

"THE FRANCHISE"

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EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DETROIT -- EVENING

Christmas Eve.

Apartment buildings line each side of the road, some with colored lights, others with wreaths. There's snow on the ground, dark slush in the streets and gutters.

In a small yard outside one of the buildings, two YOUNG BOYS make a Snowman. The older, ROD, 12, shakes his head as KEVIN, 8, places a Detroit MTA hat on it.

ROD
Bro, what gives?

KEVIN
He's a bus driver.

ROD
A bus driver? The snowman's a bus driver?

KEVIN
Like Daddy.

ROD
Oh, so he's a loser?

Kevin turns to him. Handful of snow. BAM! In Rod's face.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- EVENING

Two hands button up a shirt with a prominent MTA logo and a name patch reading "Jesse". Standing in front of a full length mirror, JESSE, late 30's, straightens the collar, calls to his wife.

JESSE
Baby?!? You seen my hat?!?

EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD -- EVENING

Kevin dodges Rod, hides behind the Snowman.

KEVIN
Daddy's not a loser!

ROD
You ever wake up and see him on Christmas morning? How about Thanksgiving?

Kevin throws another snowball.

ROD (CONT'D)
4th Of July? You know why?

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- EVENING

Jesse pulls on his MTA jacket. His wife, REGINA, 30's, places a Santa hat on his head. Kisses his cheek. She stares at him in the mirror, drapes an arm over his shoulder.

JESSE
Kevin?

She nods.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Snowman?

Another nod. He smiles.

JESSE (CONT'D)
At least one of my boys doesn't think I'm a loser.

REGINA
Rod doesn't think you're a loser.

Jesse raises an eyebrow.

REGINA (CONT'D)
He's confused, that's all.

JESSE
You got everything you need?

REGINA
Well, what I really need is to be waiting at a cold bus stop in a fur coat and have some handsome MTA employee ask for my fare.
(whispers seductively)
But I don't have it....

JESSE
You do know I need to leave?

REGINA
Uh-huh. But I gotta make sure you come back.

JESSE
He gets out today.

REGINA
You picking him up?

JESSE

I don't know. He hasn't responded to me since...

REGINA

He's your brother. You should pick him up.

JESSE

I gotta get going. Walk me down?

EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD -- AFTERNOON

Kevin lands on his back. Snow hits his face. As Rod grabs the hat off the Snowman Kevin growls, tackles him into it.

KEVIN

You gimme that back!

Rod pushes him off, hops over the sidewalk fence, holds the hat over gutter slush.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Don't!

ROD

See where we live? That's 'cause Dad never had the guts to do anything more than drive a bus!

He drops the hat. Steps on it. Looks at Kevin who's displaying abject mortification. Fear. At something else. Rod turns - Jesse's on the steps with Regina. He removes the Santa hat, gives it to Regina and walks away. Regina steams. Points at the door.

REGINA

Inside.

KEVIN

But -

REGINA

INSIDE!

KEVIN

(to Rod)
Way to go.

They ascend the stairs, pass her. She slaps the back of Rod's head. Regina sees the MTA hat in the gutter, descends the stairs, retrieves it, gently shakes water from it.

She turns as Jesse reaches the end of the block. A bus pulls up, lets him on, drives away.

EXT. DETROIT MTA STATION - ESTABLISHING -- EVENING

Buses line the lot as others pull in and out.

INT. DETROIT MTA STATION -- EVENING

ABE SIMMS, 40's, thin, weathered, the Supervisor, briskly enters a room full of MTA DRIVERS, including Jesse.

He holds a clipboard, moves back and forth in front of a large map of the Detroit Metropolitan area.

ABE SIMMS

Okay. 10 minutes before shift change.
Show of hands - who didn't volunteer
to work this evening?

No hands.

ABE SIMMS (CONT'D)

Good. Last year, we had some issues
with drivers abandoning their routes.

EXT. DETROIT STREET - FLASHBACK -- NIGHT

An MTA bus, covered in snow. TWO EMERGENCY MEDICAL workers approach it, pry open the door. Gray from cold, hands frozen to the steering wheel is a DRIVER.

ABE SIMMS (O.S.)

One fell asleep and nearly froze to
death outside an old girlfriend's
house while stealthily parked in the
opposite direction of a one way
street.

The only movement comes from his eyes. The only sound's his distorted vocals - "*whore....whore....whore....*"

INT. DETROIT MTA STATION -- EVENING

Abe shakes his head.

ABE SIMMS

Another decided to do some donuts at
the park.

EXT. DETROIT PARK - FLASHBACK -- NIGHT

An MTA bus spins round and round the black top.

DRIVER (O.S.)

WHOO-HOO!!! WHOO-HOO!!!

It SLAMS into a curb, tips over.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT PARK - FLASHBACK -- NIGHT

The bus is now on its side, covered in snow. Emergency medical vehicles and a tow truck roll toward it.

ABE SIMMS (O.S.)
He nearly froze to death waiting for help.

INT. JIMMY G'S SPOT - FLASHBACK -- NIGHT

ANOTHER MTA BUS DRIVER sits at the foot of the stage as bodies dance in and out of frame.

ABE SIMMS (O.S.)
A third waited out the Holiday Sojourn
in Detroit's only all night
Gentleman's Club.

Behind him, a man approaches. Taps him on the shoulder. The Driver waves him off. Another tap. Another wave.

The man sits next to him, stares. It's Abe, complete with clipboard, MTA jacket. The Driver extends a dollar to the Dancer, never notices Abe. Abe writes a note down - "**fired**".

INT. DETROIT MTA STATION -- EVENING

ABE SIMMS
You men volunteered for this shift.
You're either lonely...

In the back, an MTA DRIVER's writing on a pad, complete with drawings. **HOW I'M GONNA BE HAPPY: 1) Find Friend, 2) Handcuff Friend In Basement, 3) Give Friend Haircut....**

ABE SIMMS (CONT'D)
You're bored.....

On the side, another MTA DRIVER's coloring his thumb with a pen. From a different angle, it looks like Abe Simms.

ABE SIMMS (CONT'D)
Or need the money.

Jesse fidgets.

ABE SIMMS (CONT'D)
But you're working. And you will work.

(MORE)

ABE SIMMS (CONT'D)

I'll be spot checking routes so if
you plan on pulling a fast one, well,
Bah-humbug.

A bell rings.

ABE SIMMS (CONT'D)

Let's go!

The drivers rise, move for the door.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- EVENING

Jesse rolls his flat nose bus out of the station, follows
another then takes a left turn.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- EVENING

Christmas decorations hang from street lights, fill the
windows, the edifices. Folks hurry up and down the sidewalks
on their way home. Some carry presents, others briefcases,
purses as they hail cabs, hop on buses, get into cars.

Most everyone's on their way home. Most everyone except the
HOMELESS MAN, 40's, sitting with a shopping cart parked next
to a cardboard box shelter.

He watches as a bus pulls up and stops. The door opens and
we see Jesse letting RIDERS exit. They start up the street.
SADIE MATTHEWS, 10, led by her mother, MRS. SENATOR MATTHEWS,
40's, passes the Homeless Man. Sadie breaks away, hands the
Homeless Man a wrapped candy cane.

HOMELESS MAN

Thank you, sweetheart.

Sadie winks, rejoins her Mother.

INT. CODY'S EX-WIFE'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

We've yet to meet Cody, but CODY'S EX, 30's, places a present
beneath a Christmas tree amongst very few others. The tag
reads "**TO: DADDY FROM: YOUR GIRLS**". She walks to the
window, crosses her arms, stares into the distance.

EXT. DETROIT CITYSCAPE -- EVENING

The entire city amidst snow flurries.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DETROIT CITYSCAPE -- NIGHT

It's nighttime, red & green lights sparkle on Christmas Eve.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - BOYS ROOM -- NIGHT

A couple beds. Some sports memorabilia, a Rihanna poster, clothes on the floor. Kevin's got a Teddy Bear. Regina pulls up the covers, adjusts the Teddy. She moves over to Rod's bed, stares at him with reserved love, pulls up his covers, touches his face, exits.

As she closes the door, the light slivers to nothing. A moment passes and we PUSH OVER the beds, stare out the window.

In the distance WE SEE two people exit onto the roof of the apartment building across the street, a woman, MRS. ROBINSON, 30's, is led by a man in a red and white Christmas suit. This is DETROIT SANTA.

MRS. ROBINSON
You're him? Seriously?

DETROIT SANTA
Straight up, woman. Wanna ride in my sleigh?

He leads her across the roof where we make out what appears to be a sleigh with animals - reindeer - in front of it. She's amazed.

MRS. ROBINSON
I'm not getting in that thing.

DETROIT SANTA
I'm a professional. Trust me.

He helps her step into the sleigh. A red light appears on the nose of the first reindeer as they all move in unison, pull the sleigh forward.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Here we go!

The reindeer LEAP into the air and off the roof. The sleigh follows.

MRS. ROBINSON
AHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

We're still watching from the boys' room as the Reindeer head right at us, kicking, leaping as the sleigh swerves side to side! Suddenly, the reindeer dive downward, take the sleigh out of sight before reappearing right outside as they SHOOT STRAIGHT UP PAST THE WINDOW.

A second later, the building shakes. The sleigh's crashed on the roof. The Boys shoot out of bed, rush to the window as an endless amount of wrapped boxes drop past them.

Numerous reindeer fly away, disappear in the night.

The Boys press their faces to the glass, try and see where things are falling from, push off the window, rush out.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Regina stands at the window, staring above as the Boys rocket around the corner, run for the front door.

REGINA

HEY!!!

Too late.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF -- NIGHT

The sleigh's upside down, hung up on the edge of the roof, presents flowing from a giant sack in the sleigh's rear. Detroit Santa's by the door, spread eagle on his back.

Mrs. Robinson's a few yards away, face down atop the only reindeer still here. Draped by an extravagant leather bridal with red, green and blue bells, an engraved leather chest palate with extravagant font reads "**COMET**".

Kevin and Rod blast through the door, nail Detroit Santa right on the head. He rolls over.

KEVIN

That's Santa!

Kevin sees Mrs. Robinson with the reindeer.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Hey isn't that -

REGINA (O.S.)

Nikki!

Regina's standing behind them. She moves from the door, helps Mrs. Robinson roll over, lean against Comet.

Detroit Santa opens his eyes, stares straight at the two boys above him.

DETROIT SANTA

Ho-Ho-Ho....

(realizes what's
occurred)

....hoooooo noooooo!

He sits up, sees Mrs. Robinson with Regina, the sleigh hanging off the side, the presents pouring out of the giant bag.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Boys, help out a brother.

He rises, rushes to the sleigh, pulls on the present bag.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Grab the other end.

Kevin reaches for it.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Not you, shortstop. The big guy.

Rod pushes by Kevin, grabs the end of the sack. Detroit Santa gives him a nod and they pull it up. With a gold sash, Detroit Santa secures the opening, glances over the edge. Kevin and Rod stand on either side of him, check out the pile of presents on the ground.

MRS. ROBINSON
I thought you were a professional?

DETROIT SANTA
In hindsight, I should've gone to the driving seminar. My bad.

There's a purse on the ground. He pushes off the edge, picks it up and approaches Mrs. Robinson.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Yeah. Be careful. Looks like Comet's coming to. He's a live one.
(holds up her purse)
Hey, you got a cellphone in here I can I borrow? I seem to have misplaced mine.

Mrs. Robinson turns to Regina - "can you believe this guy" then motions for her purse. He tosses it.

KEVIN
Are you - are you - are you -

DETROIT SANTA
Cold? Yes. I am.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - MUMBAI -- NIGHT

A HUGE room with row upon row of cubicles. MUMBAI EMPLOYEES sit at computer screens. All wear Santa hats, phone headsets.

We TRACK PAST a row of OUT SOURCED CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES, pick up the use of blatantly non-Mumbai first names with Indian accents, "Hello, this is Mark", "this is Karen", "this is Bill" until we reach RAJEEV, 20's, thin, intelligent.

RAJEEV

Hello, this is Jeff. Merry Christmas
and how I can I help you this evening?

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa's on the phone.

DETROIT SANTA

Are you in Detroit?

RAJEEV

I am outside Detroit, sir. How can
I help you this evening?

DETROIT SANTA

Are you even in the States? I bet
your name's not Jeff. It's not Jeff,
is it?

RAJEEV

What's the problem you're having,
sir?

Detroit Santa glances at the sleigh, the boys petting Comet,
Regina and Mrs. Robinson staring at him.

DETROIT SANTA

A coupla' angry black women are about
to pitch me off a roof. You got a
solution for that?

RAJEEV

Have you tried telling them you know
Denzel?

DETROIT SANTA

That's very funny. *Jeff.*

(turns away from group)

Look, I didn't exactly attend the
seminars and I'm having some trouble
with my deliveries. You think maybe
you could hook me up with someone to
possibly, I don't know, help a brother
out?

RAJEEV

Sir, it's specifically outlined in
the handbook, each Franchisee -

DETROIT SANTA

Man, I'm just looking to get these
presents delivered. Now you gonna
help me or not?

RAJEEV

Hold please?

DETROIT SANTA

Don't put me on hold, Jeff! Hello!?!
Hello?!?! Jeff!?!?

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - MUMBAI -- NIGHT

Rajeev's seat is empty. We pick him up approaching the Control Room.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

The Main Office. Glass windows with open venetian blinds. Large desk. Huge wall with back lit world map and scores of BLINKING RED LIGHTS, some moving, some grouped together.

BRAD NIXON, 50's, bald, sits with his feet up on the desk. Rajeev knocks on the door jam, pokes his head in.

RAJEEV

Sir? I have a problem.

BRAD

Have you tried the Call Center?

Rajeev humors Brad with a grin.

RAJEEV

I couldn't get through. And they're all Indian so why bother.

Brad winks at him.

RAJEEV (CONT'D)

I have a Franchisee requesting some assistance with his deliveries.

Brad stares back at him. Nothing.

RAJEEV (CONT'D)

You're not going to help this guy are you?

BRAD

Not at all. But thanks for stopping by.

Rajeev nods.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - MUMBAI -- NIGHT

Rajeev slides back in his desk, slips the headset on.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF -- NIGHT

Phone jammed into his shoulder, head creaked to the side, Detroit Santa's writing names and numbers on his hand.

DETROIT SANTA
Uh-huh.....Uh-huh.....I'll try 'em.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - MUMBAI -- NIGHT

Rajeev speaks softly. On his computer screen, a couple dots are highlighted with information bubbles extended from them - names, numbers, locations.

RAJEEV
I'm sorry I couldn't be more help
but we've got something of a...
(looks over cubicle
at Brad)
...Glass ceiling here.

DETROIT SANTA
Ahhhhh...white folk.

RAJEEV
(smiles, sits down)
Exactly.

DETROIT SANTA
Gotcha.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse slows to a stop, glances at a TOUGH LOOKING KID, eyeballs him as the door opens and the Kid exits. Jesse watches the rear view as the Kid disappears around the back.

The door shuts and Jesse puts it in gear, pulls away. A few moments pass when something hitting against the vehicle's metal bashes out. Jesse slams the brakes, grabs a bat from behind the seat and opens the door.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse jumps out the bus, bat up.

JESSE
Come on! You wanna mess with my
bus? Come on!!!

He makes his way around each side of the bus, jumps defensively, looks beneath it. No one.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse sets the bat down, closes the door. Puts it in gear, glances at the large mirror above him. A Reindeer, **DANCER**, stares back at him. Jesse screams. Dancer screams, levitates, moves upward.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse vaults out of the bus, lands in a snow bank. Dancer remains inside, silly grin on his face, not wiggled, just chilling. He lowers to the ground.

JESSE

What the.....?

Jesse walks up to the glass. Peers through, checks out Dancer. Similar extravagant leather bridal and engraved chest plate as Comet's.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Naaaaah.....really?!?

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Like a puppy, Dancer raises his head, positions his antlers so Jesse can pet him. Jesse's hand reaches out tentatively, touches his head, gently strokes him. Dancer smiles.

JESSE

Dancer? Your name's Dancer?

Dancer closes his eyes in pride.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You can fly, Dancer?

Dancer seems to nod.

EXT. CHICAGO -- NIGHT

Another sleigh's on the ground, another giant bag of gifts in the back, another set of Reindeer attached to the front. Beneath the sleigh's CHICAGO SANTA, holding a cell phone with one hand, wrench with the other.

CHICAGO SANTA

Look, I'd love to help you, but I got my own problems right now.

He tosses the phone to the ground, puts both hands on the wrench, pulls it toward him. Further away, WE SEE the sled's resting on the pitcher's mound at Wrigley Field. A trail of landing marks stretch like trenches through the infield.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS -- NIGHT

Flying through the frame's a third sleigh pulled by another set of reindeer. At the helm's INDIANAPOLIS SANTA. He flies out of frame as a NEARBY EXPLOSION rocks his sleigh.

INDIANAPOLIS SANTA
(answering phone)
YEAH?!?

The sleigh comes back in frame.

INDIANAPOLIS SANTA (CONT'D)
NO CAN DO, JACK! MY GPS JUST
FREESTYLED ME INTO MILITARY AIRSPACE!!

Another NEARBY EXPLOSION rocks the sled.

INDIANAPOLIS SANTA (CONT'D)
GOTTA GO!!

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa hangs up. Turns to look out over the city.

DETROIT SANTA
Gotta find those reindeer.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

A dryer spins clothes round and round.

Santa sits down on a stool in a wife beater, boxers, Christmas hat. Just above him to the left's a small washer/dryer over-under unit. Across from him are Rod and Kevin.

DETROIT SANTA
Where was I?

KEVIN
How you became Santa.

DETROIT SANTA
Yeah.....well, I know a guy. Hooked me up. If Detroit's your idea of getting hooked up. Seemed like a good idea, this being the first year and all. You get -
(points a finger for each element)
One Sled. One suit. One Present Bag, A Rudolph, A Donner, A-

ROD
 (interrupting)
 You got Rudolph?

DETROIT SANTA
 AAAAAAA Rudolph. A. Not "the".
 But my Rudolph IS from his DNA,
 so....yeah, kinda.

ROD
 You're not really Santa are you?

DETROIT SANTA
 Kid, to everyone in the Detroit
 Metropolitan area, I'm Santa. Keep
 this up you'll be getting Christmas
 presents from the Easter Bunny.

The door opens and in walks Jesse. Detroit Santa turns,
 kids sitting near him. Regina comes around the corner with
 the Santa Jacket.

REGINA
 Okay, I sewed up -

Upon seeing Jesse, she stops. He eyes Detroit Santa, looks
 back at her. She gives him nothing. He motions with his
 head again at Detroit Santa. A spark of recognition flashes
 in her eyes and she winks.

REGINA (CONT'D)
 He's Santa.

JESSE
 That's Santa?

REGINA
 Yes.

KEVIN
 Yeah, Dad!

ROD
 He's Santa!

JESSE
 Baby? A word?

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Jesse and Regina are inches apart. In the background's the
 boys with Detroit Santa. Jesse whispers, albeit aggressively.

JESSE

You wanna tell me why some Salvation Army Bell Ringer's sitting in my kitchen, wearing nothin' more'n a dirty tank top, boxers and talking with my boys?

Regina smiles.

REGINA

Honey, you're not gonna *BELIEVE* what I'm about to show you.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF -- NIGHT

The sleigh's been righted. Comet's attached to the front. Detroit Santa stands with the boys petting Comet. Jesse's having trouble processing the information.

JESSE

So you're....so you're.....so you're -

ROD

Cold?

KEVIN

Yeah.

They share a smirk. Bump fists. Jesse shakes his head, turns to his wife. She smiles, nods.

JESSE

Wow.

He glances at Detroit Santa.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Well, I have something in my bus. I think it belongs to you.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

We RISE UP From the opposite side of the bus, see through the open windows as Jesse, Detroit Santa, Regina and the Boys exit the building. Dancer's inside, defying gravity as he leaps from one end to the other.

DETROIT SANTA

Dancer.

(looks back at Jesse)

You better let him out, he has a tendency -

JESSE

Too late. I had to open the windows.

DETROIT SANTA

Yeah....

JESSE

The floor. The seats. We gotta get him out of there.

DETROIT SANTA

Where we gonna put him? Might as well leave him in there while we get the others.

JESSE

The others? What others?

DETROIT SANTA

The other Reindeer. We need to find 'em. That sleigh ain't gonna pull itself, Jack.

Kevin's jaw drops, Rod turns to his mother who winks at him.

JESSE

Whoa-whoa-whoa. I can't just take off. I have a job. Responsibilities.

DETROIT SANTA

Without my reindeer this whole metropolitan area's gonna be a mushroom cloud of tears and whining.

JESSE

What are you asking?

DETROIT SANTA

Help me save Christmas.

JESSE

I'd love to help you. I want to. I do. It's just -

KEVIN

Daddy?

Jesse glances at the boys, his wife. Regina stares back at him, subtly motions to the boys. Jesse exhales, faces back toward Detroit Santa. Weighs his choices.

JESSE

You fronting? I mean..
(takes a step forward)
Are you really.....him?

DETROIT SANTA

For Detroit? I am him.

JESSE
What's that supposed to mean?

DETROIT SANTA
I know a guy. Look - are you gonna
help me or not? 'Cause if ya'
ain't...

Regina moves into Jesse, puts her arms around his waist.

JESSE
I'm gonna lose my job. Guaranteed.

REGINA
We'll figure it out, honey.

JESSE
You say that now. The way things
are, I could end up back doing what
I was doing with Cody.

She kisses his cheek.

REGINA
You won't.

JESSE
Yeah, why's that?

REGINA
'Cause you're *my* man.

Jesse ponders, glances at Regina, Kevin & Rod, back to Santa.

JESSE
(still looking at
Detroit Santa)
Boys?

ROD & KEVIN
Yeah, Dad.

JESSE
Get your coats.

They bolt into the building.

INT. DETROIT PRISON - PROCESSING MONTAGE -- NIGHT

A jail cell opens. A pair of legs in prison issue clothing
step into frame. A paper bag of belongings lands on a
counter. A hand signs for them with a pencil, sets it down
on a clipboard.

A black flight jacket's pulled over a shoulder. A watch slipped on a wrist. A black wool knit cap placed on a head. A pair of Doc Marten boots laced up.

INT. DETROIT PRISON - GATE -- NIGHT

We're standing behind CODY, 30's, Jesse's brother. He's very still as a sliding security door opens up. The night, the wind, the cold, the snow makes its way inside.

Cody zippers his jacket all the way.

PRISON GUARD (O.S.)
Y'all come back soon now, ya' hear?

Cody walks outside. The gate closes behind him.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Kevin and Rod stare straight ahead. Jesse's at the wheel, Detroit Santa to his right.

JESSE
Wait a second. You're telling me
Christmas has been.....*franchised*?
Like McDonalds?

DETROIT SANTA
Exactly like McDonalds. You get a
sled. A suit. You get the magic
bag of presents. You get an owner's
manual.
(points a finger for
each reindeer)
You get a Rudolph. A Comet.

JESSE
(interrupting)
You get Rudolph?

ROD
AAAAAAA Rudolph.

KEVIN
But his Rudolph's got the DNA-

DETROIT SANTA
So....yeah, *kinda* Rudolph.

JESSE
And how'd you get hooked up?

DETROIT SANTA
I know a guy.

JESSE

And your guy gave you Detroit?
(chuckles)
What he have against you?

DETROIT SANTA

It's all I could afford, alright? I couldn't even get into the bidding for something like Beverly Hills. Though to be honest Injun with ya' I'da been bankrupt by the time they opened bidding. Besides, having to deliver all those BMW's, mountain bikes, iWatches..... No. Not me. And I don't speak Spanish so there was no sense of going after Paris. That would've been a complete waste of Time-o.

JESSE

Pretty much no one wanted Detroit.

DETROIT SANTA

Pretty much.

He winks at the kids.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

It's not a bad gig. And if this bus thing's not working for you, it might be a nice alternative. Just take over the payments. That's all I'm asking. Just take over the payments and it's yours. The sleigh, the registration -

KEVIN

The Reindeer.

ROD

The magic presents bag.

JESSE

Look, I don't wanna be driving around all night. What are we doing?

DETROIT SANTA

You know where the zoo is?

JESSE

Of course. You think that's where they all went?

DETROIT SANTA

Nah, other animals don't like
Reindeer. They'd be in mortal danger.

KEVIN

Why's that?

DETROIT SANTA

'Cause they're beautiful, can fly
and hang out with Rudolph and Santa.
Imagine being a Pug or a Mastiff
with those jowls, drooling like a
car wash soap sponge as a Reindeer
strolls by. It'd be like living
next to Superman. Sounds cool, but
after the millionth person's asked
'how's superman', 'isn't superman
cool', 'can you hook me up with
superman' you'd probably be not too
happy with Superman. Nah, only
animals that like Reindeer are other
Reindeer or something from their
lineage.

ROD

Like maybe deer?

DETROIT SANTA

That's right, smart guy. They gotta
stick together. Don't wanna think
what'd happen if one of 'em got
surrounded by a bunch of other
critters.

JESSE

Zoo's pretty close.

DETROIT SANTA

Good. We'll get Cupid first. I'm
absolutely positive he's there.

Really bad 70's heavy bass music starts playing.

EXT. DETROIT ZOO -- NIGHT

The music continues.

We CRANE DOWN from the Detroit Zoo sign, reach the street
level, TRACK AWAY from the gate, find ourselves behind **CUPID**.
Same leather reigns, leather nameplate. He glances around,
then LEAPS over the gate, lands on the other side

EXT. DETROIT ZOO - WALKWAY -- NIGHT

Cupid, super loopy confidence in his eyes, come hither in his stroll, makes his way through the zoo, checking out the various habitat cages.

Cupid sees a LIONESS, lounging seductively on a rock. Cupid does "the wink" and she bats her eyes. He moves toward the habitat when her Lion Mate's ROARRRRR precedes the King Of The Jungle's sudden appearance in frame. Cupid coolly changes direction, continues on his way.

EXT. DETROIT ZOO - DEER HABITAT -- NIGHT

Cupid turns the corner, hears some deer purring, stops.

In the habitat are two young, HOT LOOKING FEMALE DEER. Cupid smirks at us, turns around. The Female Deer move into each other a bit, check him out, invitingly. Again, Cupid does "the wink". They bat their eyes and he LEAPS over the moat separating the walk from the habitat, lands in front of them.

They part and he rises on his hind legs, drapes a front hoof over each, walks with them into the cave, their cotton tails wagging. What a stud.

EXT. DETROIT ZOO -- NIGHT

We're back at the gate. The bus pulls into frame.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse puts the bus in to park.

JESSE

Hey, how long is this gonna take
'cause it's, you know, getting there.

DETROIT SANTA

Remember when you were a kid and
Christmas morning couldn't come soon
enough but it took forever?

JESSE

Yeah.

DETROIT SANTA

Well, that's just it. Christmas Eve
lasts until the final present's
delivered.

Jesse stops, pushes a button to open the door.

EXT. DETROIT ZOO -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa exits the bus, stands, sniffs the air.

DETROIT SANTA

Yeah. He's here.....

Detroit Santa walks toward us, blocks the frame.

EXT. DETROIT ZOO - DEER HABITAT -- NIGHT

We PULL BACK from our Two Babe Deer standing next to each other, very sad. Detroit Santa leads Cupid away.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa secures Cupid in the back between Dancer & Comet. Jesse, still in the driver's seat, holds a map.

JESSE

Okay - all of Detroit. I've circled my apartment building here.

Detroit Santa moves toward the front. Cupid gives Dancer a look, a nod. They high-five hooves. Kevin sees, turns to Rod who's become increasingly bored. Kevin punches his arm.

ROD

Owwwww...

Kevin points to the reindeer. Rod looks at them, his brother, gets an idea and rises from his seat.

JESSE & DETROIT SANTA.

Detroit Santa eases up to the map.

JESSE

So, this is the zoo. Looking at it, where do you think our next move is?

DETROIT SANTA

Hmmm...

ROD & KEVIN.

Rod's untied Comet.

ROD

Go on.

KEVIN

No.

ROD

Baby.

KEVIN

I'm not a baby.

ROD

Then do it.

Kevin checks out Jesse as he confers with Detroit Santa. Turns back to Rod. Whatever "it" is, he's gonna do it.

JESSE & DETROIT SANTA.

JESSE

Look, I just....I wanna help.

In the background, Kevin climbs on top of Comet. Rod reaches for the emergency door open switch, pulls it. WHOOSH! The hydraulics flip the sides free. Rod slaps Comet's backside - he LEAPS through the opening.

KEVIN

DAAAAAAAAADDDDDDDDDYYYYYYYY!!!!!!

EXT. DETROIT ZOO - JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse, Detroit Santa and Rod pour outside, stare up at the sky. Kevin and Comet fly away from them, shrink smaller and smaller until they're a dot then...disappear. Jesse turns to Santa who continues staring at the sky.

DETROIT SANTA

(holding a hand up)

Wait for it...wait for it....

Reluctantly, Jesse turns his attention back to the sky. Sees a dot appear, then watches as Comet and Kevin become bigger and bigger, hears Kevin's screams and crying, watches Comet land right where he took off from. Jesse goes to Kevin, pulls him off as Detroit Santa takes hold of Comet's reins.

JESSE

It's okay....It's okay.

He shoots daggers at Rod, enters the bus, leaves Detroit Santa, Comet and Rod outside.

DETROIT SANTA

You know, I had a younger brother.
And I treated him just like that.

ROD

Yeah?

DETROIT SANTA

Yeah. Nowadays, whenever I need anything, he makes it real hard for me to ask for help. I got the guilt thing working my heart, the payback working his heart...real messy.

In the background, we see an ELDERLY MAN slowly approach, full plastic bag in hand.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

So when you do things, like put your little brother on a Reindeer and send him into the stratosphere, you're not exactly banking up solids you may need when you're older.

ROD

Yeah? Well, that ain't hurt my pop none. He did the same to his bro and it don't phase him one bit. So tell me, Jack, why should I listen to you?

DETROIT SANTA

You know it all don't you?

Kevin smirks as the Elderly Man reaches the bus. Knocks on its side.

ELDERLY MAN

Excuse me. This the 217?

Detroit Santa and Rod both turn to Jesse as the Elderly Man approaches, pets Comet.

ELDERLY MAN (CONT'D)

Whoa - that's a big doggy! Is it a mastiff?

Everyone exchanges a glance.

DETROIT SANTA

Yes. Yes it is.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The Reindeer are secure. Kevin sits up near Jesse, Detroit Santa a couple seats back, the Elderly Man near the front door, Rod in the way back.

The Elderly Man looks around. Takes in the three Reindeer. The bully brother, Detroit Santa with his "like me please like me" grin, Kevin with his head down and Jesse driving.

EXT. BUS STOP -- NIGHT

Jesse pulls up to the curb. Opens the door. The Elderly Man gets out, walks down a stretch between two buildings.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse holds up the map. Detroit Santa rises, approaches.

EXT. COURTYARD -- NIGHT

The Elderly Man appears from between the two buildings.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa tries to moves the map one way, Jesse the other.

DETROIT SANTA

Hmmmm....

JESSE

Stop.

DETROIT SANTA

Lemme turn it.

JESSE

Stop!

DETROIT SANTA

I need to see this, this other-

JESSE

STOP!

(pulls map away)

Please.

Rod and Kevin recoil. Know when Dad gets mad. Jesse sighs. Stares at Detroit Santa.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You have no idea where they are do you?

EXT. COURTYARD -- NIGHT

The Elderly Man stands perfectly still. Scared.

ELDERLY MAN

(softly)

Wild dogs. Good wild dogs.

A set of antlers enter frame, then another set, then more and more. From above, WE SEE the Elderly Man's surrounded by DONNER, BLITZEN, PRANCER, DASHER and VIXEN.

All but Rudolph. Each has leather reins, chest plates.

The Elderly Man closes his eyes, his grip on the plastic bag loosens and it slips away. The contents SMASH on the ground. Scared, the Reindeer LEAP INTO THE AIR, TAKE OFF!!

The Elderly Man opens his eyes, relaxes.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa and Jesse are going at it. The map rips.

Meanwhile, Kevin looks out the window, into the sky. Again, his jaw drops and he points a shaky finger. Curious, Rod leans over, looks out the window.

ROD

DAD!

Detroit Santa and Jesse rush to the window. All look up into the sky. The Reindeer. Flying in and out of clouds, silhouetted by the moon, kicking, leaping. The Reindeer in the back of the bus get antsy, move about, pull on their leather straps attached to seats and poles. Jesse sits down, puts the bus in gear.

JESSE

Everybody hang on!

Detroit Santa and the boys sit with their faces plastered against the windows. Jesse pulls out, checks out the sky.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Somebody help me.

DETROIT SANTA

Uh.....

ROD

Just keep going straight, Dad.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

The bus rolls along at the speed limit.

EXT. DETROIT SKY -- NIGHT

The Reindeer start to peel off.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa notices they're getting ahead of them.

DETROIT SANTA
 Hey, uh, buddy? Mind moving this
 land submarine a little quicker?

Jesse sees they're moving far away.

JESSE
 (downshifts)
 Wanna play, huh?

He hits the gas.

EXT. BUS STOP -- NIGHT

Abe Simms stands at the Bus Stop. Checks his watch, checks his clipboard. Leans out to look down the road, straightens. Cody's standing there, startles him.

CODY
 Sorry.

Suddenly, Jesse's bus tears around the corner, takes up about a foot of curb as it heads their way.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Things are getting a little hectic in here.

DETROIT SANTA
 There! There!

JESSE
 I got him! I got him!

KEVIN
 Daddy!

JESSE
 (looking up at sky)
 I see 'em, Kev!

Kevin's not talking reindeer, he's talking folks on the sidewalk.

EXT. BUS STOP -- NIGHT

Hearing the engine, Cody turns, eyes fixed on the bus barreling down.

CODY
 What the -

Abe turns as the headlights catch him.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Kevin points and SCREAMS!

KEVIN
WHITE MAN!!!

Jesse sees bodies on the sidewalk, swerves the bus as Cody and Abe dive into the snow.

EXT. BUS STOP -- NIGHT

Jesse takes the bus back on the road. Narrowly misses parked cars in the process. Kevin and Rod are pressed against the windows watching the guys sit up in the snow.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

They're further down the road.

JESSE
They okay?

Detroit Santa nods assuredly, then sneaks a backwards glance to make sure. Meanwhile, Jesse looks up into the sky.

JESSE (CONT'D)
We're down to one.

Detroit Santa squints.

DETROIT SANTA
Looks like Donner.
(thinks)
Hey, how far's that building with
the belfry?

Up ahead, the light's turned yellow at a busy intersection.

JESSE
Oh...oh...oh...Not good. Not good.

EXT. INTERSECTION -- NIGHT

Jesse's got a red light. The others are green. But he's going way too fast. From above, we're watching as TWO OTHER MTA BUSES move toward each other with Jesse headed perpendicular to them.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse slams his foot on the accelerator, stiff arms the steering wheel, squints one eye closed and hopes for the best. The others follow suit.

EVERYONE
 AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

EXT. INTERSECTION -- NIGHT

Miraculously, Jesse passes through the intersection moments ahead of the other two busses. Again, the boys are at the window watching the world go by. This is starting to become less scary and more fun.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

KEVIN
 You rock, Daddy!

ROD
 In a big way, Otto!

INT. POLICE CRUISER -- NIGHT

Sipping a cup of coffee, CAPTAIN RICKY DAVENPORT, 30's, witnesses the near collision. He sighs. Puts the top on his coffee, adjusts his driving gloves, cracks his neck.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 Let's do this.

He peels out.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse cranes his head looking for the Reindeer.

JESSE
 You see him? Anyone? Bueller?
 Bueller?

Detroit Santa glances back. Flashing red and white lights.

DETROIT SANTA
 Hey.....hey.

JESSE
 You got him?

DETROIT SANTA
 No. He's got us.

JESSE
 What?

ROD
 It's "The Man", Dad.

Jesse checks out the rear view mirror. Police Cruiser.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The Bus slows to a stop, the hydraulic brakes hissing once it's still. The police cruiser pulls up behind, red and blue lights swirling.

INT. POLICE CRUISER -- NIGHT

Captain Ricky puts it in park, opens the door and places a foot on the ground. Steam appears as he exhales and shivers.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Damn!

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Watching from the rear view mirror, Jesse sees Captain Ricky slide back in the cruiser, pull the door closed.

JESSE

What? What's he doing?

Captain Ricky's voice bellows through the Cruiser's speaker.

CAPTAIN RICKY (O.S.)

EXIT THE VEHICLE WITH YOUR LICENSE
AND REGISTRATION AND GET OVER HERE!

JESSE

(to himself)

You gotta be kidding me.

CAPTAIN RICKY (O.S.)

I'M NOT KIDDING YOU. EXIT THE VEHICLE
WITH YOUR LICENSE AND REGISTRATION
AND GET OVER HERE! LET'S GO BUDDY!
PUT SOME ANDALE ON THAT BUTT!! LET'S
GO! HUT-HUT-HUT-HUT!!!

EXT. BUS & CRUISER -- NIGHT

Jesse exits the bus, walks toward the passenger side of the Cruiser. Captain Ricky's hand appears above the roof from the driver's window, waves him over.

CAPTAIN RICKY

This side! This side!

Jesse approaches the window as Captain Rickey snaps his fingers, extends his hand. Jesse gives him the documents. Captain Ricky withdraws his hand, rolls up the window.

Jesse surveys the surroundings, rubs his hands together, blows on them to warm up. Inside the Cruiser, Captain Rickey speaks through the handset.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
YOU RAN THE LIGHT BACK THERE!

JESSE
Yeah, I know. I -

CAPTAIN RICKY
LOUDER!! I CAN'T HEAR THROUGH THIS
GLASS!!

JESSE
I was looking -

CAPTAIN RICKY
LOUDER, BUDDY!!! LOUDER!!!

JESSE
I'M SORRY!!!

CAPTAIN RICKY
YOU'RE SORRY!!! THAT'S IT!!! I'M
FREEZING MY GARLAND OFF ON CHRISTMAS
EVE FOR I'M SORRY!?!?!!

Jesse shrugs.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
THAT'S IT, HUH?!?! THAT'S THE BEST
YOU GOT?!?! NO -
(changes voice)
"I DIDN'T SEE THE LIGHT, OFFICER",
"PLEASE DON'T TICKET ME, OFFICER",
"CAN WE HANDLE THIS IN THE BACK OF
YOUR CRUISER OFFICER"...

Jesse glances at the bus, 'are they hearing this?'

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa sits down across from the Kevin and Rod.

DETROIT SANTA
You boys having a good time? Yeah?
You know, me and my brother used to
sneak out at night, run down the
street where Antoinette Fazzone lived.
She had this window in her bedroom
which was bigger than the curtain.

KEVIN
Should we be hearing this?

DETROIT SANTA
Yeah, probably not.

Rod hits Kevin's arm.

EXT. BUS & CRUISER -- NIGHT

Captain Rickey rolls down the window, returns Jesse's license and registration. No ticket.

JESSE

(happy)
You're not citing me?

CAPTAIN RICKY

Oh.
(hands him ticket)
Sorry.

He rolls up the window, grabs the handset.

CAPTAIN RICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

DRIVE SAFELY AND HAVE A MERRY
CHRISTMAS.

Jesse takes a step.

CAPTAIN RICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

LEMME PULL OUT FIRST. FREEZING MY
BUTT OFF...

Captain Ricky puts it in gear, rolls away, waves. Jesse heads back to the bus. Walking alongside it, he sees Detroit Santa speaking demonstrably to the boys who are smiling and laughing together. Jesse's not impressed, reaches the front door, knocks on the glass.

Detroit Santa rises, fist bumps with the boys and moves to the driver's seat, roots around the controls, pushes a button. The door opens.

JESSE

We need to talk.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The boys watch Detroit Santa exit the bus.

KEVIN

Uh, oh.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

JESSE

It was an irresponsible and impulsive
decision on my part. I mean - who
am I kidding? I need this job!

DETROIT SANTA
 What about the local kids? They
 need their presents. It is Christmas.

JESSE
 I'm worried about *my* kids.

DETROIT SANTA
 Are you?

Jesse steams.

JESSE
 Man, you think I like working on
 Christmas, on New Years, Thanksgiving,
 Saturday and Sunday? I've spent the
 majority of my boys LIVES on that
 bus! But that bus keeps them fed,
 housed and clothed.

Jesse calms.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 Help me get those Reindeer off the
 bus. I have a route to keep.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse's in the driver's seat. The kids sit up front. Detroit
 Santa stands on the ground below with Comet, Cupid and
 Dancer's reins in his hands. The door closes on him.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa and his reindeer watch the bus drive away. He
 stands alone. High above and behind him's a bell tower.
 There's a Reindeer fluttering around it. Santa's reindeer
 notice, become agitated. Detroit Santa turns to pacify them,
 glances up.

DETROIT SANTA
 Donner.

EXT. BELL TOWER BUILDING -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa and his reindeer cross the street onto the
 sidewalk, stop directly in front of the building. Detroit
 Santa stares at the structure, slowly cranes his neck to see
 all the way up. It's high. REALLY high. And Donner's flying
 around the tower. Detroit Santa resigns himself.

DETROIT SANTA
 This is just suck-tacular...

He secures the Reindeer to a traffic meter. Approaches the building, begins to climb it.

INT. ANOTHER BUS -- NIGHT

Cody sits in the bus by himself, gazing out the window. Up ahead, three Reindeer stand at a traffic meter outside the Bell Tower Building. Passing it, Cody's in awe at what he's seeing. He turns to the building - a man in a red & white suit's about 50 feet up the side.

CODY

What the -

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Kevin and Rod play hangman. Rod holds the pad. He's drawn the gallows, the dashes for letters. The title says "LOSER". There's already a **D- -D-D-** . They speak softly.

KEVIN

Why do you do this?

ROD

What's it to you?

KEVIN

It makes mommy sad.

Rod purses his lips. Damn.

JESSE.

Jesse drives. Checks out his boys in the mirror. Not happy.

JESSE

Kevin?

(points at button)

You wanna help me opening the door?

Jesse points at the button again.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Kevin?

EXT. BELL TOWER BUILDING -- NIGHT

A boot finds purchase between protruding bricks. A gloved hand pulls on another brick. Detroit Santa grimaces. Boot. Hand. Repeat. Talk about Free Solo...

EXT. BELL TOWER BUILDING - LEDGE -- NIGHT

A small ledge by the belfry. We now see what's up with Donner.

His leather rein's caught on the mesh fencing protecting the belfry from birds.

Donner attempts to free it by flying, but it only serves to yank the mesh fencing, doesn't appear to make any real progress.

On the other side of the belfry's a similar ledge. Santa's boot - not his hand - appears. About a meter to the side, his hand grabs the ledge. He pulls/rolls himself to the ledge, lays on his back, lungs heaving. Sitting up, he hangs his legs over the ledge.

Surveying the surroundings, he slowly realizes just how high up he is.

DETROIT SANTA
(closing his eyes)
Don't look down-don't look down-don't
look down....

His hands begin shaking. Donner rattles the mesh. Detroit Santa stands, arms stretched against the structure, moves around the building. Donner notices him appear at the corner, brightens. Detroit Santa reaches, strokes his head.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Hey, Donner buddy. What are you
doing up here?

Donner tries to nudge next to him.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Watch those pointers. It's a long
way from the top....if you wanna
rock 'n roll.

Detroit Santa snickers, follows the reins to the mesh, baby steps to it.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Ah, how'd you do this, boy?

Detroit Santa tries to get to the rein but the knot's on the inside. Checking out the corners, he sees a screw on each end, reaches into his boot, removes his keys, uses one as a screwdriver.

He pulls the top part of the grate down, reaches inside to free the rein. Tug. Donner slides back a bit. Tug. Donner slides back a bit more. Tug. Donner slides OFF THE LEDGE, kicks his legs and hovers but pulls the grate forward, PUSHING DETROIT SANTA BACKWARDS.

Santa's got his fingers gripping the grate as it slowly lowers perpendicular with the ledge. Santa's now upside down. Back to the ground staring toward the moon.

He sees Donner hovering above him, still attached to the grate. Donner slowly lowers.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

No!! Donner!! YAH!! YAH!!

Donner lands on the grate and sure enough, it SNAPS from the wall. Both Donner, Detroit Santa and the metal grate enter a free fall. Santa's going down backwards, can't do much but hold on and scream. Donner though, attempts to hover, kicks for all he's worth and TEMPORARILY STOPS THE FALL - JERKS THE GRATE.

Santa's feet come lose and he's now holding only by his hands. A moment passes but Donner can't hold it, he's trying, straining to keep them both going - the weight's too much. Another jerk as Donner takes a breath and they fall a little.

Donner strains with another series of leaps, slows the fall, but it's no use. He's caught by the rein. And Detroit Santa spent too much time eating the Happy Meal when he should've just played with the toy. He's heavy.

They begin another descent, gain more momentum. Detroit Santa looks down, sees the ground approaching, looks back up at Donner kicking for all he's worth and makes a decision.

If they're both gonna pancake.....he releases his hands, sacrifices himself. Donner shoots upward with the grate as Detroit Santa free falls. Solo. No spotter.

EXT. BELL TOWER BUILDING -- NIGHT

Our three Reindeer on the ground are hovering but they're tied to the traffic meter. They're straining, Santa's falling, Donner's got the grate. Santa's approaching FAST and he's heading to the concrete. The trio of traffic meter reindeer look away.

From above, Donner holds his altitude when he suddenly makes a decision, moves forward a couple feet then arcs downward, puts himself into a dive, the grate following. Donner SWOOPS into frame, grate sparking the sidewalk as he catches Detroit Santa on his back.

But Santa's a big dude dropping and the power FORCES Donner onto the sidewalk, sliding into a crash landing. The two tumble to a stop. Alive, but with some damage.

Detroit Santa picks himself up from his second wipe out of the evening, stretches the bumps in his arms and legs, collects the big pieces of antler and checks on Donner.

He's hurt. Detroit Santa helps him up as Donner drags the grate in the middle of the road.

DETROIT SANTA
C'mon, buddy. Walk it off. Walk it off.

He shoots Detroit Santa a look as if to say, "you walk it off". Detroit Santa raises his hands, backs off.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Backing off...

Donner stands.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Atta boy.

Detroit Santa pets him.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Hey?
(points at Donner)
I owe you, pal.
(thumps his heart)
I owe you.

He extends his fist - Donner fist bumps him with a hoof. Detroit Santa steps over to the other Reindeer, proceeds to untie them. Their faces say it all.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
What?

They glance at Donner limping, dragging the grate. Detroit Santa seems to melt, shoulders slumping. Nods.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Guys, I'm doing my *best*.

They drop their heads, look away from him. Resigned, he removes his Santa hat.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
You're right. Who am I fooling?

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Kevin's at the front with Jesse. Rod in the back. Both without inspiration. Jesse slows to a stop. Kevin opens the door.

JESSE

I told you.
 (closing door)
 Only when a passenger's getting on
 or off.

Kevin opens the door again. Spiteful. Jesse closes the it.
 Kevin opens the it. Jesse closes the it. Kevin reaches,
 Jesse grabs his hand. Suddenly, Rod's hand is on Jesse's.

JESSE (CONT'D)

What? So now you're gonna defend
 your brother?

ROD

More'n you've ever done for yours.

OUCH!! Even Kevin's taken aback. Challenge Dad?

JESSE

You wanna go there little man?

ROD

I wanna go back and help Santa.

KEVIN

Me, too.

Geez...the pressure. There's what's right and there's what's
 right and never the twain shall meet.

JESSE

You know it'll mean my job?

KEVIN

It's the right thing to do, Dad.

ROD

And you always told us to do the
 right thing. Dad.

Advantage Offspring! Jesse's cornered. What do you do?
 The right thing and lose your job or the wrong thing and
 lose your boys?

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

The brake lights dim. Jesse does a U-Turn. The boys cheer!

EXT. CODY'S EX-WIFE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

An apartment directory with buttons next to names. Cody's
 finger searches the listings, stops on a woman's name, moves
 his finger to the bell.....doesn't push it.....thinks about
 it, lowers his hand.

INT. CODY'S EX-WIFE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Through the window, WE SEE Cody walk away. We PULL BACK, find a note for Santa next to a plate of cookies.

EXT. BELL TOWER BUILDING -- NIGHT

The bus pulls up to where Detroit Santa was climbing. The door opens and the three exit onto the sidewalk. They see the small bits of antler, the Santa Hat, scrape marks on the road leading to the metal grate leaning against the wall.

Kevin picks up the hat, hands it to Jessie. Jessie stares down the road. Hoof and footprints stretch into the snowy distance.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

Jesse creeps the bus forward as the boys follow the hoof prints.

KEVIN

Thanks for sticking up for me back there.

ROD

Don't expect it every time.

KEVIN

Hey.

ROD

What?

KEVIN

He's still our Dad, okay?

Rod shrugs.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Okay?

ROD

Okay.

Kevin punches his arm. Rod punches him back. Jesse honks.

JESSE

(through the glass)
Cut it out.

Rod and Kevin smile at one another.

EXT. ANOTHER ROAD -- NIGHT

Still following the footprints, we TILT UP, see the Reindeer tied up, wandering in the street. A big, bright neon sign burns in the evening snow: **JIMMY G'S SPOT**. 80's Hair Metal pours from the door. Across from Jimmy G's is a rundown park with a merry-go-round and slide.

The boys stop as does the bus. Kevin and Rod stand still. Suddenly, Kevin breaks into a sprint for the building.

Jesse hops out of the bus, offers chase, Rod following.

JESSE

Kevin! Get your ass back here now!

KEVIN

Gotta find Santa, Dad!!

JESSE

Kevin!

KEVIN

Doing the right thing, Dad!

ROD

Go Kevin! You can make it!!

JESSE

Rod!

Kevin's approaching the door. Looks like he's gonna make it. 30 feet, 20 feet, 10 feet, 5 feet, hand reaching out - OOOHHHHH - Jesse grabs him!!! So close!!

KEVIN

Noooooooooooo.....

Rod slows down near the curb, bummed Kevin didn't make it. Jesse sets Kevin down.

JESSE

When did you get so fast?

Kevin dodges for the door. Jesse laughs, grabs him. Never turns around. Rod eyes Jesse, takes a step for the door.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(not turning)

Rod. One more step. Go on, big man. One more step.

Rod thinks about it. Kevin mouths "go". Rod looks at the door, at Jesse. Changes his mind.

JESSE (CONT'D)
That's my boy.

He picks up Kevin, turns and sets him down next to Rod.

JESSE (CONT'D)
(pointing)
Bus.

The boys head for the bus, Jesse for the club.

INT. JIMMY G'S SPOT -- NIGHT

Not an upper class Gentleman's Club. Bar. Small stage. Pole. Chairs around stage. Dancers wear elf bikini outfits and Santa hats. Detroit Santa by himself on the left, a couple MALL SANTAS to the right. Jesse steps into frame. Takes a seat.

JESSE
Hey.

DETROIT SANTA
Hey, man.

JESSE
What are you doing?

DETROIT SANTA
What I do whenever I mess up. Pout.
Feel sorry for myself. Hope there's
someone I can blame it on.

He takes a dollar, extends it to The Dancer.

JESSE
I see you found another Reindeer.

The Dancer descends, puts her ass in Santa's face.

DETROIT SANTA
He's hurt. Hurt his leg.

JESSE
How?

DETROIT SANTA
Fell on him.

JESSE
Look. We gotta get out of here.
Find the others. Let's go.

DETROIT SANTA
You go on without me.

JESSE

What?

DETROIT SANTA

Yeah. Just take over the payments.

EXT. PARK ACROSS FROM JIMMY G'S SPOT -- NIGHT

Rod pushes Kevin around the merry-go-round.

KEVIN

Did you ever meet him?

ROD

Yeah, I think. It was a long time ago. I know something happened before he went away and it makes Dad sad whenever Wendy and Lisa come over.

KEVIN

I want to meet him.

ROD

So does Lisa.

INT. JIMMY G'S SPOT -- NIGHT

JESSE

Listen, I can't do this without you.
(Jesse stands)
C'mon.

DETROIT SANTA

I'm not going anywhere. I'm a loser.
Always have been. My brother knew
I'd mess this up and I did.

JESSE

You're not a loser.

DETROIT SANTA

Yes. I am.

JESSE

No. You're not.

DANCER

Excuse me.
(Jesse turns to her)
He is a loser.

Detroit Santa points at her as if she's proved his point. Frustrated, Jesse pulls some tokens from his pocket, hands them to her.

DANCER (CONT'D)
 (looking at tokens)
 Bus tokens? Awesome. Now I can
 retire.

She drops the tokens, moves across the stage to the Mall
 Santas.

JESSE
 (re: other Santas)
 Are those Franchise owners, too?

DETROIT SANTA
 I don't know. I blew off orientation.

A hand suddenly lands on Jesse's chest. Stops him cold.
 TERRANCE, 30's, muscular, mean looking, stares down at him.

TERRANCE
 Hey. Remember me?

JESSE
 (yes. i do.)
 No. I don't.
 (to Detroit Santa)
 Let's find those reindeer.

Jesse pushes through the door, Detroit Santa following.

DETROIT SANTA
 Friend of yours?

JESSE
 (exiting)
 Shut up.

Terrance pulls out a cellphone, speed dials.

TERRANCE
 Hey. Guess whose brother I just ran
 into?

EXT. JIMMY G'S SPOT -- NIGHT

The boys sit up as Jesse and Detroit Santa roll out of the
 bar, move toward the Reindeer.

JESSE
 How'd you get Donner?

DETROIT SANTA
 Climbed the building.

JESSE
 No shit?

DETROIT SANTA
Yeah, I climbed it!

JESSE
That's awesome.

DETROIT SANTA
It was. Until I fell. That kinda
sucked.

Detroit Santa sees the boys across the street, squints.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
I ain't getting in your business,
I'm just saying based on my past
experience I'd say you got about 2.5
seconds before this over here goes
deep south.

Jesse turns. Rod's speeding the merry go round at breakneck
speed as Kevin SCREAMS and is launched off. Jesse runs across
the street toward the boys.

Detroit Santa glances at the Reindeer.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Looks like we're gonna do this, boys.

They all rise, stroll to him and rub his side.

EXT. GANGSTER'S PARADISE -- NIGHT

Not the best neighborhood. A couple GANGBANGERS stand outside
with obvious bulks beneath their jackets.

GANGBANGER #1
(pointing)
Remember this guy?

Gangbanger #2 turns, sees Cody.

CODY
You gonna stare or gimme some love?

Cody opens his arms, embraces Gangbanger #2.

GANGBANGER #2
When-

CODY
Little while ago. I'm gonna get
warm. We'll catch up later?

GANGBANGER #2
Yeah, baby.

Cody nods, moves inside the building.

INT. GANGSTER'S PARADISE -- NIGHT

A cross between a clubhouse, gym and nightclub. The boys are all here and eyes light up when Cody strolls through. They stand, grab his hand, bump his fist, hug.

This is royalty back from exile, the player to be named later, the star re-born. Making his way to the back, Cody approaches MORRIS, 30's, the leader. He stands.

MORRIS

You never write.

They embrace.

INT. GANGSTER'S PARADISE - GARAGE -- NIGHT

A chop shop. Blow torches. Tools. Hydraulic lifts. Long line of cars being dismantled and put together by the MEMBERS.

Morris leads Cody through the de-assembly line.

MORRIS

Yeah, we're always super busy at the *Toys-R-Us* time of year. It's pretty much our Black Friday.

CODY

The boys don't mind working? I mean, it IS Christmas Eve.

MORRIS

Somehow I'm not expectin' a grievance from the Gangbangers Union.

CODY

How's my brother? You keeping tabs on him like I asked?

MORRIS

Yeah. He's clean. Straight. We let him alone just like you wanted.

CODY

My girls?

MORRIS

Good from I can tell. Your baby mama, though....you know she's....

CODY

I know. It's alright.

Cody's turned a bit dour.

MORRIS
Don't go there. Listen, I got
something really cool to show you.

CODY
Yeah? How cool?

MORRIS
REAL cool.

They reach a door. Morris stops, turns and smiles.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Ready?

INT. PRIVATE ROOM -- NIGHT

We're in a POV. A door opens and they enter, walk toward
the POV, which is looking a little up at them.

CODY
What is that?

MORRIS
Not *what*, brother. *Who*.

Suddenly, a red glow illuminates their faces. Morris smiles.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

A nicely manicured lawn with Nativity Scene. Three Wise
Men, Mary, Baby Jesus, Reindeer.....a Reindeer?? Wait - it
just moved. It's walking to the hay, nibbles. Turns to us
and WE SEE the chest plate - **PRANCER**. If Elton John were a
reindeer, he'd be Prancer.

INT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - HOUSE -- NIGHT

Through a window, we watch Prancer walk around the lawn. We
PULL BACK over the shoulder of Sadie, the girl with the Candy
Cane in the beginning.

INT. DETROIT - SADIE'S HOUSE - STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Hoofs slowly make their way up the stairs. Clump-clump-clump.

SADIE
Shhhh.....

Prancer's antlers SCRAAAAAAAPE the walls, really dig in,
peel wall paper, leave indentations.

INT. SADIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Hoofs hang off one end of the bed, Antler's at the headboard, Sadie pulls a blanket up to Prancer's neck, kisses his cheek, climbs in next to him. Clicks the light off.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The bus drives past the jail. Jesse tries to steal a glance but Detroit Santa sees.

DETROIT SANTA
You got some people in there?

Jesse shrugs.

JESSE
Used to. Got out tonight.

DETROIT SANTA
Is that a good or bad thing?

JESSE
Not sure.

DETROIT SANTA
(nods)
You know, having your own business is a great way to help those you love. And in a time of financial unpredictability, something with a built in clientele and guaranteed seasonal obligation -

JESSE
(interrupting)
Just take over the payments.

DETROIT SANTA
That's all I'm asking.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

Standing by a fire in a garbage can, the Homeless Man we met in the beginning tries to stay warm. Nearby are cardboard boxes covered with a blue tarp, shopping cart. Antler shadows appear and envelope him. He turns.

HOMELESS MAN
Hello. And what might you be?

BLITZEN walks into frame. Stands defiant. Proud. A bit aggressive. The Homeless Man squints, reads the chest plate.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

Blitzen?

(to reindeer)

Is that your name? Blitzen.

Blitzen nods. Cracks his neck one way. Cracks his neck the other, exhales through his nose. Scrapes a hoof like he's in a bullfight then BOLTS TOWARD THE HOMELESS MAN.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

Hey-hey-hey....

Blitzen plows him over, knocks over the garbage can fire. The Homeless Man lands HARD on the ground. Blitzen backs up, lets him recover.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

Oh, you wanna play that game do you?

Blitzen rears up, stands on his hind legs, holds his front hoofs up like fisticuffs. The Homeless man rises, drops his jacket, cracks his neck one way, cracks it the other, raises his fists.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

I'mo give you some Christmas tidings.
Old school style.

Blitzen beckons him forward with a hoof.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

Let's get it on.....

They circle each other. Start throwing punches, kicks. It's like a Christmas MMA match.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Through the front windshield, Jesse and Detroit Santa see Blitzen and The Homeless Man in the middle of the street.

DETROIT SANTA

Oh, man, Bull picked another fight.

JESSE

You know this guy?

DETROIT SANTA

Not the guy! The reindeer he's trading with!

JESSE

That's a - That's a -

Now closer, Jesse can see clearer. He slows the bus. Blitzen and the Homeless Man are encircled by a street lamp.

DETROIT SANTA
 (cracking his neck
 one way)
 Yes.
 (cracking his neck
 the other)
 It's Bull.

JESSE
 There's a reindeer named Bull?

DETROIT SANTA
 Well - Blitzen. I call him Bull
 'cause he's like The Lonely Bull.
 Tough guy this one.

Jesse stops the bus. Puts it in park.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
 (to the boys)
 Do NOT leave the bus. Even if Bull
 takes us out. He's a mean, mean
 animal.
 (softly to Jesse)
 He HATES me.
 (nods)
 This could blow.

JESSE
 Why's he hate you?

DETROIT SANTA
 Well, when I first got the sleigh, I
 let the reins fall, and when I pulled
 on them, they, uh, got tangled on
 his -

JESSE
 Ooooooooooooo...ouch!

DETROIT SANTA
 Yeah. Never forgave me. Hates all
 humans now. My bad.

He jumps in place like a prize fighter, does some deep
 inhaling and exhaling.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
 Alright. Let's do this.

Detroit Santa slaps the door button.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

Blitzen's taking as much as he's giving the Homeless Guy. Both have bloody noses, black eyes. Suddenly, another fist smacks Blitzen in the head. He turns. Santa's smirking at him.

DETROIT SANTA
It's Britney, bitch.

Another fist gets him in the ribs. He turns, snarls at Jesse who's less certain than Detroit Santa about this.

HOMELESS MAN
Tough guy punked me by my crib.

He nails Blitzen in the jaw. Detroit Santa nails Blitzen in the cheek. Blitzen steps back, shakes it off, sizes them all up.

The fight begins. Three on one. Which as it turns out, is NEARLY fair. Blitzen's a skilled, skilled boxer with some Muay Thai thrown in for good measure. He goes after Detroit Santa first. Takes it to his face while surreptitiously tossing the occasional defensive punch to keep The Homeless Man and Jesse at bay.

Detroit Santa's taking it pretty bad, having a hard time standing. Blitzen goes for the Coup d'Grace, spin kicks him INTO THE AIR - SAILS HIM IN AN ARC TO A SNOWBANK. He sinks, leaving only the spread eagle form of his entrance on the top. Blitzen turns to Jesse and The Homeless Man.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)
BUCK-BUCK!!

JESSE
BUCK-BUCK!!

They rush Blitzen, tackle him to the ground. But Blitzen's a strong animal, struggles his way up to his knees. Both Jesse and The Homeless Man are on each side as they wrestle him into place. But he's fierce.

Suddenly, a taser nails Blitzen in the back. Blitzen glances at us, eyes go wide!! Blitzen, Jesse and The Homeless Man all shake uncontrollably as electric current zaps them. It's now we see who's applying the power - Captain Ricky's near his cruiser, door open, lights swirling, taser in hand.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Let go!!!!

JESSE
(vibrating)
Can't. Trying. Can't.

CAPTAIN RICKY
You better let go!!

Blitzen, The Homeless Man and Jesse are vibrating so hard they're moving about the road.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
O-kaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay.....

He maxes the power and all three vault backwards.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

We're staring up at Kevin and Rod looking down at us.

KEVIN
(shaking Jesse)
Daddy.....Daddy wake up.

JESSE
What.....where.....

ROD
Dad! That was awesome!!!

They help him sit up. His hair's a bit fried. His jacket's smoking. Jesse checks out his surroundings. Homeless Man sitting in an Ambulance. Blitzen cuffed on the ground. Detroit Santa out of the snowbank talking to the cop.

KEVIN
You flew like....20 feet!!

JESSE
Help me up.

The boys get Jesse on his feet. He approaches Detroit Santa talking mid-business pitch to the Cop.

DETROIT SANTA
You get an owner's manual.
(points a finger for
each reindeer)
You get a Rudolph. A Comet -

CAPTAIN RICKY
 (interrupting)
 You get Rudolph?

DETROIT SANTA
 AAAAAAA Rudolph.

JESSE
 (to Detroit Santa)
 We gotta get going.

DETROIT SANTA
 Yeah, yeah.

They turn to move for the bus.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 Whoa-whoa-whoa.

Jesse and Detroit Santa stop, turn to him.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
 You just whoa.

Captain Rickey reaches for his cuffs, points at Detroit Santa.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
 Turn around, put your hands behind
 your neck.

DETROIT SANTA
 What?!?!

CAPTAIN RICKY
 Turn around. Put your hands behind
 your neck. NOW!!

Detroit Santa throws Jesse a helpless glance, does as he's
 told. Captain Ricky cuffs him.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
 Don't you go nowhere. You're next.

He leads him to the Cruiser.

JESSE
 Officer. He's telling the truth.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 Yeah, yeah and I'm a Fire Chief.
 Where'd you steal all those deer?
 The zoo? You're in a lot of trouble,
 mister.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
 (muttering as he opens
 back door)
 A Rudolph....a Comet....

Detroit Santa turns to him.

DETROIT SANTA
 We're so close. We just need Prancer,
 Vixen, Dasher -

JESSE
 And Rudolph.

DETROIT SANTA
 Yeah, he's a really sweet reindeer,
 Rudolph is. Practical joker that
 one.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 I'm sure.

He puts Detroit Santa in the back, closes the door. A
 squawking emanates from the radio.

RADIO OPERATOR (O.S.)
 All Units. We have a call for a
 wild animal discovered in the bedroom
 of Senator Matthew's daughter. The
 little girl's trapped inside. Repeat.
 Trapped inside.

DETROIT SANTA
 (snickering)
 Prancer.
 (louder, to Jesse)
 Fifty bucks says it's Prancer!

JESSE
 They have chest plates. All the
 reindeer have chest plates with their
 names on them. Please - just ask
 what the name is on the reindeer.

Curious. Captain Ricky picks up the hand mike.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 This is Captain Ricky Davenport.
 Tell me...is there a name plate -

JESSE
 Chest plate.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 (extending handset to
 Jesse)
 Are you the cop here? 'Cause I think
 I'm the cop here.
 (turns around, whispers
 into handset)
 Is there a *chest plate* with a name
 on it?

RADIO OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Yes, sir. Prancer.

Captain Ricky's taken aback. Detroit Santa nods. Captain
 Ricky looks at the Reindeer in the bus, the kids, Jesse,
 Detroit Santa.

JESSE
 (re: Detroit Santa)
 They're his reindeer. He can save
 that little girl.

DETROIT SANTA
 Don't...don't tell him that.

JESSE
 Time to shine, buddy. You can do
 this.

DETROIT SANTA
 I don't think this is a good idea.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 This is the deal - you go there and
 save that little girl or we take a
 little ride in my company car and
 check ya' into our local Bed &
 Breakfast. Check out time's between
 5 to 10. YEARS.

Detroit Santa swallows hard.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - HOUSE -- NIGHT

Though far away, it's still quite a sight. Scores of cop
 cars, ambulances, fire trucks up and down the street, on
 lawns, driveways.

Choppers swirl above, search lights crossing everywhere.
 Red & Blue spinning bulbs, tactical discussions, blue prints,
 police, fire, SWAT! The Bus pulls up and Captain Ricky
 directs him to park by his Cruiser.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse follows Captain Ricky's arm motions.

JESSE

Man! Only time our neighborhood had this kinda police presence's when someone thought they saw Beyonce and called 911.

Jesse puts the bus in park.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

The group reconvenes by the bus and cruiser. They start walking toward the house and all the gak. Suddenly, Captain Ricky slows, recognizes someone in the distance.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Oh.....MAN!! What's he doing here?!?
(to others)
Why's he even working on Christmas Eve?!?!

DETROIT SANTA

Who?

CAPTAIN RICKY

Damn! You mean I gotta go through him first?!?

JESSE

Who? Who?

CAPTAIN RICKY

You guys stay here.

He trudges toward the house.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - HOUSE -- NIGHT

Captain Ricky makes his way through the crowd of people on his way toward a Fire Engine. A GROUP OF FIREMEN form a small circle around a FIRE CHIEF with his back to us.

Captain Ricky approaches the group and stops just to the side and behind the Fire Chief. All eyes shift from the Fire Chief to Captain Ricky. Ricky clears his throat and the Fire Chief turns around. It's FIRE CHIEF JACKIE DAVENPORT, 30's Ricky's identical twin brother.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

Hey! Little brother!

CAPTAIN RICKY

(to Firemen)

By two minutes.

(to Fire Chief)

Can I talk to you a second?

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

Sure. It's not like I have a major emergency concerning the daughter of one of the state's most influential politicians. I got all the time in the world.

The Firemen laugh, high five.

CAPTAIN RICKY

(calmly)

Talk to me Jackie. Or I protest the last basketball game where Edwards over here nuted Anderson during a rebound. You want to play Emergency Medical for 3rd Place?

One of the Firemen takes offense, moves forward but the others hold him back.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's right Edwards. 3rd Place.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa, Jesse and the boys watch as Captain Ricky and Fire Chief Jackie step away.

ROD

What's going on, Dad?

JESSE

Shhhh.....

They see Captain Ricky turn, point toward them, then turn back to face Fire Chief Jackie.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - HOUSE -- NIGHT

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

Really?!?

CAPTAIN RICKY

Yep.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

And you just have to take over the payments?!?

CAPTAIN RICKY
Don't tell Brennan. This is my deal.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Wow. You think he's for real?

CAPTAIN RICKY
I think so. But there's only one way to find out. And that's where you come in.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Weellllllllll, if I'm gonna helllllp you-

CAPTAIN RICKY
Ah, Jackie you always do this. Every time. Gotta get yours!! I hate you sometimes. HATE YOU!

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Lower your voice.

CAPTAIN RICKY
(softly)
You wanna be the man? Fine. My guy over here'll save that girl and you can be the man. But the franchise is mine!!

They do a complicated handshake.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
HA! HA! HA! You're so easy! You could've had it all!! I was bluffing little brother!!! But you blew it!!!! I swear, if it wasn't like looking in a mirror I'd bet money you were adopted. Get your guy over here and let's do this!!

Fire Chief Jackie turns, settles his men down.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

Jesse, Detroit Santa, et al see Captain Ricky wave for them.

EXT. DETROIT - FRONT OF HOUSE -- NIGHT

No pressure.

Unless having all these Official looking people, SENATOR MATTHEWS, Mrs. Senator Matthews, Cops, Firemen and Emergency Medical - who're playing Detroit P.D. for third place - staring at you.

Captain Ricky steps up to Detroit Santa.

DETROIT SANTA
 (re: Fire Chief Jackie)
 That guy's your brother?

CAPTAIN RICKY
 Yeah, how could you tell?
 (puts a hand on Santa's
 shoulders)
 Don't let me down, okay? You feel
 me? Hmmm? Hmmm.....?

He pats his shoulders. Fire Chief Jackie approaches.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
 Yo. Fat boy.

Detroit Santa turns. Fire Chief Jackie walks him a few feet away. Captain Ricky takes his place by Jessie and the bus. Behind them, the reindeer observe curiously from the window.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE (CONT'D)
 Swat'll get you inside the room. At that point, you have five minutes. Five. Minutes. To emerge with that animal. If not, we're giving our Snipers the okay to laser sight him up like a 70's disco ball. Then me and the rest of the boys here'll London Broil him for Xmas dinner. Just don't tell the misses 'cause she still thinks I'm Vegan, ha, ha. We good?

Detroit Santa nods. Fire Chief gently pushes him into the Swat group. He glances back at Jessie and Captain Ricky.

JESSE
 You got this, buddy!

CAPTAIN RICKY
 I bet reindeer be MIGHTY tasty....

Jesse glances over a shoulder, sees the Reindeer inside getting agitated, angry. They're clearly listening.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
 Come to think of it. This is kinda win-win. Cranberry sauce. Gravy. Rein.....deer....

Jesse nudges him.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

What?

INT. NICE HOUSE - STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa enters the house, threads a GAUNTLET OF SWAT TEAM MEMBERS.

DETROIT SANTA

Hey.

A Swat Team Member places a finger to his lips. Detroit Santa nods, puts a finger to his lips. The Swat Team Member points to the stairwell. Detroit Santa moves in that direction, quietly ascends the stairs.

Gently, he places a foot on the step. CREAACKKKKK. He squints his face, cowers a bit. Lifts his other foot up and sets in on the step. CREEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAKKKK!

Again, squints his face, cowers. He lifts the first foot. CREEAKKKKKKKK. The Swat Team Members exhale. SWAT TEAM MEMBER #2 holds a hand up for him to stop. Moves into the middle of the staircase and demonstrates. He RUNS up the stairs, hop-turns, RUNS back down the staircase.

No sound at all.

Swat Team Member #2 extends his hand for Detroit Santa to give it a try. He hovers his foot over the step - doesn't even make contact with it but we hear the beginnings of CREEAAAAA -

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

I'm not even touching it! Look!

He lifts it up, NO SOUND, lowers it - CREEAAAAA - lifts it up, NO SOUND, lowers it - CREEAAAAA -

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

See!! I'm not -

Swat Team Member #1 runs up to Detroit Santa - no sound. Gets in his face. Places a finger on his lips.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

(whisper though Swat's
finger)

Sorry.

Swat Team Member #1 demonstrably repeats the hand symbol. Detroit Santa mouths the word "sorry". He turns to the stairs. Exhales.

He extends his foot to the step. CREEEEEEEEEEAAAAAKKKK. They wave him to just go on and he slowly then progressively quicker, moves up the stairs until he's at the top, creaking all the way.

INT. NICE HOUSE - SADIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa pushes the little girl's door open, steps in, sees Sadie sitting on the bed next to Prancer. She wears a small holiday antler hat.

DETROIT SANTA
(to Sadie)
Hey.

Prancer's under the covers. Only now he's got lipstick on, a wig, rouge. Detroit Santa whistles with his fingers, motions to Prancer.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Let's go you...

Prancer hops out of bed - giant pink tutu - walks to Detroit Santa. Sadie, though, is very sullen. This really gets to Detroit Santa.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
I...need him to help pull the sleigh.

Her lip starts to quiver.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
No....don't....don't do that....

Suddenly, a red laser spot appears on her forehead, then make it's way to Prancer. Detroit Santa takes a deep breath, turns and heads to the window. He makes the "cut it" motion with his hand across his neck. More lasers appear on his chest. He anxiously tries to wipe them off and they disappear. Panicked, he starts crying.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
I'm just not cut out for this! SOOO
much pressure....

He really starts sobbing. Sadie watches.

SADIE
Hey, buddy. C'mon, it's not that
bad.

She goes to him, full of empathy, pats his back.

SADIE (CONT'D)
 It's alright, there, Santa. C'mon,
 it'll be okay....let it all out.

Detroit really breaks down.

SADIE (CONT'D)
 I know. I know.

DETROIT SANTA
 I'm a loser!

SADIE
 Hey. Stop that. You're not a loser.

DETROIT SANTA
 I am too!

SADIE
 Look at me.

He does. She bunches up her sleeve, and he leans over so she can wipe his face clean.

DETROIT SANTA
 Appreciate it. Thank you.

SADIE
 You gotta suck it up, Princess.

DETROIT SANTA
 I know...

SADIE
 Come over here and sit with me. We
 need to talk.

She leads him to a tea party table. Slides out a very small seat for him which he's barely able to navigate. She sits opposite him.

SADIE (CONT'D)
 You're not a loser.

DETROIT SANTA
 I -

She puts a finger to her lips.

SADIE
 Shhhhhh. I'M talking.

Detroit Santa nods.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Had a tough life, huh?

He sobs a little, nods.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Okay. You've had a lot of bad experiences. And you're associating these experiences with failure rather than learning opportunities which when accepted and addressed create a path to success. You want the Reindeer? Would that make Santa happy?

Detroit Santa's chin quivers as he nods.

DETROIT SANTA

I need him to help pull my sled. Otherwise, no Christmas. For Detroit at least.

SADIE

Well, there you go. You don't have the Reindeer. You find the Reindeer. You're taking the failure of losing the reindeer - you lost them right? They weren't stolen?

DETROIT SANTA

I lost them.

SADIE

No worries. You lost them. But you've addressed that and are creating a path to success by retrieving them. A loser wouldn't do that. YOU - are not a loser.

DETROIT SANTA

That's...that's amazing. How old are you?

SADIE

I'm 8. But that's not the point here. The point here is this: What's a learning experience?

DETROIT SANTA

Um....it's.....um.....a.....

SADIE

Path?

DETROIT SANTA
A path to success!!!

SADIE
That's my Santa. You gonna turn
this around? Start looking at
mistakes and setbacks as opportunities
to create success?

DETROIT SANTA
Yes, ma'am. I am.

Extends her pinky.

SADIE
Pinky swear?

DETROIT SANTA
(extends his pinky)
Pinky swear.

They lock fingers.

SADIE
Here...

She drapes a necklace with a charm over his head. It reads
"Encourage The Awesome".

SADIE (CONT'D)
Touch this when you need to remember
how awesome you are.

DETROIT SANTA
Thank you.

They hug.

SADIE
Anytime.

Detroit Santa moves to the door with Prancer.

SADIE (CONT'D)
Yo. Dude.

He turns.

SADIE (CONT'D)
Am I getting that pony?

He winks, nods.

SADIE (CONT'D)
You rock.

DETROIT SANTA

No. You rock.

She taps her fist to her chest, throws a peace sign.

The SOUND OF CHEERING ERUPTS.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - HOUSE -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa exits the house with Prancer amongst a sea of cheers, attaboys, back slapping, moves through the crowd like champion. Captain Ricky's over the top with excitement, throws an arm around Detroit Santa.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Yes! Yes!

He sees Fire Chief Jackie next to the Fire Truck.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

He's been messing with my Christmas since we were five.

He places a hand in front of his own head.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

(to Fire Chief Jackie)

Face!! Face!!

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

We PULL BACK from Prancer, see he's in the back of the bus with the recovered Reindeer. In the seats are the boys and Detroit Santa. Up front, Jesse drives away with Captain Ricky standing next to him.

CAPTAIN RICKY

THAT WAS AWESOME!!! TOTALLY BITCHIN'!!! SANTA YOU'RE THE FRICKIN' MAN PARDON MY GREEK!!!

He slaps Jesse's back.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

PEDAL TO THE METAL, BROTHER.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

The bus leaves the Police/Fire Department/SWAT/Helicopter guarded area.

CAPTAIN RICKY (O.S.)

WHOOO-HOOOO!!!!!! RUN THE LIGHT!! IT'S COOL!!! I'M A COP!!! HAHAHA!!!

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

CAPTAIN RICKY
HEY, YOU GOT A RADIO IN THIS THING?

JESSE
Of course.

CAPTAIN RICKY
CRANK IT UP!!!

Jesse turns the volume to 11. He bumps fists with Jesse. In the seats, Kevin nudges Rod, nods toward what just happened as if to say "you see, Dad's cool".

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

A clipboard shows the scheduled stop. A wrist watch lets us know it's late. REALLY late. Abe Simms purses his lips. Slowly, WE HEAR a rock song fade up.

Abe turns, sees a pair of headlights pretty far away. As they approach, the music gets louder, Louder, LOUDER until the bus passes by, doesn't stop, doesn't slow down.

Jesse waves and Abe sees Captain Ricky flip him off, Detroit Santa flip him off, the kids flip him off and each and every reindeer moon him.

He rubs his eyes.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

CAPTAIN RICKY
Hey, who was that anyway?

JESSE
My boss.

CAPTAIN RICKY
What? Dude - you're the man!!

He bumps fists with Jesse. In the seats, Kevin nudges Rod, nods toward what just happened as if to say "you see".

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

Cody and Morris walk Rudolph. A hardcore chain's substituting for a leash.

MORRIS
You given much thought to getting back in the game?

CODY
I'm gonna try being square. See if
I can make a go of that. I miss my
girls...

Rudolph walks into the snow, lifts a leg, pees by a bush.

CODY (CONT'D)
Say, what you gonna do with the red
light special here?

MORRIS
I don't know. Maybe teach him to
fetch.

Having finished peeing, Rudolph stretches, takes a step and
WHOOSH!! He's airborne, taking Morris with him.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

There's not much Cody can do except follow beneath him.

CODY
Don't let go!!!

Rudolph's having a great fly, but Morris is a big guy and
the chain's heavy, the drag forces him to lose altitude and
he begins a reluctant descent.

But he's headed for a light post with an extension. Rudolph
clears it but Morris doesn't. He and the chain do a couple
revolutions, wrap around the metal.

Rudolph, still attached, hovers while Morris, still death
gripping the chain, hangs. Cody stands below.

CODY (CONT'D)
Hey, any chance I can borrow our
flight simulator here?

MORRIS
GET ME DOWN AND YOU CAN HAVE HIM!!!

CODY
'Cause he's my ticket back in my
kids' lives and ain't no one gonna
mess that up.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse watches the road. Suddenly, animals begin passing the
bus. Dogs, cats, coyotes, wolves. It's disturbing.

They all exchange looks. The animals are heading towards an intersection when an innumerable amount appear from the two other directions. All convene toward the fourth.

The bus carefully moves ahead.

EXT. CLEARING -- NIGHT

The Reindeer **VIXEN**. She's surrounded.

EXT. ABOVE CLEARING -- NIGHT

The bus observes the wild animals closing in on Vixen. She looks one way, spins around to the other. She inhales, extends her front hooves in the lotus position, shuts her eyes as the animals close in.

EXT. CLEARING -- NIGHT

Suddenly, her eyes snap open and she's an intense, determined warrior. She holds her front hooves up like Michelle Yeoh and snaps a look around, LEAPS in the air as the boys pounce and in bullet time, takes the first wave out like Trinity.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

JESSE

WHOA!!!!

CAPTAIN RICKY

Did I just see that?!?!

DETROIT SANTA

(approving nod)

That's my girl....

EXT. CLEARING -- NIGHT

A second wave comes in. Vixen dispenses with them. But she's a little winded. Takes a moment to reset for the third wave. Manages to fend them off but she's weakening.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

CAPTAIN RICKY

Santa?

No answer.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

Santa?!?

He looks at the back of the bus. Santa's untied the other Reindeer. They're bunched together in front of him like a football team listening to their coach.

DETROIT SANTA

Look, tonight - we've had our share
of challenges. It's 4th and long
and we got one of our own out there.

He searches their eyes. They're starting at him. Listening.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

None of us - none of us - can do
this alone. We gotta suck it up,
princess, turn this set back into a
path to success. So let's put aside
our differences - I'm looking at you
Bull - and bring Vixen back home.
Let's Tom Brady this thing.

He pulls the emergency door switch.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

Encourage The Awesome!!!

He lets them out, high fives each as they exit. The last to
leave, Bull, fakes him out, nails him in the crotch.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The Reindeer LEAP OUT THE DOOR AND FLY LIKE BAD ASS SAMURAI.

EXT. CLEARING -- NIGHT

It's on. It's like THE WARRIORS crossed with THE OUTSIDERS.
These boys kick serious ass. They've formed a circle and
proceed to fight their way to the bus.

KEVIN

Why don't they just fly away?

ROD

'Cause they're stand up guys.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The Reindeer have made their way back to the bus and one at
a time enter, file to the back where our team attaches them
to various seat posts.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The last to enter's Blitzen. Detroit Santa steps over a
bunch of rows, really works to get out of the way.

DETROIT SANTA

Somebody better secure him solid!

Blitzen makes his way on the bus, sees Detroit Santa and goes for him. Captain Ricky and Jesse restrain him as Rod and Kevin tie his reins to the pole.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Let's roll!!! Let's roll!!!

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The remaining animals are surrounding the bus. Jesse backs it out, turns it around as they climb onto the roof, growl in the window, scratch the hood.

He peels out, moves the bus as fast as it can go. The wolves give chase but eventually realize it's futile.

EXT. DETROIT -- NIGHT

From far above the city, WE SEE the bus rolling along at a pretty good clip. In a series of dissolves, it's moved safely from the pack.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

JESSE
So we good? That all of them?

DETROIT SANTA
No. One more. Dasher.

JESSE
What's he look like?

DETROIT SANTA
Well, he's got antlers, some leather reins, a chest plate says Dasher.

Still driving, Jesse turns to Detroit Santa.

JESSE
Anything *specific* we should be on the look out for?

CAPTAIN RICKY
He shake his head a lot?

DETROIT SANTA
When it's down. Why?

CAPTAIN RICKY
'Cause we're about to hit him.

Jesse and Detroit Santa turn back to the road. There he is. **DASHER**. In the middle of the street. Head down, shaking his antlers.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

The bus wheels lock up. Grab for all their worth.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Everyone's pushed to the front and brace themselves. In the back, the force strains the reins and from back to front, one rein at a time SNAPS putting more and more pressure on Blitzen who stares intently at Detroit Santa.

They make eye contact. Detroit Santa swallows hard as Blitzen begins gnawing at the leather, weakening it.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

Smoke POURS from the wheel wells.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse's foot is jammed on the brake. In the back, Blitzen's nearly freed himself. CHEW-CHEW-CHEW...

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Dasher's screwed. No way this thing's gonna stop in time. THREE-TWO-ONE-BAM!!!! The bus SLAMS into Dasher, sends him down the road, antlers crushed. He rolls ass over tea kettle.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Blitzen - CHEW-CHEW - WHIP OF THE HEAD AND-SNAP!!!

The Reindeer all slide forward, their antlers now mortal weapons pushing down on the crowd at front. Kevin turns back, sees them coming.

KEVIN

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

All turn. The bus slows to a stop as EVERYONE presses against the flat windshield like they're playing Antler Twister.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Looking from the outside in, the antlers reach the glass. TINK-TINK-TINK-TINK. So far everyone's safe.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Santa's having a hard time with Blitzen's approach. TINK-TINK.....THUD. He's been gored. He exhales, works the pain. Glances around to the others. No one's seen.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Everything's stopped. Dasher's alive, but drags himself on the road.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The Reindeer fall back and gradually our guys move from the window. Tiny spider cracks dot the glass. Detroit Santa pushes Blitzen, the antler pulls out revealing a good size mark of blood. Detroit Santa wipes it clean with his red jacket. Turns in pain.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Everyone good? Kevin? Rod? Jesse?
Santa you good?

Detroit Santa raises his hand.

DETROIT SANTA

Just got the wind knocked outta me.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The door opens and they fall out, rush to check on Dasher. Detroit Santa's the last one out. Captain Ricky bends down, pets the guy's head, feels along his body.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Nothing broken.

They help him up. He exhales, shakes his head. Everyone JUMPS BACK from what's left of the antlers.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

(a la sports announcer)
And folks, he's okay!!! The Lions
are back in the game with the ball
on the 20 yard line.

The group slowly returns to the bus. Detroit Santa waits by the door.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

Been a Cinderella story for the Lions.
Quite a comeback for these local
boys as they fight for the end
zone....

Kevin and Rod help Dasher into the back as Jesse, Detroit Santa and Captain Ricky stand at the front door. Detroit Santa leans against it.

JESSE

So that's a full boat, right?

Captain Ricky gazes inside, counts the reindeer.

DETROIT SANTA

Not quite.

JESSE

What do you mean not quite? You said we were missing one and we -

DETROIT SANTA

Rudolph. We're missing Rudolph.

JESSE

Look, I know where you're going, but we got enough to do the job don't we?

DETROIT SANTA

I spent my whole life cooking up get rich slow scams and cutting corners. And if it's one thing I learned tonight - don't cut corners. This is Christmas. We gotta find him.

CAPTAIN RICKY

I think I can help.

Jesse ascends the steps. Captain Ricky moves for the door, glances at Detroit Santa.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

You okay?

Detroit Santa nods. Waits for Captain Ricky to step up before moving from the bus. He's left a slightly bloody hand print.

EXT. DETROIT - GANGBANGER NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

The bus is parked outside an apartment building.

INT. DETROIT - GRANDMA CROTHERS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jesse, Detroit Santa, Captain Ricky and the boys sit at a small round table sipping tea with an elderly woman, GRANDMA CROTHERS, 80's in good light, coke bottle glasses, frail.

CAPTAIN RICKY

This is some great tea.

JESSE

Great tea.

DETROIT SANTA

World Class.

Grandma Crothers nods.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Grandma Crothers? Would you mind
telling us exactly what you phoned
in to the 911 operator?

GRANDMA CROTHERS
She said I was crazy.

CAPTAIN RICKY
I know. I'm sorry.

GRANDMA CROTHERS
I'm not crazy.

CAPTAIN RICKY
I know.

GRANDMA CROTHERS
Don't tell me I'm crazy.

CAPTAIN RICKY
I won't.

GRANDMA CROTHERS
'Cause that mean girl on 911 said I
was crazy.

CAPTAIN RICKY
I won't say you're crazy.

GRANDMA CROTHERS
I'm not crazy.
(extends a finger)
I'm old.
(to Rod)
No, duh, right?
(she pokes Rod)
Right?

Kevin nudges Rod to respond. Confused, he nods.

GRANDMA CROTHERS (CONT'D)
(back to others)
But I'm not crazy.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Alright, I think we established -

GRANDMA CROTHERS
I'm not crazy.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Okay...you know....

GRANDMA CROTHERS

I'm not crazy.

CAPTAIN RICKY

(jumping to his feet)

Alright! You're not crazy! Geez!
Will you just show us what you saw
already!! Man!

JESSE

Hey....settle...settle...

DETROIT SANTA

Yeah, just, maybe, you know...sit?

CAPTAIN RICKY

(sitting)

Geez!!!!

INT. DETROIT - GRANDMA CROTHERS' APARTMENT WINDOW -- NIGHT

A frail hand pulls back a curtain while another points to the corner where a light post used to be. A long line of metal to road scraping leads down the street.

GRANDMA CROTHERS

He was flying and got caught on the
light. The homey with the chain was
hanging from it and his OG buddy
standing underneath.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Can you describe him?

GRANDMA CROTHERS

Who?

CAPTAIN RICKY

Who do you think you crazy bat?

GRANDMA CROTHERS

Did you just call me -

CAPTAIN RICKY

What did they look like?

GRANDMA CROTHERS

Who?

CAPTAIN RICKY

The guys, deathwatch! The
(imitating her)
*"Homey with the chain hanging from
the pole"*

(MORE)

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

(regular voice)

And his

(imitating her again)

"OG buddy on the ground."

GRANDMA CROTHERS

You don't want to know about the
thing in the air?

CAPTAIN RICKY

NO!

GRANDMA CROTHERS

(holds hands above
her head, extends
fingers)

'Cause it had antlers and a bright
red -

Captain Ricky SLAPS her across the face.

GRANDMA CROTHERS (CONT'D)

The-guy-hanging-from-the-pole-was-
5'11"-close-cropped-hair-old-school-
red-Michael-Jordans-and-he-wet-his-
pants.

(uses inhaler,
continues)

The-OG-on-the-ground-was-5'11"-and-a-
half-wool-skull-cap-black-mess-you-
up-flight-jacket-O.J.-"I'm-waiting-
in-the-bushes"-black-pants-and-skull-
crusher-doc-marten-boots.

Detroit Santa glances at Jesse. Jesse drops his head, nods.
Captain Ricky's back to his tranquil self.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Thanks for the help.

(kisses her cheek)

You're a great American.

EXT. DETROIT - GANGBANGER NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

There's a ditch of broken concrete where the light pole used
to be, a scraping line.

CAPTAIN RICKY

You do know where that leads.

JESSE

Make sure my boys get home safe.

ROD
Where you going, Dad?

JESSE
See your Uncle.

Detroit Santa stands a little straighter, eyes open a little wider.

DETROIT SANTA
We got your boys.

We CRANE UP as Jesse walks away, follows the scraping line. Kevin and Rod return to the bus with Detroit Santa and Captain Ricky.

CAPTAIN RICKY
So....the sleigh, the presents bag,
the A-A-A-A Reindeer...

DETROIT SANTA
That's correct.

CAPTAIN RICKY
And I just take over the payments?

DETROIT SANTA
Yep.

CAPTAIN RICKY
That's it?

DETROIT SANTA
That's it.

CAPTAIN RICKY
HMMMMMMMMM.....

EXT. GANGSTER'S PARADISE -- NIGHT

We FOLLOW the metal scrapes to the door as Jesse steps up, knocks. Gangbangers #1 & 2 appear behind him.

GANGBANGER #1
Man, you oughta know better'n come
'round here.

Jesse turns around.

GANGBANGER #2
Jesse?

JESSE
Mike. Been a long time.

TIME CUT:

EXT. GANGSTER'S PARADISE -- NIGHT

The door opens. Jesse looks up expectantly, but Cody gives him nothing, merely exits. They stare at each other and we sense there's a closeness, a fraternal bond but.....

JESSE
You look good. Healthy.

CODY
You, too. You've...filled out.
Stronger. Muscle.

Jesse nods.

CODY (CONT'D)
Taking care of my girls?

JESSE
Yes. Of course. They're good. I'm
always broke, but...

CODY
We'll I can't help you there.

JESSE
That's...that's not what I meant.

CODY
I just got out, you know.

JESSE
Yeah, yeah. I meant, I've been there
for them. All the way.

Cody nods.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Hey..
(softer)
Can we talk? Alone?

CODY
You mean without my boys?

Jesse stares at him.

CODY (CONT'D)
That's what you meant, right?
(MORE)

CODY (CONT'D)

You want to talk without my boys
around? Just say it little brother.

JESSE

Why you gotta be that guy?

CODY

What guy? You came to me.

(to Gangbangers)

He came here on his own, right? You
didn't roll up on him, drag his MTA
driving butt kickin' and screamin'?

GANGBANGER #1

No, man.

GANGBANGER #2

He came on his own.

CODY

Well. There you go.

JESSE

I need that thing you got.

CODY

Don't know what you're talking about.

JESSE

That thing.

Nothing.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Gimme that reindeer.

Cody smiles, laughs. Turns to Gangbangers who snicker.

CODY

Reindeer?

JESSE

Rudolph. "*Had a very shiny nose...*"
Coming back to you now?

CODY

Yeah. Along with the Easter Bunny,
Tooth Fairy and our Dad. Three more
things that don't exist.

Cody turns back to the door, opens it.

CODY (CONT'D)
 Besides, what would I be doing with
 a Reindeer? I'm scared of heights.

He enters, closes the door on Jesse. Jesse glances at the
 Gangbangers, walks away.

JESSE
 Merry Christmas.

GANGBANGER #1
 You, too.

GANGBANGER #2
 Yeah.

INT. GANGSTER'S PARADISE - GARAGE -- NIGHT

The giant light pole's laying on the floor. Attached to it
 is Rudolph. Cody enters, approaches Rudolph and pets him.

MORRIS
 Hey?

Cody turns.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
 This is about family. You go ahead
 and take him.

Cody turns to Rudolph. Rudolph looks up, his nose
 illuminates, makes Cody smile.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF -- NIGHT

Jesse steps out onto the roof. The sleigh's at one end, the
 reindeer attached and in line. Captain Ricky, Kevin and Rod
 adjust the reins. Detroit Santa secures the magic presents
 bag.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 Hey. How'd it go?

JESSE
 It didn't.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 We know he's got him. I call in a
 code violation, my brother'll tear
 that place apart.

JESSE
 No way.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Why not?

JESSE

'Cause he's *my* brother.
 (to Detroit Santa)
 You're gonna have to go without him.

DETROIT SANTA

(sitting down)
 I can't.

JESSE

You're gonna have to.

DETROIT SANTA

I'm not doing so well.
 (moans)
 That psycho Blitzen stabbed me.

CAPTAIN RICKY

What? When?

DETROIT SANTA

(opening jacket)
 In the bus. I wanted to make it,
 but I think....

Wow. Check it out. Yeah, he's hurt.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)

You're gonna need to do it.

JESSE

Me? I can't drive this.

DETROIT SANTA

It's not that hard. Check out the
 manual...

He reaches beneath the front bench, pulls out a phonebook sized manual, tosses it to Jesse. On the cover's a drawing of a nondescript Santa, big gregarious smile, sitting in a sleigh pulled by reindeer. Across the top reads, "**YOUR SANTA FRANCHISE - OWNER'S MANUAL**".

JESSE

I don't know about this. I've never
 even been on a horse.

Detroit Santa walks around to the front.

DETROIT SANTA

Look, it's not as traditional as
 you'd think.

He taps on the wooden dashboard. It flips open and over, reveals a technical panel any geek'd die for. GPS screen, a couple button plates and a large bar code scanner gun with a long cable.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Little dude - toss me a present.

Rod removes a box from the presents bag, sails it to him.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Each one of these has a bar code on the bottom.

He stretches out the bar code gun, holds it to the box.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Zap it with the scanner, set it in the chute.

He lifts a small door on the sleigh's floor, drops the box in a compartment, closes the door, secures it.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
(points to GPS screen)
The bar code sends the info to the GPS here.

An address appears with name, number, coordinates. Options for quickest route, shortest route, etc. A giant button protrudes to the left of the screen, currently red.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Pick your option, when the route's ready it turns....

Ding! It's green. Detroit Santa walks to the front of the sleigh.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Now, this is *REALLY IMPORTANT*. Make sure you're buckled in before you push that button 'cause down here...

He points to various small openings with circular lips.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
Are small laser jets which zap these fella's in the rumpus like spurs. They control speed, turns - it's all automatic. No biggy. Just leave it off manual.

Detroit Santa walks back around to the front.

DETROIT SANTA (CONT'D)
 Now can someone drop me off at the
 hospital?

He extends a hand to Jesse who opts to hug him. Jesse turns
 to Captain Ricky.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 You got my number, right?

Jesse nods, embraces Captain Ricky

JESSE
 Thanks for everything.

CAPTAIN RICKY
 I better get him out of here. He
 loses any more blood he's gonna be
 his own White Christmas.

Captain Ricky leads Detroit Santa to the door, exits down
 the stairwell.

DETROIT SANTA (O.S.)
 Man...they better have 0 negative.

Jesse glances at the reindeer, returns to the sleigh, checks
 it out, flips through the manual. Rod and Kevin stand by
 the back. Rod's stoic while Kevin sports a beaming, working
 it smile. Resigned, Jesse sighs.

JESSE
 Get in.

Their eyes light up as they pile in back.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 Rod, you handle the presents. Kevin,
 you got the zapper. Put your seat
 belts on.

Jesse climbs in. Checks out the control panel.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 You have no idea what you're doing.
 I'm gonna kill these boys.

ROD
 Dad? You can do this. I know you
 can.

Kevin nods in agreement.

JESSE

Hold on, guys. The suck potential's kinda off the scale right now.

He cringes, reaches for the green button when suddenly Cody rises above the building on top of Rudolph.

JESSE (CONT'D)

CODY!!

CODY

Let's save Christmas!

Rudolph lands on the roof as Jesse and his boys rush to him. Jesse offers a hand, helps him to the roof. Rudolph, meanwhile, takes his place at the front of the line.

CODY (CONT'D)

We gotta make a stop. Alright?

JESSE

No problem.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa sits in the passenger seat of a parked car. Suddenly, the engine starts and Captain Ricky rises into frame on the driver's side.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Can't do this to the newer models.
C'mon, buckle up. It's against the
law to ride without a seat belt.
I'm serious.

Detroit Santa reaches for the strap.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)

(slapping it into
gear)

Alright....I haven't stolen a car in
years!!

He pulls out.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF -- NIGHT

Man, this looks cool. Kids in the back, brothers in the front, long line of reindeer with Rudolph at the front.

JESSE

Everybody ready?!? HERE WE GO!!!

Rudolph's nose beams red. Jesse pushes the green button. The Reindeer take two jumps and LEAP INTO THE AIR, the sleigh follow behind them.

EXT. CAPTAIN RICKY'S STOLEN CAR -- NIGHT

From the passenger seat, Detroit Santa stares at the sky. Reflected in the glass, he sees his sleigh flying. A subtle grin appears on his face, followed by a proud smile.

EXT. DETROIT SANTA'S SLEIGH -- NIGHT

This is fun.

Jesse and Cody in the front, the boys in the back. Everything's good in the world right now. There's a mechanical sound on the floorboard and the present SHOOTS OUT THE FLOOR, sails to a building where it disappears.

CODY

You know where you're going?

JESSE

Please.

Jesse punches an address into the GPS, the Reindeer arc, pull the sleigh into a wide turn. Everyone holds on.

The city's far below them, the lights, the avenues. It's awesome. Jesse and Cody yell over the rush of wind.

CODY

Remember when we used to sneak down and undo the tape on our presents, sneak a peek?

JESSE

Yeah.

CODY

You think Mom ever found out?

Jesse shakes his head.

JESSE

No way. We too good!

ROD

You did that, Dad!?!

JESSE

(to Cody)
Thanks.

Cody smiles, looks back at the boys.

CODY

Hi. I'm your Uncle Cody.

INT. CAPTAIN RICKY'S STOLEN CAR -- NIGHT

Captain Ricky drives down the street.

DETROIT SANTA

Look, we get there you just drop me off, okay? I don't wanna be implicated in some grand theft auto. I'll be lucky enough to get my brother to pick me up from the hospital. No way he'd bail me out.

CAPTAIN RICKY

I hate mine.

DETROIT SANTA

Better work that out soon. Especially since it's Christmas.

CAPTAIN RICKY

You know? You're right!!!

He spins them into a U-Turn, slams Detroit Santa in the door.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

The stolen car burns rubber as it does a 180.

CAPTAIN RICKY

This'll only take a second.

DETROIT SANTA

I'm *BLEEDING*, man!!!

CAPTAIN RICKY

Suck it up there, Princess.

INT. CODY'S EX-WIFE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

We PAN ACROSS a shelf of photos showing Wendy and Lisa from past to present as Cody whispers.

CODY (O.S.)

...I was standing there with just a plastic spork to defend myself, in front of all these tattooed....

Slackjawed, Wendy and Lisa hug their pillows as they listen to Cody. He pauses, sits back in his chair, really sees them for the first time.

CODY (CONT'D)
You're both....so beautiful.

He becomes very quiet.

WENDY
Dad? It's okay.

CODY
Really? You forgive me?

Their eyes tell him yes.

CODY (CONT'D)
Say...
(leans in closer)
...You ladies wanna do something
REALLY cool?

EXT. DETROIT SANTA'S SLEIGH -- NIGHT

The sleigh shakes. A present shoots out, disappears.

Rod takes a present from the bag, hands it to WENDY, 10, who flips it over so the bar code can be scanned by Kevin. Kevin sits back so LISA, 7, can take the present, hand it to Cody who puts it in the chute, Jesse presses the green button.

The sleigh shakes. The present shoots out, disappears.

EXT. FIRE STATION HOUSE -- NIGHT

Captain Ricky gets out of his car.

CAPTAIN RICKY
I'll be right back.

DETROIT SANTA
Hurry.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Gotcha.

DETROIT SANTA
I'm dying.

CAPTAIN RICKY
I know.

DETROIT SANTA
I mean it - I'M LITERALLY DYING!!!

CAPTAIN RICKY
I know-I know...I'll be quick. Swear.

A glass door reflects Captain Ricky's approach. He reaches for the handle, opens it, enters.

INT. FIRE STATION -- NIGHT

The Firemen from before play poker at a round table. Fire Chief Jackie's in the middle, sees Captain Ricky step up.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Hey. It's my little brother!

Captain Ricky turns to the others, holds out two fingers.

CAPTAIN RICKY & ENTIRE FIRE HOUSE
By two minutes!!

They erupt in laughter, return to their games.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
How's the franchise?

CAPTAIN RICKY
Remember when we were five and I got
the fire truck but you wanted it so
you took it?

Fire Chief Jackie smiles in remembrance, continues playing.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
When we were eight and I got the
chemistry set and you lit the house
on fire then blamed me when you
couldn't put it out?

Fire Chief Jackie lets out a laugh.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Yeah, yeah....

CAPTAIN RICKY
Then when we were seventeen and Coach
Dudley picked me for the All Star
Team but you locked me in the bathroom
and played the game as me?

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
That was Brennan.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Really?!?!

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
No. That was me.

The table erupts in laughter.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE (CONT'D)
I struck out three times!!!!

Captain Ricky watches, remains calm.

CAPTAIN RICKY
This being Christmas and all, I'd
like to finally get past it. Have
my brother back.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Yeah? How do you suppose we do that?

INT. CAPTAIN RICKY'S STOLEN CAR -- NIGHT

Detroit Santa waits in the car.

DETROIT SANTA
Though I walk.....though I walk in
the valley....Though I walk in the
valley of death...

He hears a commotion and glances in the side mirror.
Suddenly, Fire Chief Jackie SMASHES BACKWARDS THROUGH THE
GLASS, lands on the sidewalk.

EXT. FIRE STATION -- NIGHT

Captain Ricky steps through the door, shakes off the violence.
He approaches Fire Chief Jackie, still on his back.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
So...we good?

CAPTAIN RICKY
Whooo.... Yeah.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Well, gimme a hand, then.

Captain Ricky helps him up. They hug. Pat each other's back.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Right back at ya'. I gotta get my
buddy over there to the hospital.
Bleeding pretty bad.

Detroit Santa sits in the passenger seat, he's looking really,
really pale.

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
Might not make it.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Well, come back when you're done.
Play a few hands.

CAPTAIN RICKY
I'll try.

They part. Captain Ricky heads for his car.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
If not - See you at Mom and Dad's?

CAPTAIN RICKY
(opening door)
You know it.

He hops in, drives off.

CAPTAIN RICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You good?

DETROIT SANTA (O.S.)
Not really.

CAPTAIN RICKY (O.S.)
Don't suppose we could run by a drive
thru? Just kidding. Seriously,
though....you hungry?

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Jesse and Cody have changed positions.

JESSE
You don't wanna take it off automatic,
but if you have to, push this button
here and grab the reins.

Up ahead, a light snow's begun. They navigate between
buildings when SUDDENLY ANOTHER SLED APPEARS, BANGS INTO THE
SIDE AND CATCHES A METAL SKID.

Cody takes it off automatic, grabs the reins. The OTHER
SANTA attempts to navigate as well, pulling the connected
sleds in different directions, disrupting the balance.

OTHER SANTA
My Rudolph lost his red light!!

Sure enough, Rudolph's nose is dim.

CODY
I'm gonna kick your ass!!

OTHER SANTA

What??

JESSE

WE GOTTA LAND!!

This is where things get a little sketchy. Down below's a four lane city street, vacant, but still.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You got this?

CODY

I got this. Check on the kids.

Jesse swivels.

JESSE

Buckle up. Stay down.

Rod puts his arm around Kevin, Wendy around Lisa.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

Here they come. Two sleds, one Franchise Santa, a bus driver, ex-con, four kids and twenty reindeer - only one of which has a red light.

This looks something like Detroit Santa's approach from the beginning. Shaky balance, too much speed, minimal control. It's pretty terrifying.

They move from one side of the road to the other. Jockeying for position pushes the other towards the buildings as the sleighs slowly descend: 7th floor, 6th floor, 5th floor....

CODY

WATCH IT!!

The Other Santa holds a hand up. They center the sleighs with the yellow line between them. Pulling on the reigns, the Reindeer slow and they....

....Touch down, hit the ground HARD, bounce up, hit the ground a second time, start sliding down the road, at an angle, toward a street light - BAM!

Careening off the pole, the sleighs spin, head straight for a fire hydrant. Alarmed, the reindeer work together, dig for all they're worth to avoid it, spinning the sleighs around and taking out the hydrant. A fountain of water GUSHES high in the air.

Slowly, they come to a stop. Cody hops to the ground, bee lines for the other Santa.

CODY (CONT'D)
What you thinking -

OTHER SANTA
(reaching for sky)
I....I....I.....

WENDY (O.S.)
You stop right there Mister Daddy.

Cody turns, revealing Wendy behind him, hands on hips.

WENDY (CONT'D)
You heard me. Get away from him!

CODY
But he nearly killed you and your
sister.

WENDY
We ain't going there.

Lisa steps into frame.

LISA
No, we ain't.

WENDY
It was an *accident*, Daddy.

CODY
Look -

WENDY
Don't you '*look*' me, mister.

Lisa shakes her head, waves a finger.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Now you step away and apologize to
Santa Cracker here.

Cody smiles.

CODY
I'll say this... Your mother's done
a great job with you two. I'm very
proud.

He turns to the Other Santa.

CODY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, buddy.

He grabs his hand, pulls him into a man-hug, releases.

JESSE, ROD AND KEVIN.

Jesse stands outside the sleigh, cell phone in one hand, flipping through the Owner's Manual with the other. He smiles, motions toward the other sleigh.

JESSE

Boys, that's my brother Cody.

He begins dialing on the phone.

CODY AND OTHER SANTA.

The two sleighs are hooked together at a skid.

OTHER SANTA

These things, they're put together pretty shabby. I can't imagine who approved them.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

Brad spins around in his chair as high pitched alarms beep, wall map lights blink like a discotheque.

There's an intent knocking on the door.

BRAD

(to himself)

Never shoulda left FEMA.

He stops spinning, steps to the door, swings it open.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - MUMBAI -- NIGHT

A small group of CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES speak at Brad simultaneously.

BRAD

I'll get right on that.

He closes the door.

CALL CENTER EMPLOYEE (O.S.)

Santa's gonna kick his butt.

Over the following dialogue, we PAN AROUND the floor - people run back and forth like a Wall Street trading floor, phones ring like a radio contest for free tickets.

Chaos.

RECORDED MESSAGE (O.S.)

Please do not hang up.

(MORE)

RECORDED MESSAGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Your call is very important to us
 and will be answered in the order
 received. Franchise Owners receive
 a 10% discount at all participating
 Dave & Buster's....

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

Jesse hangs up, approaches Cody and the Other Santa.

CODY
 You get Donner?!?

In the background, Rod, Kevin, Lisa and Wendy stand by the
 Other Santa's reindeer. Lisa holds the manual, Wendy reads
 over her shoulder.

OTHER SANTA
 No-no-no. AAA Donner....

CODY
 Ohhhh.....

Wendy points at Rudolph's dim nose, speaks to Lisa. They
 glance over at the sleigh. Kevin walks over, leans inside,
 rustles around, pulls out a bottle of water.

JESSE
 Heard the recording again. Left
 another message.

Jesse checks out the sleighs. The connected skids are mangled
 together.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 We ain't getting this apart.

Rod cups her hands as Kevin pours water into them. Rudolph
 laps it up and slowly his light comes on. The girls dance
 around, celebrating.

Cody, Jesse and the Other Santa turn towards them.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 (to Other Santa)
 Mind sitting this one out?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT SANTA'S SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Both Rudolphs lead the new pack and double sleigh through
 the sky.

Jesse, Cody, their kids are zapping presents, sending them on their way as the bi-sleigh travels Detroit and the surrounding areas.

EXT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY AMBULANCE ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

We TRACK TOWARD the front door. It slides open.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM -- NIGHT

We TRACK TOWARD a large window. Detroit Santa lays on a table as a SURGEON finishes stitching him up. The Surgeon steps away. Walks toward the door and exits.

He removes his mask as he approaches us.

SURGEON

He's gonna be okay, but his side'll
have some tenderness....

EXT. DOUBLE SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Rod reaches into his bag of presents - empty. On the other sled, Wendy has her hands up - empty.

CODY

We done?

Jesse stares at the horizon - no sunrise. His cell phone begins ringing.

JESSE

Hello?

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - RAJEEV'S CUBICLE -- NIGHT

RAJEEV

Hello. This is Jeff from the - ah, who the hell am I kidding, listen, my name's Rajeev and I noticed you've finished delivering your Franchise's commitment. Look, this operation makes the war in Iraq look like a bunch of pre-schoolers playing capture the flag.

EXT. DOUBLE SLEIGH -- NIGHT

JESSE

Uh-huh.....yeah. We need to find someplace where I can meet them.

INT. FIRE STATION HOUSE -- NIGHT

Cops and Firemen play poker at numerous tables. There's a spread with food, eggnog, whiskey.....Captain Ricky steps into frame, phone to his ear.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Louder....LOUDER.....LOUDER!!!

EXT. DOUBLE SLEIGH -- NIGHT

JESSE
AIRPORT!!!! DO YOU HAVE ANY PULL
WITH THE AIRPORT?!?!?!?

INT. FIRE STATION HOUSE -- NIGHT

CAPTAIN RICKY
You serious?!?! HA!
(across room)
Hey!! Jackie?!?! Do we have any
pull at the airport?!!?

Fire Chief Jackie laughs, points at Ricky.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
THAT'S funny!!!

INT. DETROIT AIRPORT - AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL -- NIGHT

A small group of AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS speak into headsets, stare at small computer screens. With his back to us, FLIGHT CONTROLLER BRENNAN DAVENPORT, 30's, curly hair, issues commands to the room.

FLIGHT CONTROLLER BRENNAN
NO!! THEY DON'T LAND ON SEVEN!!! I
TOLD YOU IDIOTS, SEVEN STAYS OPEN!!
C'MON, LET'S DO THIS!!
(turning toward us;
lifts cell to ear)
Man!!!

With the exception of Brennan's mustache and curly hair, he, Jackie and Ricky are identical triplets.

Brennan leans against a desk, stares through the window at the runway. Dozens of sleighs, scores of reindeer, Fire vehicles, police vehicles, - all sitting on the tarmac. Brennan waves.

FLIGHT CONTROLLER BRENNAN (CONT'D)
Where were we? Yeah-yeah-yeah, I
got it, A Donner, A Blitzen...Well,
it sounds like a good deal to me.

EXT. DETROIT AIRPORT - TARMAC -- NIGHT

Amongst the personnel, Jackie waves back at Brennan as Rickey steps up behind him.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Well, you're gonna have to talk to
Ricky about it. It's his deal.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Did you? Is that?

Fire Chief Jackie mouths "I'm sorry".

CAPTAIN RICKY (CONT'D)
You told him?!?! You fuck!!

Captain Ricky walks off angry.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
(hanging up)
Brennan, I gotta go!
(following Ricky)
Ricky? C'mon, man, he's our brother.
Ricky.....

Fire Chief Jackie stops, looks up into the sky.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE (CONT'D)
Here he comes!!!!

EXT. DOUBLE SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Jesse, Cody, et al, circle the runway.

CODY
I thought you said three?

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - RAJEEV'S CUBICLE -- NIGHT

RAJEEV
Look, I'm sorry.
(points at screen)
But what could I do? They kept
calling and my supervisor's solution
was to turn off the L.E.D. world
map. Unless somebody steps up,
parents all over the planet are gonna
be puncturing each other's ear drums
to silence the screams. Listen to
me, Obi Wan. You're their only hope.

EXT. DOUBLE SLEIGH -- NIGHT

JESSE

Hey, man. I'm just a bus driver,
okay? What do you expect me to -

An idea hits him. He turns to Cody.

CODY

What?!?

JESSE

How good are your boys?

CODY

Why?

JESSE

I have an idea.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- NIGHT

A blow torch sparks on. A bunch of low riders surround the sleds which are suspended by a series of car jacks near the MTA bus. At each end of the street are police cars and Fire Engines keeping the work area clear.

Captain Ricky stands with Fire Chief Jackie laughing, the Kids water up the rest of the Reindeer, Morris, Gangbangers 1 & 2, the Chop Shop guys and Terrance work their tools, solders, blow torches.

EXT. DETROIT AIRPORT - TARMAC -- NIGHT

We're TRACKING along side a series of five across reindeer, tracking, tracking, tracking, tracking, tracking until we find out what they're attached to - Jesse's bus.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The seats are gone. In their place are dozens of present bags. Up front, the control panel consists of a couple GPS bar code scanners and a gift chute.

EXT. DETROIT AIRPORT - TARMAC -- NIGHT

Jesse, Cody, et al, walk along the bus towards the door. Captain Ricky, Fire Chief Jackie and Flight Controller Brennan keep pace.

CAPTAIN RICKY

We've organized the presents to take
you efficiently across the Mid-West.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

And we'll be meeting you at each corresponding Airport to re-up the bus and keep you going until this thing is done and done.

FLIGHT CONTROLLER BRENNAN

I'll be interfacing with Jeff -

CAPTAIN RICKY & FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

(impatient)

Rajeev!!

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

Man...

CAPTAIN RICKY

Yeah, right?

FLIGHT CONTROLLER BRENNAN

Listen little brothers-

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

(to others)

By one minute!

CAPTAIN RICKY

(to others)

By three minutes!

FLIGHT CONTROLLER BRENNAN

...To make sure we have the closest traffic center. Keep it real guys.

He punches his chest, extends his fist. They stare at it.

FLIGHT CONTROLLER BRENNAN (CONT'D)

I can roll with that. Be careful when you take off. There's a storm front coming in pretty fast. Visibility's low.

JESSE

We better get going.

The triplets stand together as the group boards the bus. We PULL BACK past the Triplets, past the reindeer, past the emergency vehicles, past the large group of FRANCHISE OWNING SANTAS including CHICAGO SANTA, INDIANAPOLIS SANTA, etc until we see the entire tarmac.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Jesse pushes the green button. Like a wave, the Reindeer start moving forward, pull the bus along the runway.

It gains more and more speed as the Rudolfs lift off the ground, followed by the Comets, the Dashers, the Prancers and each successive row of Reindeer.

LISA
Dad, where we headed?

CODY
New York.

ROD
Really?!?

Cody smiles.

JESSE
Here we go!!!!

The bus takes off!!

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

All we see is fog. Until a series of bright red lights - is that a menorah - precede the slew of bus pulling reindeer.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

No Sleep 'Til Brooklyn. They're down to a science, a well greased machine, a family. Presents are scanned, tossed, gps'd, chuted and delivered.

INT. DETROIT HOUSE -- NIGHT

Middle class living room. Some space. Nice tv, couch, wood burning stove. A present rolls out of the chimney, finds its place beneath a Christmas tree.

EXT. BUS STOP -- NIGHT

Abe Simms stands in the quiet night. Glances at his watch. Shakes his head. Writes on clipboard.

ABE SIMMS
Hope it's worth it, Jesse.

Unbeknownst to him, in the deep sky, the bus sails across the night, pulled by a herd of reindeer.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

A present is placed in the chute.

INT. DETROIT APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A little smaller than the middle class house. Pretty cramped but still someone's home. Stockings on the wall.

A box approaches the cracked window and EXPLODES when it enters, turning into much smaller presents amidst SPARKLING GLITTER which fills the stockings with candy.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

A present is GPS scanned and appears on the screen. Jesse's eyes go wide.

CODY

What?!?

JESSE

Nothing.

EXT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - HOUSE -- NIGHT

As Jesse's Bus passes overhead a present arcs over the moon and descends into Sadie's house.

INT. DETROIT - NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - HOUSE -- NIGHT

From the fireplace, a present appears and morphs into a beautiful, delicate PONY!! A plate of cookies rest on a table by a deep chair. A little hand reaches out, takes the plate and offers it to the Pony.

SADIE

Dig in, buddy.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Through the window we see The Brooklyn Bridge.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- NIGHT

Wow. Times Square. Yankee Stadium. Presents flying.

INT. NEW YORK SUBLET -- NIGHT

A present finds its way beneath a door. Rolls toward the Christmas Tree but is stopped by a black gloved hand. The present's placed into a dark pillow case by a THIEF.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- NIGHT

The Thief drops into frame, runs across the street.

EXT. HEATHROW AIRPORT -- NIGHT

Captain Ricky trades his Detroit Police Department hat for a Bobby's Helmet.

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Again, the reindeer take off followed by the bus.

EXT. PARIS - EIFFEL TOWER -- NIGHT

Jesse sets a timer on the camera, runs to stand in front of the structure with Cody and their kids. FLASH!

EXT. ST. PETERSBERG -- NIGHT

Very quiet. Suddenly, dozens of presents appear from the sky, find their way to residences. Very quiet again.

EXT. MUMBAI -- NIGHT

The Reindeer leap, soar, leap, soar into frame.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - RAJEEV'S CUBICLE -- NIGHT

On Rajeev's screen, we see the Detroit Santa icon. Rajeev's on his headset.

RAJEEV

Oh, my God, you're right over us!

The ENTIRE call center's huddle 50 deep around his cubicle.

INT. CHRISTMAS CALL CENTER - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

Through the picture window, Brad watches the group cheer. He sits down at his chair, clicks the world map on, watches the Detroit Santa icon move through the sky.

BRAD

I deserve a raise...

INT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

Cody pulls out the last present. Looks in the bag. Hands it to Lisa, to Rod, to Wendy who scans it, to Kevin who places it in the chute.

CODY

That's it, brother. That's the last one.

They all make their way to the front. The GPS spins, the light turns green.

JESSE
 Lisa, sweetie, you wanna deliver the
 last present?

LISA
 We should deliver it together.

JESSE
 Alright. Give me your hand.

He moves his hand to the button.

LISA
 No.
 (turns to others)
 We should ALL deliver it together.

Everyone crowds in. Like a team, put all their hands
 together.

CODY
 On three.

They exchanges looks.

WENDY
 THREE!!!!

All hands become one and push the green button.

EXT. JESSE'S BUS -- NIGHT

The present shoots out, disappears to its destination.

EXT. HORIZON -- MORNING

Rays of golden light streak the dark sky as the sun appears.

FADE OUT:

EXT. CODY'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- MORNING

Captain Ricky's police cruiser's parked outside.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- MORNING

We hear whispering as we TRACK from the living room, past a
 wall and see Cody standing by the door with Wendy and Lisa
 half in their coats. The girls look up and their faces beam.

WENDY & LISA
 Esai!!!

In his robe, ESAI, late 30's, the girl's stepfather, takes a
 protective stance.

ESAI

You got about five seconds to explain yourself.

WENDY

That's our daddy.

CODY

We were gonna go out for breakfast.
I didn't want to wake anybody.

Wow. Awkward. A bit of a standoff. A second later, Cody's Ex walks around the corner. She's shocked, then happy to see him, places a re-assuring hand on Esai's shoulder.

CODY (CONT'D)

Hey, baby. I didn't want to wake you. Just wanted to see the girls. You've done a really...
(smiles, chuckles)
...great job raising them.

He looks at Esai, sobers up.

CODY (CONT'D)

Both of you.

He crouches, waves the girls to him.

CODY (CONT'D)

Can I get a hug?

They embrace him.

CODY (CONT'D)

Thanks, sweetie.

He rises. Cody's Ex hands him the present she placed beneath the tree at the beginning. Embraces him.

CODY'S EX

Will you stay for breakfast?

He looks at the girls, the tree, the stockings that don't include him.

CODY

Next time.

He does "the nod" to Esai who follows suit.

INT. POLICE CRUISER -- MORNING

Captain Ricky sits on the driver side, Jesse rides in the back next to the sleeping Rod and Kevin.

Cody knocks on the window.

CAPTAIN RICKY

It's open.

Cody slides into the passenger seat. The metal grate separates him from Jessie.

CODY

Can't believe I gotta drive away in a cherry picker.

CAPTAIN RICKY

Dude, did you see Blues Brothers?

CODY

What?

CAPTAIN RICKY

Never mind.

EXT. DETROIT -- MORNING

The Cruiser drives through downtown Detroit.

INT. POLICE CRUISER -- MORNING

Cody fiddles with the tag on his present "**TO: DADDY FROM: YOUR GIRLS**", peels off the wrapping. It's a framed photo of his daughters. He sets it on his lap.

JESSE

Hey?

(taps on metal grate)

Why'd you leave me hanging? You went inside and never talked to me.

Cody's taken aback. This isn't easy.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Took all the blame, too. I still don't feel right about that.

Cody stares straight ahead.

CODY

I'm your older brother. It was my responsibility to watch out for you. I shouldn't've let you come with me and I refused to see you until I got *outside*.

Cody turns to face Jessie.

CODY (CONT'D)

That meant making sure you didn't
find your way *inside*.

Cody winks, sees the Dancer from Jimmy's G Spot ascend a flight of stairs.

INT. DANCER'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

The Dancer enters her apartment. One room. Kitchen, living room, bedroom in a single space.

There's a small tree in the corner, red and green blinking lights illuminate a bed where a LONG HAIRE D TATTOOED ROCKER sleeps with a LITTLE BOY, 6.

She approaches, smiles, climbs in bed with them, drapes the Rocker's arm over her.

INT. THIEF'S HOUSE -- MORNING

A YOUNG BOY opens a single present. It's a small chain saw. The boy rushes to his father, dressed in black from head to toe - Our Thief - hugs him.

INT. SADIE'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Sadie sits on her pony, walks him around the house.

EXT. JIMMY G'S SPOT -- MORNING

Our Three Santa Patron's exit. Shade their eyes from the early light. One Santa pats his jacket, his pants. A Second Santa extends a small bell with a handle to the First. The Third Santa gives him a small red bucket.

The three part ways, each swinging a red bucket, each ringing a bell.

INT. PRISON -- MORNING

A PRISON GUARD walks down the row as INMATES sleep. He passes Cody's old cell, the door open. We enter it, move over the bed, the wall, find a picture of TWO YOUNG BOYS holding automatic weapons.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- MORNING

Captain Ricky watches Cody and Jesse each carry a boy into the building.

CAPTAIN RICKY

I'll catch you later. Get it? Catch
you....Merry Christmas, guys!

Captain Ricky lights up the tires and peels out like a Nascar driver.

EXT. DETROIT STREET -- MORNING

Our Homeless Man, sporting bandages and bruises from fighting Blitzen, pushes a cart down the street. He passes Abe approaching the other way.

The Homeless Man stops, extends the wrapped candy cane he received from Sadie at the beginning to Abe.

HOMELESS MAN
Merry Christmas.

Abe's taken aback. The Homeless Man continues on his way.

EXT. TRIPLETS PARENTS HOUSE -- MORNING

A red Fire Chief car's parked outside, maybe 3/4 of a space from a fuel efficient match box car. Captain Ricky pulls up, tries to park between them, bangs into both.

CAPTAIN RICKY (V.O.)
Every Christmas. EVERY Christmas....

INT. TRIPLETS PARENTS HOUSE -- MORNING

The house is full. And everyone looks like Captain Ricky - the KIDS, the GROWN UPS, the OLD FOLKS - everyone. There's a giant tree in the middle of the house, gifts galore.

Captain Ricky enters and the room erupts. In the middle of the room PAPA DAVENPORT, 70's, taps his cane on one of his Grandkid's head.

PAPA DAVENPORT
Hey-Hey-Hey....

The room quiets.

PAPA DAVENPORT (CONT'D)
Let's do this!!!

Fire Chief Jackie steps up with a wrapped box and the room settles.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE
Here you go, little brother.

Chief Ricky turns to do his correction, smiles, turns back to Jackie.

CAPTAIN RICKY
Thank you.

FIRE CHIEF JACKIE

Open it.

Captain Ricky peels off the wrapping - a fire truck. He smiles. Suddenly, Flight Controller Brennan rushes into frame, whisks it from his hands. A chase ensues.

INT. ABE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM -- MORNING

The wrapped candy cane rests on a nightstand. Abe kisses the cheek of his MOTHER, 70's, walks out the room and turns, watches her sleep as he gently shuts the door.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM -- MORNING

Jesse, Cody, Regina, Rod, Kevin and Mrs. Robinson have breakfast.

JESSE

Oh, I'M a bad driver?

CODY

You always were a bad driver. ALWAYS.

JESSE

You ever guide a bus with a football field of reindeer pulling it? Huh?

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY -- MORNING

A hand with a red sleeve and white fur knocks on the door.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

The door creaks open. A pair of Santa boots step in.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM -- MORNING

The red and white jacket enters frame. Slowly, Jesse and his family notice, turn in quiet and awe.

It's Santa. The REAL SANTA, intense, strong, imposing. Not a guy you wanna let down.

REAL SANTA

I apologize for disturbing you on Christmas morning.

ENTIRE GROUP

No-no-no-no.....

REAL SANTA

(notices kids gawking)

I know what you're thinking, "he ain't white". Movies lie, kids. Buy a helmet.

(pulls out chair)

May I?

JESSE

Please.

REAL SANTA

I just got back from that "control room". Hadda kick a little FEMA butt. Man, you know, I been doing this my WHOLE LIFE...

Real Santa rubs his temples.

REAL SANTA (CONT'D)

I don't know what I was thinking. Maybe have a little time for myself? Do some wakeboarding? Go to the movies? Sleep? Figured it'd be good all the way around. Now I hear this Cheney looking bozo fired all the elves, brought in undocumented workers, paid 'em dirt, sped up the line with poorly made toys, even phased out going down the chimney.

REGINA

Would you like some breakfast? Maybe some coffee?

REAL SANTA

No, I'm good. Thanks though. Anyway... I'm taking back all the franchises.

JESSE

Can you do that? I mean, legally?

REAL SANTA

You wanna be the guy who sues Santa Claus? Try explaining why your family, friends, hell your whole dang BLOCK be getting presents from the Easter Bunny. I don't think so. Nuh-uh.

Real Santa rubs his eyes.

REAL SANTA (CONT'D)

Where was I? Oh, yeah, this franchise....disaster. So, why I came here is this: I hear you really came through last night. Above and beyond. And I wanted...

Creeaaaaaak. CREEAAAKKKKKKKK. Real Santa turns around, sees Detroit Santa meekly step into the apartment.

REAL SANTA (CONT'D)

I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO WAIT IN THE SLEIGH?!?!

DETROIT SANTA

Yes, yes, you did. But I wanted...
(sees Mrs. Robinson)
Hey, baby.

Unimpressed, Mrs. Robinson extends an open palm.

MRS. ROBINSON

Cell phone.

She snaps her fingers.

DETROIT SANTA

(digging in pockets)
Oh, yeah.
(tosses it to her)
Sorry.

She notices his necklace.

MRS. ROBINSON

That's nice. Where'd you get it?

DETROIT SANTA

(whisper)
Life coach.

She steps away. Real Santa cocks his head, whisper.

REAL SANTA

Kinda looks like Antoinette Fazzone don't ya' think?

DETROIT SANTA

I know, huh?

Detroit Santa sits.

REAL SANTA

Older brother.
(MORE)

REAL SANTA (CONT'D)

Been taking care of him my whole life. Supposed to be the other way around but....tonight...he really came through. I'm proud of you.

Cody lowers his head while Rod glances at Kevin, raises an eyebrow. Kevin hits his arm.

CODY

Yeah, right.

ROD

Who was there for you when that little Jacob kid started picking on you?

KEVIN

Did I ask you to?

CODY

Hey, remember when we lived in 8 Mile and you -

JESSE

Yeah, yeah - the dog, right?

The group begins to swirl into conversation. Real Santa watches, then interjects.

REAL SANTA

Jesse. You want to take over for me?

One sentence silences the room.

JESSE

Excuse me?

REAL SANTA

It's a big decision, a lot of responsibility but I got a great 401K and medical's tops. Dental's okay. Sweets, you know. Whaddaya say?

JESSE

Why me?

Real Santa pulls out an envelope.

REAL SANTA

'Cause of this.
(removes letter, reads)
"Dear Santa..."
(MORE)

REAL SANTA (CONT'D)

(lowers letter)

I love that...

(lifts letter back up)

Blah-blah-blah....*"been an inspiration to his boys"*....blah-blah-blah....*"looked after his brother's girls"*...

Real Santa shoots a glance at his brother.

REAL SANTA (CONT'D)

Sound familiar?

DETROIT SANTA

I apologized for that. Remember?

REAL SANTA

(continues reading)

"If I could ask for one thing, it'd be for his boys to see him as the hero he is to me".

He lowers the letter. Taken aback, Jesse turns to Regina who eyes him with great pride.....then turns to Cody. He looks up at Jesse. He wrote it.

JESSE

Why?

CODY

'Cause you do it. 24/7. Holidays, birthdays. Every day. You're the Energizer Daddy.

DETROIT SANTA

I want you to run the whole operation. Hire whomever you like, provided they NEVER worked for the government. You and your family will become part of my family

(glances again at brother)

But not LIKE my family.

(back to Jesse)

If you know what I mean.

Detroit Santa fidgets. Real Santa rubs his temples.

REAL SANTA

Oh, yeah. One thing. Provided he DOESN'T MESS IT UP....

(points with his thumb to his brother)

He keeps Detroit.

JESSE

But I thought -

REAL SANTA

What? That he didn't WANT Detroit. He told you that, right? That it was all he could afford? He begged for Detroit and this was AFTER it sold. Cost me Palm Springs, four backstage laminates to that Jay-Z Pantages show not to mention a pony for some little girl not far from here.

DETROIT SANTA

I'm a fan of the Tigers, Red Wings, Lions. Big fan of the Pistons. BIG -

REAL SANTA

ALRIGHT!!!! Come on...

Real Santa helps his brother up. They head for the door. Real Santa pauses, turns to the group.

REAL SANTA (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas.

He pulls the door shut. We hear the brothers bicker as they walk away.

REAL SANTA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Why you gotta talk so much. They're having breakfast.

DETROIT SANTA (O.S.)

Why you gotta be that guy?

REAL SANTA

Well I DID tell you to stay in the sleigh.....

INT. DETROIT MTA STATION -- DAY

Jesse and the boys get out of their bus, toss the keys to an MTA MAINTENANCE EMPLOYEE. Abe Simms sees them leave, follows.

ABE SIMMS

Hey. Jesse....

Jesse turns, back pedals with his boys.

ABE SIMMS (CONT'D)

You just disappeared for half the night. I gotta let you go.

JESSE
Yeah, I know. It's cool...

ROD
He's got a new job.

KEVIN
Yeah, he's gonna be Santa!

JESSE
Kevin!

Skeptical, Abe waves, walks back inside. Jesse, Rod, and Kevin continue on their way.

ROD
Do one, Dad.

JESSE
Not now.

KEVIN
C'mon, Daddy, please....?

ROD
You gotta practice.

Jesse clears his throat.

JESSE
Ho-ho-ho....

ROD
Deeper Dad.

JESSE
Ho-Ho-Ho....

KEVIN
Deeper.

JESSE
HO-HO-HO....!!!!

KEVIN & ROD
DEEPER!!

JESSE
Now, I know you're messing with me.

EXT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Jesse, Cody, Kevin, Rod, Lisa and Wendy build a snowman.
Cody checks out Jesse's MTA hat.

CODY

Cool hat.

JESSE

(legitimately touched)

Thanks, man.

Cody stifles a laugh.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Guess your girls ain't celebrating
Christmas next year, hMMMMMMMMMM?

CODY

Why you gotta be that guy, huh?

Hand full of snow. BAM! In Cody's face. Cody chases him around the snowman like Rod and Kevin in the beginning. The others fall into step. It's a free for all. And it's Christmas.