

THE NAUGHTY BOY

Original Screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTH WEYMOUTH TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

A light snow falls as an SUV stops at a red light. An SUV with MARY-ELLEN WATSON, 30s, ABBY WATSON, 7, and JAMES WATSON, 10, sit in the SUV. James, long blond wavy hair with designer eye-wear is engrossed in his cell phone game as Abby reads.

James swipes his hair and glances out at Nativity scene in the town square. The light above the baby Jesus' head pops out, fizzles and dies out as the traffic light turns GREEN. The SUV joins the traffic as James frowns.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL CAFETERIA - NOON

James stands in the lunch line with STUDENTS, including SCOTT PEARSON, 10, a stout snub-nosed kid, who cuts in front of him.

SCOTT
(to Lunch Lady)
More mashed! Great lunch, hey
Watson?

The LUNCH LADY serves Scott. He saunters off and joins a group of BOYS, 10-11, at a table. James sits near two pimple-faced BOYS, 8, who immediately move to another table.

ABBY WATSON, 7, in a pink dress, sees this and sits with James, leaving KIDS her own at age at her previous table.

JAMES
No way. You wanna get me creamed?

ABBY
Wanna play Zooreka later?

JAMES
No. Why can't you just play phone
games like everyone else?

ABBY
(eats fries)
'Cause I like to play with people,
not machines. It's nicer.

JAMES
Nicer for who?

SELMA MARTIN, 10, a pretty yet unkempt Latino girl, sits at a table behind them. As James scans the cafeteria, his eyes fall on her.

ABBY

(opens juice box)

You said you'd have Dad moved home by now. Christmas is in five days and he's still in that smelly apartment with no tree.

JAMES

What do you think I'm working on? You think it's easy getting Mom and Dad down here every week? My life is nothing but detention.

A wad of paper lands on James' neck. James removes it as Scott hides his straw. Scott and his BUDDIES laugh as James reaches into his plate and scoops up some mashed potatoes.

ABBY

James! You promised Mom you'd be nice for Christmas.

James hurls the potatoes which land in Scott's hair. Scott rises, grabs his soda can, shakes it, and lets it rip.

ABBY (CONT'D)

James, I'm wearing my new dress.

Scott sprays James and Abby with his soda. Abby's dress is ruined. A food fight begins and Abby crawls under the table.

Selma gets up and approaches the lunch counter. She shoves some chips, pretzels, and apples into her backpack, zips it up and exits the cafeteria as--

MRS. REARDON, mid-30s, enters in a beige pantsuit. A wad of red beets splatters across her jacket. She sees James standing on a table, hand full of beets. She blows a WHISTLE. Everyone stops fighting and sits down.

MRS. REARDON

James Watson Junior. Get off that table and into my office this instant!

James steps off the table.

ABBY

This is going to be some Christmas.

INT. SANTA CLAUS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SANTA CLAUS, dressed in overalls, watches Mrs. Reardon escort James away on a LARGE SCREEN.

SANTA

Indeed.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

James sits on a bench outside Mrs. Reardon's office. He plays a game on his iPhone: *Kamikaze Attack*. James jabs his fingers into the keys at high speed.

JAMES

Kamikaze, over and out!

MARY-ELLEN WATSON, 30s, dressed in business attire, enters in a huff followed by JIM WATSON, 30s, who nearly crashes into her. They exchange annoyed glances.

MARY-ELLEN

She called you too?

JIM

Why is it always right before a meeting?

They hurry down the hallway. James sees them and rises.

JAMES

Hello, DNA. What took you so long?

They barge into Mrs. Reardon's office and close the door.

JAMES (CONT'D)

My work is done here.

James sits back down and resumes his game.

INT. MRS. REARDON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mary-Ellen and Jim sit across from Mrs. Reardon who dabs her new suit with club soda. It does not help. She gives up.

MRS. REARDON

That's the second food fight this week. I have some parents threatening to remove their children from this school based on the cleaning bills alone!

MARY-ELLEN

Naturally, we'll pay for any damages. Won't we, Jim?

Jim replies to a text message. Mary-Ellen kicks him under his chair. He gazes up and mouths 'what?'. She rolls her eyes.

MRS. REARDON

Unfortunately, our job is to educate children not to discipline them.

Mrs. Reardon rises and puts James' large folder into a file cabinet.

MRS. REARDON (CONT'D)

Which is why I'm recommending James be transferred to the Plight School in Boston after Christmas, where they are better equipped at handling such behavioral problems.

MARY-ELLEN

Behavioral... Jim, did you hear that?

JIM

(glances up from phone)
Boston? That's over an hour away.
Who's going to pick him up and drop him off every day?

SANTA (O.S.)

Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum.

Mary-Ellen's phone vibrates. It's a text message from James.

TEXT: 'OMG! Major Pee Break. BRB!'

Mary-Ellen closes her phone and sighs.

MRS. REARDON

I've seen this a thousand times. As soon as their parents divorce, the children do all sorts of things to get their attention.

MARY-ELLEN

It's only a ten month separation!

JIM

You mean, he's doing this on purpose?

Mrs. Reardon puts her stained jacket back on.

MRS. REARDON

Perhaps if you spent a little more time together as a family, like you did before the divorce, the situation would improve.

MARY-ELLEN

Why does she keep insisting we're divorced?

SANTA (O.S.)

Now we're getting somewhere.

Jim rises and paces around the office.

JIM

There isn't more time. I already work seventy hours as it is. Then there are bills to pay, errands to run, house repairs. Not to mention all the things I have to do with Sarah and her kids.

MRS. REARDON

Who's Sarah?

MARY-ELLEN

I doubt she's interested in hearing about your new girlfriend problems.

SANTA (O.S.)

Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A TOILET FLUSHES as James exits the boys' bathroom. He heads down the hallway as the SCHOOL BELL RINGS. The halls become inundated with KIDS. Abby spots James and runs towards him.

ABBY

James!

Scott Pearson opens his locker door, accidentally smashing Abby's face against it. Scott's books crash to the floor. He slams the locker shut and sees Abby's frowning face.

SCOTT

Watson tadpole! Look what you did!
(grabs Abby's arm)
Now pick 'em up before I...

JAMES (O.S.)
Before you what?

James shoves Scott against his locker.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Touch my sister again, Pearson, and
you'll be eating mashed potatoes
for life. On account of no teeth!

James kicks Scott's books across the floor as KIDS jump over them and LAUGH. James grabs Abby's hand and walks off. Abby glances back at Scott and gives him a RASPBERRY.

Scott collects his books, pissed, as Mrs. Reardon exits her office followed by Jim and Mary-Ellen.

MRS. REARDON
Like I said, James has until
Christmas to--

JAMES
(reaching her office)
To what?

ABBY
Mommy!

Abby hugs Mary-Ellen who gets a load of her new dress.

MARY-ELLEN
James! Her new dress?

MRS. REARDON
(eyes James)
If you'll excuse me, I have parents
waiting whose child is on the honor
list.

Mrs. Reardon saunters off as the BELL RINGS. KIDS scramble into their classrooms, including Abby. Jim eyes his watch.

JAMES
So? Am I savage or what?

Jim's phone vibrates. He reads a TEXT message.

JIM
Great. They've started without me.

MARY-ELLEN
(eyes her watch)
And I'm late for my presentation!

Mary-Ellen and Jim run down the hallway.

JAMES

Hello!? What about me? And who's picking us up after?

MARY-ELLEN

I'll call you later!

JAMES

So much for that family reunion.

James sits on the bench and resumes his iPhone game. Mrs. Reardon, from down the hallway, clears her THROAT.

James pockets his phone, enters a classroom and SLAMS the door. Mrs. Reardon rolls her eyes, returning to two waiting PARENTS, 30s, who warily eye her stained suit.

INT. SANTA CLAUS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Santa turns OFF the big screen and strokes his beard.

SANTA

Indeed.

He sits at his large desk covered with children's names stamped 'NAUGHTY' in large red letters. At the top of the stack sits JAMES WATSON's name.

BREEZY, an Elf dressed in Elf attire, enters covered in snow, dragging a large wet MAIL bag into the office.

BREEZY

Sorry I'm late. The mail sleigh got stuck in an abandoned igloo. Took six reindeer to pull out.

Breezy dumps more 'NAUGHTY' names onto the already overloaded desk. Santa sifts through them searching for one 'NICE'.

SANTA

Another bag of Naughties? That can't be right, can it?

Breezy reaches into the bag and grabs one 'NICE' name stamped in green. He puts it on the desk. It reads: ABBY WATSON.

BREEZY

Oh, yes. And one Nice.

SANTA

One!? We'd better check that progress report.

Santa rises and opens a large cabinet. A huge pile of toys fall out onto the floor. Santa steps on a doll which CRIES.

SANTA (CONT'D)

We're using my office for storage now too?

BREEZY

We already filled every mail house, attic, igloo and coal mine for fifty miles! What else is there?

Santa sighs. Breezy grabs an iPod from the pile on the floor.

BREEZY (CONT'D)

So that's where that was! I've been looking everywhere for that.

Breezy puts the headphones ON and rocks to the MUSIC.

BREEZY (CONT'D)

(dances around)

It's one of those new toys the kids love. It's great for exercise and even plays Christmas--

Santa rips the iPod off Breezy's head and throws it into a huge crate marked: RETURNS. The crate holds MP3s, E-Readers, iPads, iPhones, laptops, Gameboys, and other electronic devices used by kids.

SANTA

You know how I feel about those toys. They distract children from learning the four c's.

BREEZY

I know. Communication, compassion, compromise, and confidence. But it's fun!

MRS. CLAUS, a beautiful plus-sized woman, enters with a tray of hot cocoa and sweets. She sees Santa's toys on the floor.

MRS. CLAUS

How did those get in here?

SANTA

We're checking them for durability.

BREEZY

(holds a wooden block)

What's to check? They've outlasted
eight recessions.

Breezy shoves the toys back into the closet as Santa eyeballs him. Mrs. Claus tries to put her tray on Santa's desk, but cannot find a vacant spot.

MRS. CLAUS

Are those all Naughties? What
happened to all the Nices?

Breezy watches on as Santa takes the tray from Mrs. Claus.

SANTA

I see you've been baking again.

He puts the tray on a nearby table. Mrs. Claus eats a muffin.

MRS. CLAUS

You know how I get this time of
year. With all the excitement, I
can't seem to keep still. And that
new electric oven, baking so easy.
It's as if they bake themselves!

SANTA

Newer isn't always better,
unfortunately.
(takes muffin from her)
Perhaps you could help with the
dolls again.

Breezy frantically waves his hands. He shows Santa a doll with a face that looks like a transvestite.

MRS. CLAUS

But you said my dolls were scaring
the children.

Breezy hides the doll as Mrs. Claus takes back the muffin.

SANTA

On second thought, baking is much
better. We have more than enough
dolls this year.

Mrs. Claus nods as she happily nibbles her muffin. An OLDER
ELF enters with a golden sealed envelope.

OLDER ELF

Special delivery!

The Older Elf salutes Santa, hands him the envelope, and exits.

BREEZY

Uh oh. It's from the Elf Elders.
They found out about the toys.

MRS. CLAUS

What about the toys?

Santa opens the envelope and reads it.

SANTA

Apparently that igloo collapsed,
revealing some of the stored toys.

MRS. CLAUS

Stored toys? Why were they being
stored? Elf toy-making rules say
that toys must be delivered by
Santa to every Nice child that asks
for them!

BREEZY

Which is exactly why we've had to
store them. We're all out of Nice
children. Nobody seems to want our
toys anymore!

Breezy slaps his hand over his mouth and walks off.

MRS. CLAUS

Nobody wants our toys? What is he
talking about?

SANTA

It's true. Ever since the invention
of the newer toys, we've had a
steady decrease in requests for our
toys and a sharp increase in the
number of Naughties. Breezy and I
had to not only make up a number of
toy requests, but we've had to add
to them each year to keep the elves
from becoming aware of the problem.

Mrs. Claus eyes the crate full of new toys marked: RETURNS.

MRS. CLAUS

You're storing toys. Exactly how
many years has it been since you've
delivered all of them?

BREEZY

Thirty! Ever since the invention
of the laptop.

Breezy slaps his hand over his mouth again and walks off.

MRS. CLAUS

Is this true?

SANTA

I'm afraid so.

Mrs. Claus bites into another muffin. Santa takes it away.

SANTA (CONT'D)

This is exactly why I didn't want
to worry you. Sooner or later the
children will remember why they
preferred our toys.

MRS. CLAUS

But what if they don't? What if
the Naughty list continues to grow?
What will happen to all the nice
children?

BREEZY

She's right! A few more years like
this and Christmas could go out of
business!

He slaps his hand over his mouth as another closet bursts
open revealing Santa's toys. Santa eyes the crate full of
the newer toys, and strokes his beard, worried.

EXT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL - DAY

Rain pours. Abby and Mrs. Reardon stand in front of the
school, waiting. Abby holds her Barbie umbrella above Mrs.
Reardon's head. James emerges from the school and sees them.

JAMES

What? Again?

Abby nods 'yes'. An exasperated James pulls out his cell
phone. Mrs. Reardon holds out her open palm.

MRS. REARDON

You know the rules. No cell phones
on school property during school
hours.

JAMES

But it's *after* school.

MRS. REARDON

Would you like more detention?

JAMES

You just gave me six hours!

MRS. REARDON

Shall we make it seven?

James hands over his cell phone and scowls. Mrs. Reardon retrieves her own cell phone and 'speed dials' a number. The phone RINGS and RINGS as more cars drive by. She hangs up.

MRS. REARDON (CONT'D)

I don't have time for this. I have my own kids to pick up.

JAMES

No fail. I can walk her home. It's only three blocks and I have the keys right here. See?

James dangles his house keys in front of Mrs. Reardon's eyes.

MRS. REARDON

Fine! But have her call me the second she gets in, or I'll expect to see both of your parents back in my office first thing tomorrow.

James nods. Mrs. Reardon watches them walk off.

JAMES

(to Abby)

See? I told you my plan was working.

They continue down the street.

ABBY

Your plan is stupid. Don't you every think that just nice would make things better?

JAMES

When's 'just being nice' ever done? If you want to fix something, you gotta have a plan. How many times I gotta tell you that?

They stop at an intersection as the FEMALE CROSSING GUARD, 30s, sees James. She gives him a nasty look.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's her problem?

ABBY

You wrote 'Honk If You Bet She's Single' on her sign last year. Remember?

JAMES

That was forever ago. Can't she take a joke?

The Crossing Guard lets James and Abby cross. An impatient driver HONKS as he drives by her.

FEMALE CROSSING GUARD

I'm engaged now!

James shakes his head as Abby frowns.

JAMES

Noob.

ABBY

What if Dad doesn't move back? This could actually be our last Christmas together.

JAMES

Not gonna happen. Soon they'll both see that newer isn't always better.

ABBY

What?

JAMES

That old isn't... that new stuff can't... Oh, I don't know. Why do you always ask so many questions? I'm just trying to be nice, okay?

Abby stops in her tracks. Her eyes well with tears.

ABBY

That's just it, James. You're never nice. If you were, maybe they'd stop fighting.

James halts, floored, and looks back at her.

JAMES
I can't believe you just said that.

ABBY
Just really try to be nice this
Christmas. For me? Please?

She bites her lip. James turns away.

JAMES
Don't do that. I hate that.

She bites her lip again. James sees her tears. He throws up
his hands.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Okay, I'll try! Only I'm telling
you, being nice never fixes
anything!

A car HONKS as Mary-Ellen stops beside them.

ABBY
Mommy!

Abby runs over to the SUV. James follows.

MARY-ELLEN
Why weren't you at school?

JAMES
Why weren't you?

Mary-Ellen lowers the backseat window. James sees BILL
HARRIS, late-30s, in the front seat, and his sons, HENRY, 9,
and THOMAS, 11, in the back playing Gameboys. James gives
his mother the stink eye.

MARY-ELLEN
(to James, hushed)
Be nice.
(louder)
You remember Bill Harris and his
boys from school? They're coming
to the mall with us.

JAMES
Oh joy! Just what I always wanted.

ABBY
James, you promised!

James helps Abby into her booster seat and climbs in.

MARY-ELLEN
Promised what, honey?

JAMES
(shoves boys)
Move over!

BOYS
You move over.

James slams the door as the SUV drives off. Abby looks out the window and frowns.

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE - DAY

Santa and Breezy exit Santa's house. They head down the hillside toward the village.

SANTA
Maybe it was a misprint. Maybe
they didn't actually find the toys.

BREEZY
You really are living in a fantasy
world, aren't you?

They enter a huge building in the middle of the village which reads: TOY SHOP.

INT. TOY SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Thousands of ELVES make toys by hand or with the help of old-fashioned machinery. They work efficiently. Santa and Breezy walk past them.

ELVES
It's Santa! You're here early.

SANTA
(eyes toys)
Simply marvelous. Keep up the good
work.

BREEZY
(under his breath)
Shouldn't you be saying, slow it
down?

Santa and Breezy climb a staircase to a second floor landing. Santa peers inside an office window and sees the THREE ELF ELDERS seated at three small wooden desks.

Each Elf Elder is dressed in an elf suit with golden shoulder tassels. Breezy notices Santa sweating and hands him a handkerchief.

BREEZY (CONT'D)
Should I come with?

SANTA
(dabs forehead)
No. We don't want to appear
anxious.

BREEZY
Right. Denial is always the best
approach.

Santa enters the office alone. The factory has fallen silent. Breezy looks at all the elves who have stopped working to watch.

BREEZY (CONT'D)
Work!

The elves work faster than ever and smile happily.

BREEZY (CONT'D)
Yep. We're doomed all right.

He peers into the office.

INT. ELF ELDERS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Santa stands before the three ELF ELDERS as they hide some blueprints and rise from their desks.

SANTA
You wanted to see me, gentlemen?

ELF ELDER THREE
Have a seat. Won't you?

Santa spots an elf-sized chair in the middle of the room and makes several attempts to sit on it. He finally gives up.

SANTA
I think I'll stand, thank you.

The Elf Elders circle him as one of them brandishes a report.

ELF ELDER THREE
It has come to our attention that a
great many toys are being stored
throughout the village.

ELF ELDER TWO

Including nearly a billion toys
that haven't been requested this
Christmas!

Elf Elder Two holds up a report. Santa turns around, trying
to keep up with them.

ELF ELDER ONE

This means the elves are down there
right now making toys you have no
intention of delivering!

ELF ELDER TWO

Not to mention the billions of toys
you're now storing!

Santa grabs on the tiny chair, slightly dizzy.

SANTA

Alright. I'll admit we've had a
slight increase in the Naughty list
over the past few years, but I
assure you it's only a matter of
time before the children lose
their interest in all high-tech
devices and return to requesting
our toys.

ELF ELDER TWO AND ONE

So you admit it. You are secretly
storing toys!

SANTA

It's not the children's fault. The
world has become an increasingly
distracting place to live in.

Santa paces the office.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Why most parents today have to work
twice as hard for far less than
ever before, which means less time
spend with their children. That's
why our toys are more important
than ever.

(MORE)

SANTA (CONT'D)

They help teach children the values that will not only help them become happier children and adults, but also encourage them to embrace a physical world filled with social and emotional experiences which lead to memories that last a lifetime, which reminds them that not only is giving the only way to be happy, but it is exactly the reason why playing with toys that teach the to become Nice is so important.

The Elf Elders turn to each other, confused.

ELF ELDERS ONE, TWO AND THREE

I have no idea what he's talking about? Do you know what he's saying? No!

ELF ELDER TWO

What's this got to do with saving your toys!?

Elf Elder Three rises.

ELF ELDER THREE

I warned you this would happen. If we don't start making the toys children want today, you're going to put us all out of business!

Breezy enters, concerned.

BREEZY

Is everything all right in here?

SANTA

If only there was some way I could remind the children about the value of the four c's, without the use of the toys. But how? We've always relied on our toys to convey the message of Christmas.

Elf Elder Three's eyes widen.

ELF ELDER THREE

Excuse us a moment, will you?

The Elf Elders form a huddle and whisper.

ELF ELDER THREE (CONT'D)
 That's it. We'll ask him to turn
 one Naughty into Nice by Christmas
 without the use of his toys, or
 else admit to the elves that he's
 no longer in charge of Christmas!

ELF ELDER ONE
 And what if he succeeds in this?

ELF ELDER THREE
 Nonsense. Once a Naughty always a
 Naughty and never a Nice twice.
 Everyone knows that.

ELF ELDER TWO
 He's right. We'll be able to make
 our own toys and be in charge of
 Christmas!

They HUSH Elf Two and look over at Santa and smile. They
 return to their desks.

ELF ELDER THREE
 We've decided to accept your offer.

SANTA
 Offer? What offer is that?

ELF ELDER THREE
 You turn one Naughty into Nice by
 Christmas, without the use of your
 toys.

SANTA
 Did I say that?

ELF ELDER ONE
 And we'll see if the four c's still
 mean as much to the children as
 they do to you and our toys.

ELF ELDER THREE
 And if not, we'll be in charge of
 Christmas from now on which means,
 we'll be making the newer toys!

Breezy eyes widen, stunned.

BREEZY
 You'll be making toys? That sounds
 like you trying to fire Santa!

The Elf Elders rise holding the blueprints and reports.

ELF ELDER ONE
Would you rather be making coal?

ELF ELDER TWO
We're in the business of storing
toys!

ELF ELDER THREE
Either he proves he can still run
Christmas or we'll have no choice
but to get rid of him and his toys!

Santa is deeply hurt by this.

ELF ELDER TWO
Agreed?

SANTA
Agreed.

Breezy passes out on the floor as Santa eyes him, suddenly
overwhelmed.

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

An ELF DOCTOR hovers over Breezy who lies in Santa's bed. The
Elf Doctor sticks a tongue depressor in Breezy's mouth as
Santa looks on, dressed in his red robe and slippers.

ELF DOCTOR
Say, ah!

BREEZY
I told you, I'm perfectly...

ELF DOCTOR
Say it!

BREEZY
AHHH!

The Elf Doctor puts his tongue depressor away and rises.

ELF DOCTOR
You'll live. Now get some rest and
I'll check on you later.

Breezy bolts out of the bed.

BREEZY
Rest? How can I rest in the middle
of a crisis?

ELF DOCTOR
What crisis?

Breezy looks at Santa, panicked.

BREEZY
Elf flu! You know how the elves
are this time of year. Busy, busy,
busy. Not even a bomb can slow them
down.

ELF DOCTOR
Elf flu! That is urgent. Why
haven't I heard about this?

The Elf Doctor rushes out the door.

SANTA
You're lying now?

BREEZY
What did you want me say? That
Christmas is ending because of a
few outdated toys?

Mrs. Claus enters with a tray of treats.

MRS. CLAUS
But children have played with our
toys for four hundred years. And
you said yourself, the newer toys
don't last more than a few months.
Most of them are not even child
proof.

SANTA
That's not the point. The Elf
Elders no longer believe I
understand the children or what
they need. And maybe their right.
Maybe my time as Santa has come to
and end.

Mrs. Claus and Breezy are both shocked by this. Mrs. Claus
touches Santa's shoulder.

MRS. CLAUS
Nonsense. If anyone understands
what makes a child heart full of
joy it's you. You must remember,
the gift of giving is remembered
for a life time.

BREEZY

But who is the Naughty child? Has anyone heard?

OLDER ELF (O.S.)

Special delivery.

The Older Elf enters with a golden sealed envelope. He hands it to Santa, salutes him, and exits the room.

BREEZY

I don't even think I want to hear this.

Breezy walks off as Santa opens the envelope and reads.

BREEZY (CONT'D)

Dear lord. Please, make him a gracious, reasonable, rational, responsible--

SANTA

It's James Watson.

BREEZY

What!?

(turns around)

James Watson of 389 Belmont Drive, South Weymouth, Massachusetts?

SANTA

Yes. Why?

BREEZY

He's the most selfish child on our radar. He's topped the Naughty list three years in a row!

MRS. CLAUS

A selfish child at Christmas?

SANTA

Apparently the Elf Elders knew that a selfish child is the hardest to change back to being Nice. They've completely forgotten what giving is.

BREEZY

That's it. It's over. I can smell the coal dust already.

SANTA

We still have five days to see what he does remember.

Santa puts the envelope away. He takes off his robe and lies on the bed.

SANTA (CONT'D)

In the meantime, we'll get some sleep and leave first thing in the morning to speak with him.

A huge silk comforter engulfs Santa and tucks him in, followed by his pillow fluffing itself for his head.

BREEZY

What do you mean, 'we'?

SANTA

I haven't spoken to a human child in nearly a century. Ever since they started putting Santa's in the store. Besides, you're a parent. I could use your support.

Mrs. Claus takes off her robe and lies beside Santa. The comforter and pillow do the same thing for her.

BREEZY

Elves are not children. They don't know how to be selfish. That's why we're so good at making toys!

Breezy exits the bedroom as Mrs. Claus turns OFF the light.

MRS. CLAUS (O.S.)

Goodness gracious. Since when did making a few toys to make some children happy become so complicated?

SANTA (O.S.)

Since I thought of giving them, I believe.

INT. APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jim and Mary-ellen sit at a table with James and Abby. The WAITRESS stands beside James, taking his order.

JAMES

I'll have the double-double, extra fries, a Mac and Cheese, and...

JIM
James, you're ordering too much.

JAMES
Its called take-out, Dad. Besides,
you know how Mom hates to cook.
I'm just trying to help out.

James continues ordering as Mary-Ellen sighs.

MARY-ELLEN
He always does that.

JIM
What?

MARY-ELLEN
Makes me feel like I'm doing a
horrible job as a mother.

JIM
When is the last time you cooked?

Mary-Ellen gapes at Jim as SARAH MARSHALL, 30s, an attractive blonde, enters the restaurant with her twin daughters, EMILY and RACHEL, 11. She waves to Jim.

MARY-ELLEN
What's Sarah doing here?

JIM
I said I'd help her pick out a tree
later.

MARY-ELLEN
But you told James you'd help him
with his homework.

JIM
I thought you were going to.

BILL (O.S.)
Hi, there!

Mary-Ellen looks up and sees Bill wave. He sits at a nearby table with his sons who play with their Gameboys.

JIM
What's Bill Harris doing here?

BILL
(winks to Mary-Ellen)
Can't wait to see the lights later.

Mary-Ellen looks away as Jim's eyes widen.

JIM
You're dating him?

MARY-ELLEN
We're friends. And what
difference does it make? You're
dating, aren't you?

Abby looks at her parents, worried, and bites her lip.

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)
Sorry I'm late, Mrs. W.

PHILLIP BARTON, 16, a huge kid with acne dressed in a high school wrestling jacket which reads: CAPTAIN, arrives at their table.

PHILLIP
We just beat the pants off Wesley.

JIM
Who's this? Another date?

MARY-ELLEN
This is Phillip. Our new baby-
sitter.

James looks up, nearly chokes.

MARY-ELLEN (CONT'D)
This is my husband, Jim, and that's
Abby and James.

Phillip sits between Abby and James and grabs a menu.

PHILLIP
So what's good here? I'm starved.

JIM
What happened to the old baby-
sitter?

MARY-ELLEN
Would you like to explain, James?

JAMES
How did I know it was paint instead
of food coloring? Besides, they're
just hair extensions.

The Waitress returns with a plate of fries that she places before James. Phillip eats one. James' mouth drops.

PHILLIP
I'll have what he's having.

The Waitress walks off as Phillip's hand goes back into James plate. James picks up his fork to retaliate.

JIM
James!

James puts the fork down and unscrews the top to the ketchup. He puts it next to Phillip.

PHILLIP
(to Abby)
So sweetpea, I hear your a real fan of Zooreka. How about we play a game after dinner?

ABBY
Really? You're nice.

PHILLIP
Those could use more ketchup. Don't you think, buddy?

Phillip grabs the ketchup and tries to squeeze it. James grabs it back and squeezes it himself. The cap falls off and ketchup splatters all over James' shirt.

JAMES
Butters!

MARY-ELLEN
James, what did you do now?

PHILLIP
No sweat, Mrs. W! We'll get that cleaned up in no time.

Phillip grabs James and drags him towards the men's room.

JAMES
Mom, Dad! Do something!

Abby smiles, pleased.