oliver SPRINTS from the trees and TACKLES Nadia out of the
way! The snowplow SCOOPS UP the Robbers and BURIES them in a
pile of snow.

Oliver and Nadia hit a tree, causing pinecones to drop onto
them.

Nadia looks up to Oliver-

NADIA

You saved me!

OLIVER

Thinking about all possibilities of
a situation is the definition of
staying prepared.

NADIA

Ya lost me.

She rolls her eyes and pushes Oliver off.

Henry JUMPS out of the tractor

HENRY

Come on!

The kids take off down the path.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - ENTRANCE - LATER

They run back to the front of the lot and see their bikes under the muscle car.

The Yokel comes out of the booth-

YOKEL

Hey, y'all need to hold it right there! What was all that noise?!

The kids DUCK and run toward the street. He runs after and tries to GRAB Oliver. Oliver shakes him as the YOKEL tries to jump across a table but goes INTO the tree netting machine!

Covered in netting, he watches as the kids escape-

YOKEL (CONT'D)

Ah man. Momma's gonna fire me again.

A LITTLE BOY comes up and POKES the Yokel with a stick.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

The kids finally come to a stop and catch their breath.

TOMAS

I don't want to do this anymore guys. We have to go to the cops. They'll understand.

HENRY

NO.

They are all taken back by Henry's outburst.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sorry. No. We have to keep going. If I- If we don't do this... we'll lose everything.

Astrid notices something in Nadia's hood. She pulls it out.

ASTRID

GUYS.

OLIVER

That's a Golden-Fir pinecone!

TOMAS

Where'd you find it, Nadia?

NADIA

It must've fallen in my coat when
Know-It-Oliver tackled me?

ASTRID

Finding The Old Man, the cookies in
the abandoned factory, and a
Golden-Fir pinecone just FALLING
into Nadia's hood? This is fate!

HENRY

(sotto, could this be
real?)
I mean, it actually is all pretty
weird...

OLIVER

This has been the greatest day of
my life. I feel like I just
wanna...

Oliver KICKS a pole!

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Ow!

HENRY

(back to the plan)
Seriously though, we can do this...

Tomas considers...

TOMAS

Alright. If you REALLY think this
is gonna get us to meet Santa, I'm
down.

HENRY

(lying... maybe)
I do. I think we will meet Santa.

NADIA

Let's get a quick snack and then be
on our way.

They roll their eyes and start down the street. Oliver hands
her a candy.

OLIVER

Here. It's a diabetes candy from
when my Grandma visited.

NADIA

Eh, beggars can't be choosers.

Oliver smiles to himself.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - TRACTOR PATH - LATER

A hand PUSHES out of the snow as three faces emerge, GASPING!

MARGO

AIR!

They crawl out, SHIVERING and blue.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - ENTRANCE - LATER

They push past FAMILIES to get into-

INT. MUSCLE CAR - CONTINUOUS

PIP

T-they're d-d-dead. I d-don't care
if w-w-we get th-the e-e-electric
chair.

MARGO

N-no way. I-I-I'm d-done chasing
these k-k-kids. We l-l-eave n-n-
now.

Pip sees her and screws up his face.

PIP

Uh, M-Margo. You may w-wanna have a
l-l-look.

Margo flips down the rearview... she's missing a front tooth!
She stares for a moment, then closes the mirror.

MARGO

I-I'm gonna b-burn d-own this w-w-
hole town.

Jerry goes to start the car.

JERRY

G-Guys? I t-think I lost the k-keys
in the s-s-snow pile.

A BEAT. Margo and Pip stare DAGGERS.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Y-Yup. I'll g-go find 'em.

Frozen Jerry SLOWLY exits the car.

EXT. JORGENSEN TREE FARM - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Brian and Gloria hustle up to the devastation as EMPLOYEES carry out broken animatronics and try to dig out the tractor. Brian spots their smashed bikes in front. They approach the Yokel as he finishes freeing himself from the netting.

BRIAN
What happened here?

YOKEL
Some kids stole the tractor and went on a rampage through the woods. Smashed up dang near all the Christmas robots!

GLORIA
(to Brian)
That sounds like your precious angels.

BRIAN
Do you know how many kids came through here?
(to Yokel)
What did they look like?

YOKEL
Big one. Couple little ones. One looked like Indiana Jones. I dunno.

Brian turns to the wreckage.

BRIAN
What have they gotten themselves into?

EXT. RURAL ROAD - LATER

The kids trudge along the side of the road as CARS PASS. Nadia practices dance moves as she and Oliver bring up the rear.

OLIVER
Hey Nadia.

NADIA
Yea?

OLIVER

I have a question for ya? I hope it's ok.

NADIA

If it's about science or math, then no. It is not ok.

OLIVER

It's not. I've always wondered, what happened to all your real parents?

NADIA

Oh... Well Tomas's parents got deported when he was three and then his aunt who was taking care of him got too old and put in a home. He came to Brian's about six months ago.

NADIA (CONT'D)

Astrid and my parents died in a car wreck when we were little. But she doesn't really remember them. We came to the house about a year and a half ago.

She pauses... then motions to Henry-

NADIA (CONT'D)

And Henry's been here the longest. He bounced around a lot after his parents left him with a friend of theirs when he was a baby. Was supposed to be just for a few days, but they never came back.

OLIVER

Oh wow.

NADIA

Yea. Brian and Sarah's house has been the nicest place any of us has stayed.

(beat)

But she died last year. It was really sad...

An awkward Beat.

OLIVER
(not knowing what to say)
You know today has been like, the
most fun I've had in a long time.

HENRY
(to all)
Hey, we're almost to the main
square!

NADIA
Keep up, Know-It-Oliver!

Nadia HITS Oliver in the arm and runs ahead. *He's smitten.*

EXT. MAIN STREET - XMAS EVE NIGHT

The kids hustle back to Main Street and glance around at the
BUSTLING stores. A TV report in a store window reads "SANTA
SIGHTED OVER GREAT LAKES!"

HENRY
Ok, what do you think The Old Man
would think is good enough
Christmas Spirit?

OLIVER
A big present!

ASTRID
Worms!

TOMAS
What if we made Santa some coupons
for a therapeutic massage?

As they consider, a BAR CRAWL of drunken SANTA BROS exits one
bar and heads for another.

OLIVER
Hey, they seem spirited!

HENRY
Wait, Oliver!

Oliver disappears into the crowd.

HENRY (CONT'D)
GAH!

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

They scour the street, weaving in between the Drunken Santa throng.

HENRY

Oliver!

ASTRID/NADIA

Oliverrrr!/Know-It-Oliverrrrrrr!

At the edge of the crowd, Oliver spots a DRUNKEN SANTA BRO breaking off from the pack.

SANTA BRO

(singing)

Jingle Bells! Jingle Bells! And to
alllllll a good night!

OLIVER

(sotto)

He seems especially festive.

Henry and the others spot Oliver as he follows the Santa Bro into the alley.

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

The Santa faces away as he fumbles with his zipper.

OLIVER

Sir! Excuse me sir!

SANTA BRO

Huh?

The Santa Bro turns and SLIPS on the snow, KNOCKING his head! He's out cold! Henry and the others run up-

HENRY

Oliver! What are you doing?

OLIVER

What? I just followed this stranger
into a dark alley to ask him about
the spirit of Christmas?

(a beat)

Was that wrong?

They all glance at the unconscious Santa Bro.

HENRY

Let's get him out of the snow.

The kids TRY to LIFT him. No dice. Lift him by his clothes. Nope. Finally, they grab him by his legs and DRAG him out of the alley.

INT. WEIRD SHED - LATER

The Santa Bro groggily comes to. He's in a shed with calendars and swimsuit pictures on the walls.

SANTA BRO
Wha? Where am I??

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME

We see a tiny parking attendant shed in the middle of an empty lot.

INT. WEIRD SHED - CONTINUOUS

The Kids step out of the dark corner, all wearing the CROCHETED, FULL FACE CAT MASKS.

SANTA BRO
What the hell?! What is this? I told Ricki I'd get him money by new years!

HENRY
We brought you inside to warm up.

The Santa Bro looks down at him arms tied to the chair.

SANTA BRO
Then why are my arms tied to the chair!?

NADIA
You kept falling over so we decided to hold you up by tying you to the chair.

TOMAS
Now that I think about it, this does seem like we're kidnapping him, guys.

HENRY
Listen. All we wanted to ask you is... "What is Christmas Spirit?"

BEAT.

SANTA BRO

WHAT?

NADIA

Like, is it presents or cute dresses or romance between a busy woman from the city and a lonely single father who runs a ranch in small town?

SANTA BRO

I have no idea??

Astrid grabs an electric fly swatter from the wall and ZAPS the Santa Bro!!

ASTRID

Tell us what Christmas Spirit is!

TOMAS

This is definitely kidnapping now.

SANTA BRO

Geez! Ok, ok! It's uh, sugarplumbs and nutcrackers!

ASTRID

You're lying!

She ZAPS him again.

NADIA

She knows when people are lying, it's a weird thing she does.

ASTRID

Tell us!

ZAP ZAP ZAP!

SANTA BRO

Um, ginger bread houses, Christmas carols, golden rings, A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE! Ahhhh please stop! That really... kinda... hurts!

Astrid gets in his face with the crackling flyswatter-

SANTA BRO (CONT'D)

WAIT! Ok, Ok the one thing that always made my parents happy around Christmas was alcohol. That's what I think Christmas spirit is.

Astrid eyes him...

ASTRID
He's telling the truth.

She drops the Swatter. They start shuffling out.

HENRY
Ok. Thank you sir. Stay warm!

SANTA BRO
Wait, are you guys leaving?

NADIA
Merry Christmas!

They leave him alone in the shed.

SANTA BRO
Wait you gotta untie me! Don't
leave me in here! I still have to
pee! PLEASE!

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER

They approach a liquor store and see a sign in the window.

HENRY
"Wine and spirits." This must be
the place!

TOMAS
What should we get?

NADIA
Uh, guys?

A giant window display with an enormous snowglobe. "*Olson's Peppermint Schnapps - for that warm, fuzzy feeling!*" It shows adults clinking glasses, happy and singing! It shines out like the holy grail.

OLIVER
I don't know what's snaps are, but I
want some.

HENRY
Ok, so... who's going in?

They all look to Tomas.

TOMAS
What? No. I'm not going in there?

HENRY

You're the only one who looks even close to old enough.

NADIA

You get mistaken for our dad a LOT.

Tomas starts HYPERVENTILATING.

HENRY

Ok bud. You got this. I believe in you.

(beat)

You wanna meet Santa and save the house, right?

Tomas nods.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it's gonna be fine.

They watch as Tomas takes a DEEP BREATH and heads inside.

INT. LIQOUR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Tomas takes a few steps inside, then turns to see the crew watching. They shoot him BIG SMILES and THUMBS UP! He turns back to the store.

He glances around - CUSTOMERS searching the aisles of booze. A CLERK ringing up purchases. A WOMAN WITH BIG BOOBS passes him as she EXITS. He's MESMERIZED. Then SNAPS BACK-

He glances down at his shirt, FLOP SWEAT SPREADS from his pits and chest. He moves forward-

TOMAS

"It's gonna be fine." "It's gonna be fine."

He walks up to the counter and goes to open his mouth-

EXT. MAIN STREET - MINUTES LATER

The kids mull around the sidewalk.

HENRY

What is taking him so long?

Then, a SCREAM and a CRASH! The giant schnapps snowglobe CRASHES through the window and rolls out into the street!

INSIDE the SNOWGLOBE is TOMAS, TERRIFIED as he ROLLS into the town square! People jump out of the way as it heads straight for the SANTA village and CRUSHES THE SANTA HUT!

The kids run after and pull Tomas out of a back hatch as people stream toward the scene!

TOMAS

It wasn't fine. IT WASN'T FINE!

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

FAMILIES rush to the rubble of the Santa Village as Brian and Gloria arrive and witness the PANDEMONIUM.

Brian SPOTS the kids helping Tomas out of the wreckage. And they're holding a bottle of liquor!

BRIAN

Kids??!

The kids don't notice him as they RUN across the field and into an alley. Brian SLUMPS into a park bench. (In the background a group of TEENAGE ELVES tries to move the snowglobe off the Santa Hut.)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

You were right. They're hooligans.
Creating a wave of destruction
everywhere they go.

GLORIA

I know it's hard to admit. But you
can visit them in prison...

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

The kids regather away from the commotion, as Tomas produces the alcohol.

TOMAS

I'm never going to a liquor store
or buying alcohol or talking to
people ever again!

HENRY

I can't believe it's actually all
coming together... It's like...

ASTRID

A Christmas miracle!

Henry stows the booze in his backpack.

HENRY

Ok, let's head to The Old Man, show him the stuff and save our house.

Henry SPINS and BOUNCES off a CHEST- It's Pip, backed by Margo and Jerry.

MARGO

Hiya, darlings.

She GRABS Henry as Pip PULLS a gun.

TOMAS

Gun!

Tomas DIVES into the trash pile as Oliver tries to RUSH Pip and Pip immediately trips him.

PIP

I gotta say, and this may sound a little hypocritical, but you guys need better parenting.

OLIVER

(puffed up)

We're gonna make Santa appear so he can save their house!

A BEAT. Margo, Pip and Jerry BURST OUT LAUGHING!

PIP

Aren't you all a little old to believe in Santa?

ASTRID

He's real! Henry tell him he's real!

They all look to Henry, who looks to Pip and hesitates.

ASTRID (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh. You don't believe.

Henry's face falls. Astrid deflates.

ASTRID (CONT'D)

The phone's in the backpack.

Margo roots through Henry's backpack and comes out with the DRIPPING phone.

MARGO
It's broken?!

Margo releases Henry.

PIP
If we ever see anyone of you again,
you'll never grow your adult teeth.

NADIA
I already have several of my adult
teeth!

OLIVER
(menacing)
Most of us do!

MARGO
Ok. As much as I love this, and I
really don't. We gotta go.

They turn to see Oliver standing in their way.

MARGO (CONT'D)
Uuuugh. What now?!

HENRY
(through gritted teeth)
Oliver, what are you doing??

Oliver puffs up his chest.

OLIVER
You didn't destroy the picture.

PIP
What do you mean -
(imitates Oliver's British
accent)
"we didn't destroy the picture?"

HENRY
Oliver, shut up!

OLIVER
It's backed up on my home server,
like all the pictures on my
phones... So you're still going to
jail. HAH.

The crew FACEPALM. Margo and Pip pause, then Pip GRABS
Oliver!

PIP
Margo, grab the others!

MARGO
Grab all of these children?

Pip considers.

PIP
Ok new plan! We take the explorer
here back to his place, delete the
photo, and leave this godforsaken
town forever.

OLIVER
Guys? Get 'em! Guys! Henry??

Henry looks down ashamed. T

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Seriously? You guys aren't gonna
fight for me?

Pip drags Oliver into the muscle car as Jerry awkwardly TRIES
to slide across the hood .

MARGO
(to kids)
You tell any adults, we kill
Jeeves.

They all get in and drive away.

NADIA
(to Henry)
Were they telling the truth? About
Santa?

HENRY
Santa's not real, ok?!

The others takes a step back.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(explodes)
How long are you going to believe
in him? When he lets you down over
and over again! And you still
believe he's gonna show up for
you?? You just have to stop being
little kids and learn how to take
care of yourselves!

A BEAT as the other take this in.

Then, Nadia PUSHES past him, grabbing the items from Henry's backpack and slipping them into hers.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

NADIA

I know we tease him a lot...Ok, I tease him a lot. But Oliver's one of us. And we look out for each other so... I'm gonna go save him.

HENRY

Nadia, you can't go by yourself.

TOMAS

She's not. I'm going with her. And then I'm gonna meet Santa Claus and save our house.

ASTRID

Me and Imaginary Paul are also very mad at you.

Astrid stomps after them. Henry stands for a moment, then heads in the other direction.

EXT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - SIDEYARD - LATER

The snow howls. On the side yard, Henry angrily TUGS at a window.

HENRY

Stupid Santa... Just do it yourself... Lose the house... I'll save it.

He stumbles back and the photo of his parents falls out of his pocket. He picks it up and stares at it for a moment... then TEARS it to pieces!

HENRY (CONT'D)

Why didn't you ever come back for me? Everybody leaves me!

He TUGS at the window again when a piece breaks off and sends Henry tumbling into the snow! He LAYS back and stares up at the BLUSTERY sky, tears in his eyes.

Then, a face enters frame- it's The Old Man.

THE OLD MAN

Have a slip did we?

HENRY
No I was just-

THE OLD MAN
Testing the security of my
shutters?

He motions to the broken slat.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Looks like they're pretty sturdy
eh?... Cocoa?

The Old Man reaches out his hand. A BEAT and Henry takes it.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SIDEYARD - SAME

Tomas, Astrid and Nadia creep up to the mansion and peek in the window. They see shadows moving around the house.

CRACK. They spin to see Margo.

MARGO
I'm getting REALLY sick of you
little rascals.

She moves closer as-

INT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Henry EYES the ring box as they enter and sit.

THE OLD MAN
Where are your friends tonight?
It's Christmas Eve after all.

HENRY
We uh... They're off doing their
own thing.

THE OLD MAN
Ah. And this is you, "doing your
own thing?"

Henry considers... Then caves.

HENRY
We're gonna lose our house. And we
have been going around all day
trying to gather up your stupid
list of things to conjure up Santa
or whatever.

Henry again eyes the ring box. The Old Man clocks him.

THE OLD MAN

And you think that was a waste of time?

HENRY

Oh come on! I know you were just being nice to them. There's no such thing as Santa Claus or magic or anything like that.

THE OLD MAN

Perhaps. Or perhaps it's all about the magic we make ourselves. Just believing in the people we love, and who love us.

The words penetrate Henry.

THE OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Or maybe I'm just a crazy old man with too much time on his hands! But what I do know is that hot cocoa always helps clear the mind when making hard decisions.

The Old Man heads into the kitchen. Henry sneaks over and opens the ring box. It SPARKLES in the firelight. He considers...

INT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - DEN - MOMENTS LATER

The Old Man reenters the room with mugs on a tray.

THE OLD MAN

You know the hard part is the milk to cocoa ratio, so you don't get clumps-

The front door is open. Henry is gone. The Old Man walks over to the ring box and opens it. The ring is STILL there.

The Old Man smiles.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SIDEYARD - LATER

Henry creeps up to the window. Inside he sees Oliver tied to a chair as Pip angrily types on the desktop.

PIP

Gah. It says we need an uppercase letter too!

OLIVER

(admiring the ropes)
You know a constrictor knot would be more secure to keep me from escaping. These clove hitches probably aren't gonna do the trick.

PIP

Keep it up, kid. I'll stuff you in the chimney.

Henry creeps along the side of the house to the living room window, where the others are tied back to back. Margo, wearing multiple necklaces, holds up two pairs of earrings-

MARGO

This one? Oooooor this one?

TOMAS

Who cares! Let us go!

NADIA

Second one.

From the intercom-

PIP (O.S.)

Margo, get over here and help me look for stuff that might give away the password.

Margo rolls her eyes and exits the room. Back outside, Henry ducks down and considers his options. Then, he spots a little X drawn on the nearby wall. *The symbol Oliver put on the secret passages.*

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Margo comes stairs, dripping in a ridiculous amount of jewels.

MARGO

Coco Chanel once said "before you leave the house, take one thing off."

PIP

I keep getting this error screen.

MARGO

I think it's the bracelet. The bracelet's too much.

PIP
Can you focus??

MARGO
Ugh. You're no fun anymore.

She knocks a vase off its stand, BREAKING it.

PIP
This isn't about fun. I'm trying to
keep us out of jail.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Henry pushes open the door into the basement passage.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tomas, Astrid, and Nadia sit tied up.

NADIA
I'm gonna try to wiggle out.

She CONVULSES against the ropes.

ASTRID
Stop you're squeezing us!

A painting swings out and Henry crawls into the room.

TOMAS
Henry!

HENRY
Shhhh!

He begins to untie them.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I've got a plan to get us all outta
here. Even Oliver. But we'll all
have to work together.

NADIA
Why should we trust you? You don't
believe in Santa Claus, or us!

HENRY
You're wrong.
(to Tomas)
Tomas, I know you're worried about
growing up and being an adult.
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

But you are more than able to take on whatever happens. I mean, you basically blew up a liquor store and got away with it. If that's not badass, I don't know what is?

TOMAS

I guess you're kinda right?

HENRY

Nadia, I know you're afraid of people forgetting about you so you always wanna be in the spotlight. But you are an amazing person just like you are. You don't have to be anything extra... unless you wanna be.

NADIA

I wanna be... But thank you, Henry.

HENRY

And Astrid, I know you're afraid of being alone because someone might not be there to protect you, but you are the most independent person I've ever met. If anything, everyone needs protection from you.

ASTRID

You really think I'm that dangerous?

HENRY

And we can all save Oliver and stop these robbers, but only if we work together. What do you say?

The others consider... then nod. Henry smiles.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Now... where did Oliver say his boobie traps were again?

They GRIN.

TOMAS

Heh. Boobie.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - KITCHEN - LATER

Astrid sneaks into the pantry and starts grabbing snacks.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - MAIN HALLWAY - SAME

Tomas creeps up to the suit of armor.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - DARKENED ROOM - SAME

Nadia hits *activate* on an iPad and powers up the room.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - OLIVER'S ROOM - SAME

Henry sneaks into Oliver's room and opens the TOY CHEST. A drone, walkie talkies, spy cameras, rope. And all of Oliver's contraptions.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pip types on the keyboard, as Margo stands over him. Jerry tries to throw mixed nuts into the air and catch them in his mouth.

PIP
Stupid thing! Saying my passwords
don't match??

MARGO
You're such a grandpa.

Henry PIPES up over the intercom.

HENRY (O.S)
Hey nerds!

Pip and Margo spin around!

PIP
What the hell?

HENRY (.S.)
I've got the picture and I'm gonna
send it to the cops!

PIP
(to Jerry)
Where does it say he's at?

JERRY
(reads intercom)
The basement.

PIP
Well... go get him!

JERRY
I'm scared of basements.

PIP
Ugh. Margo, will you please go
handle him?

MARGO
You go handle him. I'm not a baby-
sitter!

PIP
Fine. We'll all go. We'll all waste
time to go find this kid. Happy?

MARGO
I'm very happy.

They exit. A BEAT. Then Henry POPS out from behind a secret
book shelf.

OLIVER
Henry!

He starts untying Oliver.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
You came back for me.

HENRY
Yea. And now we have to take care
of these bad guys. Pull up the
picture so we can send it to the
cops!

OLIVER
My nanny unsynced my phone from the
cloud so she could download her
murder podcasts. The picture's
gone...

Henry deflates.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
What do we do?

HENRY
Ok. I have an idea.

Henry whispers to him. Oliver glances to his beloved
Christmas tree.

OLIVER
Oh no! I couldn't!

HENRY
You must. It's for the adventure...

OLIVER
(steely resolve)
Ok.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Margo, Jerry, and Pip creep down the hallway.

MARGO
I swear we just walked down this
same hallway.

JERRY
Do you guys feel like the paintings
are watching us?

They spot a trail of snacks splitting off into two
directions.

PIP
Kids are messy.

MARGO
Is that why you don't wanna have
any?

PIP
Margo this is not the time for this
conversation.

MARGO
It's never the right time!

PIP
Ugh. You and Jerry just take the
right and I'll take the left. If I
finish first I'll come take care of
you.

MARGO
Heard that before.

They split off as Astrid and Nadia peek out from a painting.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - CORRIDOR - LATER

Pip creeps into the corridor.

PIP
Come on out kid. You're dealing
with professional criminals. We're
gonna find you eventually.

A little CLAPPING MONKEY waddles out into the hallway.

PIP (CONT'D)
Heh. Gonna take more than that to
scare me off!

He steps backward and a snare PULLS TIGHT on his leg.

PIP (CONT'D)
Huh?

FOOSH. FOOOOOOSH. A noise echos from around the corner.

PIP (CONT'D)
What the-?

Astrid and Tomas appear. Astrid is holding Oliver's MAKESHIFT
FLAMETHROWER. FOOSH! Tomas follows her with a fire
extinguisher.

PIP (CONT'D)
Whoa... Ok hey, be cool.

FOOSH FOOSH!

ASTRID
I'm gonna burn you up!

TOMAS
And I'm here for safety!

Pip desperately tries to untie himself as Astrid moves
forward - FOOSHFOOSH FOOOOSH! He glances around he sees a
tarp below the window outside.

At the last second, he LEAPS through the window!

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SIDEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Pip falls from the window onto the tarp- And SLAMS through it
INTO THE PIT!

The kids look out the window to see Pip in the pit-

PIP
Uuuuuuuuuuguggghh...

Tomas EXTINGUISHES a stray flame on the curtains.

TOMAS
(to Astrid)
You better go check on Henry!

Below, a cat comes up and LICKS Pip's nose.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - LIBRARY - SAME

Jerry and Margo enter the library. Books and busts fill the leather bound room.

JERRY
Little boy? Little boy are you
there? Please don't jump out and
scare us.

MARGO
You are such a wiener.

BZZZZZZZ. They turn to the desk where a DRONE fires up its wings. It's ZIPS up to face height!

MARGO (CONT'D)
A drone?

Jerry waves and TAPS at the drone camera.

JERRY
Huh. Hello?

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SECRET PASSAGE - SAME

Astrid sits with Henry, watching the camera feed on the controls.

ASTRID
Hey lady!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - LIBRARY - SAME

ASTRID (O.S.)
(via drone speaker)
Don't touch the merchandise!

JERRY
Oh cool. My nephew has one of
these!

The drone flies backward, then DIRECTLY into JERRY's face,
KNOCKING him back!

MARGO
COME HERE!

Margo LEAPS after the drone as it ZIPS out of the room.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SIDEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Pip CRAWLS out of the pit. As he stands, brushing dirt off, he CRACKS his back. *Jesus!* He SNARLS and heads to the front door when THE ALARM GOES OFF. He glances around, then unseen DOGS BARK!

PIP
(yelling)
Nice doggies!

He turns and SPRINTS the other direction, and FALLS straight back into the PIT!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SECRET PASSAGE - SAME

Nadia messes with the other iPad. She clicks OFF *Alarms* and *Dog Barking*.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SIDEYARD - SAME

Outside, the dog noises fall silent. Pip ROLLS over and spits out a wad of dirt.

PIP
UUUUUUGHHHHHA.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Margo stalks the hallways, holding a fire poker. The drone is nowhere in sight.

Then- The drone raises up behind her! She SPINS and SWINGS wildly, missing and hitting the floor!

ASTRID (O.S.)
Have to be quicker than that!

The drone FLIES from the room.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SECRET PASSAGE - CONTINUOUS

Astrid maneuvers the drone through the hallways.

HENRY

Ok. I gotta go get Tomas ready. You gonna be ok here?

ASTRID

Yea. I'm not afraid to be alone anymore.

Henry smiles and heads down the passage.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

The front doors KICK OPEN as Pip stands, filthy and fuming. He WINCES and holds the leg he used to kick the doors open.

PIP

You all are gonna pay for embarrassing me!

(as he walks)

Ow ah ow.

He hobbles inside then turns to see a suit of armor standing in the hallway. It WAVES.

PIP (CONT'D)

Uhhh wut.

TOMAS

(in the suit)

I'm- I'm here to be brave and to stop you.

PIP

Hah! Dumb move, kid.

PIP raises the gun and FIRES BLAM BLAM BLAM!

TOMAS

AAAAAAAHAH!

The bullets RICOCHET off the armor! Tomas inspects himself. He's ok!

PIP

Huh. That's pretty good armor.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The drone flies into a room.

MARGO

Gotcha now!

Margo runs after.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - SECRET PASSAGE/SECRET PASSAGE - SAME

Astrid clicks her walkie talkies, beeping Nadia in another passage.

ASTRID
Nadia. She's all yours.

NADIA (O.S.)
Thanks sis!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - AQUARIUM - SAME

Margo enters the darkened room.

MARGO
You guuuyys. I'm not gonna hurt
you. This is so silly.

She SWINGS the poker wildly in the dark.

NADIA (O.S.)
You are not a very nice lady.

Behind her, the door LOCKS.

MARGO
Hey, what is this?

LIGHTS FLOOD ON. Margo stands inside the Aquarium room.
Exotic sharks and fish swim in tanks as the lights dazzle!

MARGO (CONT'D)
Uuuuuhhhh.

NADIA (O.S.)
You have been chasing us alllll day.
Trying to keep us from doing
something very important. But
now... you need to learn that life
isn't always about YOU!

Margo tries the door.

MARGO
I'm claustrophobic! Seriously,
lemme outta here!

TERRIFYING HOUSE MUSIC BLASTS as the lights and colors dance
around the room.

It looks like the animals are MOVING and ATTACKING! The room seems to close in as Margo slumps against the wall!

MARGO (CONT'D)

No... NO!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Jerry sits up, rubbing his head and looks around.

JERRY

Ooof. I've been knocked out a lot today. I hope my brain's ok.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - FOYER - LATER

TOMAS

Ha. Haha! Yea, come on. I can't feel anything! Bring it on!

Pip grabs a decorative oar off the wall and cracks it over the armor!

TOMAS (CONT'D)

I am invincible! HAHAAH!

Behind, Astrid climbs out of a vent on top of a wardrobe. Pip huffs and puffs.

PIP

So, what? You just gonna stay in that tin can all night?

Astrid LEAPS off of a dresser and latches onto Pips neck!

ASTRID

YAAAAAW!

PIP

AHH! Get this little monster off me!

Tomas starts HITTING Pip as Astrid SCRATCHES and PULLS OUT HAIR!

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - HALLWAY - LATER

The door creaks open, revealing flashing lights and MURDEROUS DUBSTEP MUSIC. Margo CRAWLS out of the room, hair frazzled and eyes bloodshot.

MARGO
Must... Escape...

She kicks the door SHUT and crawls down the hallway.

INT. OLIVER'S MANSION - FOYER - SAME

Tomas and Astrid dog-pile on Pip!

TOMAS
I think we got him!

ASTRID
I think so!

A BEAT as Pip stops wriggling... then-

He THROWS them off and stands up like a man possessed!

Tomas falls out of the armor as he and Astrid scamper back down the hallway. Pip STALKS FORWARD, furious.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nadia, Tomas, and Astrid arrive back in the room. Henry sits at the computer.

NADIA
The crazy lady got out of the aquarium.

TOMAS
We couldn't hold off the British either!

HENRY
It's ok! We're almost home free!

PIP (O.S.)
I don't think so.

They turn to see Pip, bruised and limping, with chunks of hair missing. And Margo, barely hanging on to sanity. And Jerry, dealing with the effects of multiple head injuries.

MARGO
(to Pip)
I can't believe you couldn't just let this photo thing go.

PIP

You're the one that doesn't take anything seriously. I have to fix everything!

JERRY

Guys, I think I need to go to the hospital.

PIP/ MARGO

SHUT UP JERRY!

They move toward the kids-

HENRY

I wouldn't do that!

Henry's finger hovers over the keyboard.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I just have to press one button and the picture gets sent to the cops.

Pip approaches cautiously.

PIP

Listen kid, I get it. Christmas for foster kids sucks. No presents, barely any attention. Hell, I had to grow up, dress as Santa and steal money to buy my own presents... You need money for your house, right? We can help.

Henry hesitates.

NADIA

Don't listen to him, Henry!

TOMAS

Yea, that's blood money!

Henry is really considering.

MARGO

What's your other option? You really believe Santa is gonna come save you?

Henry glances at Astrid. She pleads with her eyes.

HENRY

No. But I believe in my family. And they believe in me.

Henry turns to hit the button but Pip GRABS HIM! He's too fast and Henry can't hit send!

PIP
It's a shame kid. I kinda liked you.

Pip cocks the pistol when-

HENRY
Oliver, NOW!

Oliver stands above them next to the giant Christmas tree, holding a hatchet to the support ropes.

OLIVER
(to tree)
I'm sorry my sweet girl.

He SWINGS the hatchet and cuts the ropes! The tree CREAKS--- but is CAUGHT! The rope isn't totally cut!

The Robbers LAUGH as Jerry YANKS Oliver down from his perch.

MARGO
Merry Christmas to all.

Behind Margo *something* snaps one of the remaining twines... Pip raises the gun. Another twine is SNAPPED. One left...

PIP
And to all a good night.

SNAP! The last twine breaks! A CREEEEAAAK as the ropes unravel and the tree SWAYS! Henry dives as the tree tips toward the Robbers.

PIP/MARGO/JERRY (CONT'D)
NOOOOO!/Ahhh!/Another concussion!

The TREE SMASHES down on the criminals knocking them out for good!

ASTRID
Imaginary Paul! You did it! YES!

She high fives the air. The kids glance at each other as SIRENS are heard in the background.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

The kids limp outside to see COP CARS squealing in. The Nanny stumbles out, half drunk.

NANNY

What's going on??

TOMAS

How'd the cops show up so fast?

HENRY

Our boy Oliver here sent Mr. D a message and Mr. D, of course, called the cops.

They spot Brian and Gloria hustling up the steps as Brian takes the kids in his arms!

BRIAN

Kids! I'm so glad you're ok! You had me so worried!

(then)

You all are so grounded! I saw you set a building on fire and steal liquor!

GLORIA

Eh, maybe cut them a little slack this time?

She motions to the Cops pulling the battered Margo, Pip and Jerry out of the house.

PIP

You don't have anything on us!

JERRY

You'll never get me to talk!

ASTRID

(to the cops)

There was a picture of them holding the money and disguises!

HENRY

Actually, there was never a picture on the computer... Oliver's phone was never synced.

ASTRID

So there's no evidence?

HENRY

Oh. I wouldn't say that.

Oliver exits the house holding a GoPro and a screen. He plays the confession from Pip.

PIP

"I had to grow up, dress as Santa and steal money to buy my presents... "

OLIVER

Had the camera in the Christmas tree to record Santa Claus.

Brian turns back to the kids as Oliver hands off the GoPro to the Cops.

DAVE THE COP

(to Robbers)

You're under arrest for breaking and entering, child endangerment aggravated robbery-

MARGO

(to Pip)

Well, I'm "aggravated breaking up with you", you narcissist!!

PIP

Not if I breakup with you first you looney witch!

JERRY

If you let me go, I'll tell you whatever you want! Pip is the ringleader! And Margo's so mean!

Nadia runs up with the Santa offerings!

NADIA

Hey! The plan! We can still do it! We have the stuff! We can save the house!

Tomas checks his watch.

TOMAS

It's one AM. It's too late. Santa's already passed over us.

The kids deflate.

BRIAN
I'm so sorry about the house, kids.

HENRY
It's ok. We know you tried your
best for us. And wherever we go,
we'll be together and that's all
that matters.

Oliver pulls a small red card out of the backpack.

OLIVER
Hey Henry, what's this?

HENRY
I have no idea.

INT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - DEN - FLASHBACK

Henry sits in the living room, glancing at the ring box. The
Old Man heads toward the kitchen, glances at Henry, then- He
SLIPS a small red card into Henry's backpack.

EXT. OLIVER'S MANSION - NOW

Henry opens the card.

HENRY
"Dear Henry. I have a small gift
for you and your friends at my
house." Mr. D, can we go see?

BRAIN
Guys. I'm exhausted. There's no way
we are going to-

ASTRID/TOMAS
PLEEEEEEEAAAAASE!/Dude!

NADIA
I won't stop singing until we
go!

BRIAN
(SIGHS)
Well... It's on the way home and it
is technically Christmas day so...
I guess.

ALL
YAY!

EXT. THE OLD MAN'S HOUSE - PORCH - LATER

The kids step out of cop cars.

ASTRID

Bye Dave the Cop! I took one of
your bullets!

The cars drive away revealing The Old Man's house... but its
barren and empty.

HENRY

What?? This can't be the same
house?

NADIA

There were tons of lights and
decorations!

BRIAN

I dunno kids, I don't remember this
house ever being occupied?

GLORIA

Definitely not.

OLIVER

Look! Something at the front door!

They run up and see a present on the doorstep. Henry reads
the card.

HENRY

"Henry. I hope you have had a good
Christmas. Good work getting
together all the items for the
list. I knew you would find your
Christmas Spirit."

Henry opens the box to find a key and some documents.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Huh... what's this key for?

He tries it in the lock and it opens...

BRIAN

Uh, I'm not sure if I'm reading
this right, but it looks like this
is a deed to this house... made
out... to us?

ASTRID

Santa did it!

BRIAN

Well, it says that this house was
actually my great-uncles... and
it's been in probate this whole
time...

ASTRID

SANTA DID IT!!!!

They run inside.

NADIA

I claim the living room!

ASTRID

I wanna live in the attic!

BRIAN

I dunno what you guys did today...
but good work.

HENRY

Thanks... Brian.

Brian's eyes well up and they HUG. Behind them-

GLORIA

Ok! Ok! No more lovely dovey. We
have a whole house to move AWAY
from mine.

Brian and the kids enter the house and Henry starts to
follow. Then-

JINGLE JINGLE.

He turns to see The Old Man with twinkly eyes standing under
a street light.

Henry WAVES and the MAN WINKS... then walks off into the
darkness. Henry runs into the house with his family.

HENRY

Hey, don't take all the good
bedrooms without me!

ASTRID (O.S.)

Invisible Paul said he wants to
live in the bathtub!

They kids play as we-

FADE TO:

EXT. THE FAMILY HOUSE - NEXT CHRISTMAS

The Old Man's former house is all decorated, with bikes and toys littering the front yard.

INT. THE FAMILY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Inside, all the kids race around a dinner table where Brian sets a freshly cooked roast.

BRIAN

Alright all, dinner time!

Brian sits at the table next to Gloria.

GLORIA

You know, this roast isn't as good as Sarah's.

BRIAN

Merry Christmas to you too, Gloria.

The kids sit as Oliver and HIS PARENTS enter the room and sit at the table, laughing and smiling.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

(to all)

Now did you guys set out milk and cookies for Santa?

They dig in as we MOVE UPSTAIRS to Henry's bedroom. The torn photo of his parents is back on the wall, patched with tape. But over it, is a new photo- Of Henry, Brian, Tomas, Astrid, Nadia, Oliver, Oliver's parents... even Gloria, scowling of course. All playing in the snow. A family. At last.

...AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!

POST CREDITS SCENE:

INT. JAIL - XMAS EVE NIGHT

Margo, Jerry and Pip lay in a small town jail cell. Margo decorates a pitiful tree while Jerry sets out a carton of milk and a honeybun on their cell edge.

PIP

I dunno why you waste your time
with that.

MARGO

I waste time with you. At least
this brings me joy.

They all get in their bunks, staring at the ceiling. Then...

JINGLE JINGLE JINGLE.

JERRY

Did you hear that?!

SMASH TO BLACK.