

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

By Tim A. Pullen

Cast of Characters

In order of appearance

Dusty Peters: Thirty years old. Works as a sales clerk in his mother's gift store, he is married to Muriel Peters and they have three small children, ages four, two and newborn.

Bran Haste: Twenty-two years old. Single and fairly attractive he prides himself on being a ladies man. He is working with his friend at the gift shop until his acting career takes off.

Maggie Grant: Twenty-one years old. Very attractive yet intimidating, licensed veterinary technician, smart and sensitive, but she's had a bad childhood that has left her with more issues than Time magazine and horrible taste in men.

Howard Concord: Thirty-eight year old mailman, who's wife has just left him and taken their ten year old daughter, a bit suicidal. He was a pillar of the community but now he's a train wreck.

Linda Applebee: Thirty-seven years old, but doesn't look it, she's got two sons Alvin and Joey. She's a self-absorbed socialite at the surface.

Alvin Applebee: Linda's ten year old son. He's a bit spoiled and a smart aleck, still he is sincere. He loves robots, and trains.

Wilma Peters: The frugal owner of the gift store All Good Things. Sixty-three years old.

Doug O'Brien: Forty-two years old. The police chief that wishes for nothing more than to spend a quiet Christmas Eve at home with his family.

Alex Cameron: Thirty-three years old. The young, eager detective that wants to impress the chief with how well he handles a crisis.

Paul Vanden: *(just a voice) the radio DJ that updates the hostages on their situation.*

Jessica Concord: Howard's nine year old Daughter, she loves model trains and her father.

Alice Concord: *(just a voice) Thirty-six years old. Howard's lying cheating- no good soon to be Ex-wife.*

Act One Scene One

Wednesday December 24th 1997

(Lights up on the interior of the gift store *All Good Things*. There is a train set under a Christmas tree, a Santa chair with camera nearby, a card rack reaching as low as the floor, and a front counter by the door with an older model cash register, a nutcracker display with a few left on it. An empty display for an action figure called Mega Changer-Electro-man, a shelf with scattered toys like the “Captain Lazer” Action figure, and a few bottles of bubbles. A display of tacky half priced wrapping paper. The front door has a small bell attached that rings when it is opened or shut. There is a phone and wall clock hanging in sight behind the counter the clock is set to 5:50pm. The store is about to close Dusty is preparing to close for the night by turning off the Christmas music as Bran returns from walking Cindy the elf to her car and planning his date that night)

Bran: To all a good night! Be a good little elf and Santa will bring you something extra nice. See-ya later Cindy!

Dusty: I didn't know you knew each other.

Bran: We didn't, till tonight.

Dusty: I wish I had your confidence Bran.

Bran: If people were waiting in line to sit on your lap, you'd be pretty confident too. But it helps when you talk to people, you were always too shy- (Maggie Grant walks in and heads for the cards)

Dusty: Just ten more minutes till close miss.

Maggie: I just need to grab a card.

Bran: Watch and learn, my friend.

Dusty: I'm married.

Bran: Watch anyway. I like an audience. (Bran approaches Maggie) Hello, may I bring you some Christmas joy?

Maggie: Sure, leave me alone.

Bran: I do work here. What I meant was- may I help you?

Maggie: I'm sorry. I took you for some jerk in a Santa suit trying to pick me up.

Bran: I don't care how you take me, as long as you take me. (She glares a moment then dismisses him) We'll, yeah. I work here too.

Maggie: I'm looking for a card, for my boyfriend. My large muscular boyfriend. Maybe you'd know what he'd like.

Bran: So you need a man's opinion?

Maggie: Yes, but you'll have to do.

Bran: (Back to Dusty) Beautiful lady two points, me zip.

Maggie: Which one would you want?

Bran: What's the gift?

Maggie: None, just the card.

Bran: Why no gift?

Maggie: That's none of your business.

Bran: I'm in retail, gifts are my business.

Maggie: Pick a card or go away.

Bran: Okay, if you insist; that one (He points downward, she bends to get it) yeah, that's the one.

Maggie: (reading the card) *Merry Christmas to my loving wife?* Why would I- (she realizes why she bent over) Pervert.

Bran: No the name is Bran, Bran Haste.

Maggie: Bran? Your name is Bran?

Bran: Yeah, my mom had a lot of fiber in her diet.

Dusty: His real name is Branson.

Bran: And this is my little buddy Dusty, he needs to butt out, and you are?

Maggie: Sick of talking to you, now excuse me, I need to buy a card.

Bran: I can take a hint. (Walks over to Dusty) Dating rule number one: rejection is an option, take it gracefully. (He digs under the Santa Chair to bring out a brand new bottle of Vodka and a martini glass and pours himself a drink) Remember that one.

Dusty: I don't need your dating tips.

Bran: I'm out of single friends. I've gotta give these tips to someone. Want one?

Dusty: Its alcoholic isn't it?

Bran: No, it's a Sunkist martini- Yes its alcoholic ya twit.

Dusty: Muriel doesn't like me drinking, you know that.

Bran: I offer you a piece of cake at lunch, she doesn't want you eating sweets, I offer you a cigar, and she doesn't want you smoking.
(Howard Concord enters in a trench coat; he's un-shaven, dirty and glum)

Dusty: Just about to close sir.

Howard: I won't take long. (He heads straight to the train set)

Bran: What are you allowed to do?

Dusty: Muriel just worries about my health, that's all. If your dating tips worked you'd be married, then you'd understand.

Bran: That hurts. I'm not giving up on this one yet, she deserves another chance.

Dusty: She's got a boyfriend.

Bran: She doesn't even think he's worth a present.

Dusty: Put that drink down. If you get caught, drinking dressed up as Santa-

Bran: Calm down. What idiot would bring a kid to a store on Christmas Eve in a Blizzard?

(Linda and Alvin Applebee enter)

Alvin: Mom, did you know every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings?

Linda: That's right Alvin.

(Bran hands his drink to Dusty, and places his beard back on)

Alvin: Then let's give another angle its wings and walk back out.

Dusty: We're closing ma'am.

Linda: I'll only be a moment. (Back to Alvin) If you didn't want to go shopping you shouldn't have broken Joey's toy.

Alvin: Mom. I didn't mean to.

Linda: Don't take that tone with me young man. You had to break it; you have to go shopping. If we're lucky, we'll only miss a few minutes of the family dinner.

Alvin: If I'm lucky, we'll miss the whole thing.

Linda: What was that?

Alvin: If I'm lucky, we'll get to sing. Christmas carols, you know.

Linda: I don't think that's what you said, but all right.

Bran: (Santa Beard back in place) Ho Ho Ho, are you in a little bit of trouble young man?

Alvin: That suit is so fake. (He pulls off Bran's beard)

Bran: I'm sorry you uncovered my secret kid, now I'll have to kill you.

Alvin: Mom, let's get the stupid toy and go. (Linda is looking at the Mega-changer display)

Bran: (to Maggie) Can I offer you a drink?

Maggie: I normally don't drink.

Bran: Do you normally buy your Christmas cards on Christmas Eve?

Howard: I could use a drink.

Bran: You look like you've used a couple already.

Howard: It is the season.

Bran: I love to share good will and all, but are you driving?

Howard: When my wife left me, she took my car.

Bran: In that case, have my glass. (Howard takes the glass, downs it, then hands it back and intently stares at the train set either in tears or very close.)

Linda: They were right here, where'd they all go? They were stacked in this shelf I know it!

Alvin: Why are you crying Mr.?

Howard: I've got no one to buy presents for. (He answers without looking down.)

Alvin: Is that a bad thing?

(Maggie goes to the register to be rung up)

Linda: Oh, clerk!

Dusty: I'll be right with you, ma'am.

Linda: Do you still have the Mega Changer Electro man in stock?

Dusty: I'll check in just a moment- (Dusty is visibly torn between the two customers)

Linda: There was a whole display of them here just the other day.

Maggie: I'll wait.

Dusty: Thank-you, Excuse me please. (He steps away from the counter to look for the toy leaving Maggie to wait) The last two were on the bottom shelf. (He looks under the display, tips it on its side, ect.) I'm afraid we're sold out.

Linda: Are you sure?

Dusty: Yes ma'am. I just looked.

Linda: And you don't have any in the back?

Dusty: No ma'am that was all we had.

Linda: I'll just take my refund then.

Dusty: A refund?

Linda: I purchased it here just a few days ago for my son Joey. His brother was testing it for him when it fell apart.

Bran: Broke your brother's toy?

Alvin: It's an improvement. It was a truck that turned into a robot, but now the truck makes twins.

Dusty: Where is the toy?

Linda: It's broken, I've thrown it away.

Bran: (Going behind the register) I'll help you.

Maggie: Thank-you.

Bran: I've been checking you out all night anyway.

Dusty: I'm sorry, I would give you a replacement, but we're sold out.

Linda: I understand that, I'll just take my money back. It's not my fault you people can't keep your store stocked.

Maggie: What do you think of this card for my boyfriend?

Bran: Hold onto the receipt in case you change your mind.

Dusty: But- Ma'am, hold on. (He looks under the display again)

Maggie: Too sappy?

Bran: The cards fine, you might change your mind about the guy.

Dusty: Do you still have your receipt?

Linda: Am I supposed to spend my holiday holding on to every little slip of paper? It was on a gold card. It must be in your records somewhere. (She gains the attention of everyone in the room especially Howard) I'm not

going to let this annoy me. Look, I happen to be Linda Renee Applebee, the wife of Jacob Applebee the third. Jacob Applebee. You have heard of Applebee, Duncan and Myers, haven't you?

Dusty: I'm sorry ma'am, but you didn't bring a receipt or the toy, what am I supposed to do?

Linda: Give me my money back.

Dusty: I-

Linda: I can take legal action, I'm sure you've heard of my husband.

Dusty: Not really.

Maggie: I don't believe this.

Linda: Jacob Applebee happens to be one of this town's most powerful and well paid attorneys, He also will be running for delegate next November.

Bran: Then he should be able to buy his kid a new toy robot.

Linda: Does this store employ you sir? If so I can assure you, it will not for long.

Alvin: Here we go again.

Linda: What was that?

Alvin: Mom, you look so thin.

Linda: I have connections in this town. Mayor Thurmond, Judge Roswell, do any of these names ring a bell? Celine Dion, they have all dined at my home. I can make things happen with the simple snap of my fingers (She snaps her fingers, Howard pulls out his six shot revolver and approaches Linda from behind while she continues her speech, the others realize what's going on and complacently back into the corner. Linda is so wrapped up in her own words she believes her rage is driving them back into the corner) I can have the better business bureau down here. Joey has been asking for that thing since his birthday and now-

Bran: Lady-

Linda: Don't you dare interrupt me, you worthless lush.

Dusty: Sir- I understand but-

Linda: It doesn't matter if it's Christmas day or Armageddon, my women's club has over fifty-eight members; perhaps you've heard of the Berchmire Society? Not one of them will set foot in this store until this issue has been resolved, we may very well picket.

Dusty: Ma'am please-

Linda: It's a little late for apologies now. I could've overlooked the faulty craftsmanship in the goods this store carries. I could've patiently waited for my full refund until you found my receipt, or taken a rain check on a new item-

Maggie: Mrs. Applebee?

Linda: But then your drunken store Santa insults me. That is where I draw the line.

Howard: Lady.

Linda: I do not handle insults well-

Alvin: Mom.

Linda: Not now honey. I do not handle insults well at all. The fact that a ten year old boy could tear that thing apart so quickly-

Bran: Turn around lady! (She does, and reacts accordingly)

Howard: Hands up! All of you! Is this everyone in the store?

Bran: I've already hit the silent alarm.

Dusty: That thing has been disconnected for years, you know that.

Bran: He didn't.

Dusty: Oh.

Howard: Just listen to me and everything will be fine. Where's the key to this door?

Dusty: The owner has the only key, she's in the backroom.

Howard: Call her.

Linda: Could she get my refund?

Howard: Please concentrate on the gun!

Dusty: Okay, okay! Mom! It's past six! Time to lock up the store!

Wilma: (Enters from the backroom) I swear we could make so much more if we'd just stay open half of an hour later. (She walks past Dusty and the crowd and locks the door without noticing what's happening. Locking the door should be a big ordeal which is why she doesn't turn around quickly) there are at least a dozen husbands right now willing to pay any price for even a pack of gum their wives could unwrap tomorrow morning. Did you give that deadbeat friend of yours his paycheck? That boy is good for nothing- Oh My! Sweet ghost of Franklin, we're being held up! I only keep twenty bucks in the register, take it and go. (She empties out the cash into her own pocket and tosses a few bills in Howard's direction.)

Howard: I don't want your money.

Wilma: He's insane. (Retrieving her money)

Howard: The key. (Wilma hands Howard the key.) Step over there with the rest of them. Keep your hands in the air. (Bran stretches straight for the ceiling leaving Maggie downwind of his armpit. Maggie gives Bran a discussed look- he stinks.)

Bran: Sorry, I'm hot in this suit- granted- not as hot as you.

Maggie: Be quiet.

Linda: When you get the chance, there's this toy I bought for my son-

Howard: Later lady!

Linda: What is it you want from me?

Howard: My kid.

Linda: What can I do?

Howard: Apparently anything.

Bran: Shoot your mouth off too much, one day somebody'll do it for you.

Howard: What's wrong with you? Be quiet! (Linda grabs Alvin holding him tight.)

Bran: I'm sorry, go ahead.

Howard: My name is-

Alvin: Ouch! Mom! You're squishing me.

Linda: I'm protecting you.

Alvin: You're strangling me, the gun is safer.

Linda: I'm sorry, he's a little hyperactive.

Howard: None of you seem to understand this. Is no one afraid of the gun?

Alvin: The media has desensitized us. That's what Dad says.

Maggie: You gave him a drink.

Bran: I knew he was loaded, I didn't think he was armed.

Howard: My name-

Bran: At least we didn't do shots.

Howard: (Takes a shot in the air) Can I have your undivided attention for two damn seconds? (They're scared now) Thank-you. I'll pay for the ceiling. My name is Howard Concord. Look, I'm a normal guy; I just don't have normal circumstances at the moment. My daughter has been taken from me.

Linda: Taken?

Howard: Her mother took her. My wife and I were having a few problems. She wasn't happy with our marriage. I thought it was a good idea to get help. We went to this counselor, and at first I thought it was working, I felt happier, but soon they started having private sessions, she told me that she needed more help than I did. I never pieced it together- never even crossed my mind- it went on for months and I never put two and two together. I don't know what I could've done if I knew.

Bran: Your wife left you for the marriage counselor?

Howard: Pathetic, I know. I came home from work early on Halloween to take Jessie out trick or treating, and this note was stuck to the pumpkin, that said "Jessie didn't need to see this, we'll be in touch" but they were never in touch. I haven't seen my kid in three months and I've got no idea where they took her.

Maggie: Can't you go to the police?

Howard: I've tried; she's with her mother so it's not their priority. They keep telling me to wait for her to call.- They slapped the pictures on a few

notice boards and told me they'd work with me after the holidays. So, Mrs. Linda Renee Applebee, all I'd like from you is to call your God-like husband and make me a priority. All I want for Christmas is to see my daughter one more time.

Linda: Okay, may I use this phone?

Wilma: I charge customers to use my phone.

Linda: Very well, I happen to have a car phone. (Linda and Alvin head for the door, but are stopped by Howard)

Howard: Where are you going?

Linda: My car phone is in my car.

Howard: I don't think that's a very good idea. Can we please use this phone?

Wilma: Why not.

Maggie: Are you trying to trick him?

Wilma: No. I really don't like people using my phone; I have to pay that bill you know.

Linda: Afterwards I need to talk to you about this toy I –

Howard: Can that wait?

Linda: Certainly. It can wait.

Howard: Tell him I need to see my daughter before midnight tonight.

Linda: Midnight, understood. (She picks up the phone, then pauses)

Howard: Well, dial.

Linda: I don't want you to see my number.

Howard: For crying out – just remember no funny stuff.

Alvin: Mom never does anything funny.

Linda: (Dials) One ringy, two ringy, three ringy...

Howard: Can we please lose the ringys!

Alvin: Then how will dad hear the phone?

Bran: This kids a cut up.

Linda: Jacob! Hello? Hi honey it's me, Linda. Your wife, I didn't answer the phone because I'm not at home. I'm at the store. (Explaining to Howard) It's a big house. (Back to husband) Oh, well- yes, things are HOLDING-UP just fine here, and with you? Alvin is with me, he's being a little *terrorist* as usual. Nope no HOSTAGES yet. Listen sweetie, I've met this man. No-no he's not crippled he's ARMMED and legged and everything else. Look he needs you to do a little favor for him, okay? You need to have the POLICE find a little girl for him. His daughter-

Howard: Jessica Concord, they have the file.

Linda: The name is Jessica Concord. The *police* already have the file dear, he just wants you to use your influence to speed up the process a little bit-

no, no dear Po- Leece *help* him soon. Oh no much sooner than that. He's got a PROBLEM dear try to UNDERSTAND what I'm saying. Call the cops moron! I'm being held hostage!

Howard: (Takes the phone away) Damn it- Applebee, if you ever want to see your wife and kid again find my daughter! (He hangs up) I trusted you!

Bran: Never trust a woman with a phone, or a charge card (Maggie shots Bran a look) -according to my dad.

Linda: What happens now?

Bran: You don't get to use the phone anymore.

Howard: Would you shut up!

Bran: I'm just trying to help. You seem new at this.

Dusty: You've done this before?

Bran: I've seen movies.

Howard: You're not afraid of me at all, are you? Get over there with the rest of them.

Bran: Look Howy may I call you Howy?

Howard: No.

Bran: I believe your story, and I don't blame you. If I've got to be a hostage for a while to help you see your kid on Christmas I'm okay with that.

Howard: I wasn't planning for this to happen. I just wanted you to call your husband. - It's too late now, you're all my hostages. I'm sorry.

Alvin: No big, I hate those family dinners.

Linda: Alvin!

Wilma: Since we'll be here for a while, could I tally up the day's earnings?

Howard: Why not.

Wilma: How kind of you. (She goes behind the register and pulls out a bb rifle) Now! I'll give you to the count of three to get out of my store!

Howard: No.

Wilma: No? What do you mean no? My guns' bigger!

Howard: That's a BB gun.

Wilma: I'll shoot your eye out!

Howard: You're probably too cheap to put BB's in it.

Wilma: Do you really think an innocent elderly woman would bluff you while defending her store and her son?

Bran: Notice which came first.

Dusty: I know which comes first.

Howard: You don't strike me as the innocent type.

Wilma: Dusty? Is this just a BB gun?

Dusty: Yes.

Wilma: He's good. (Putting down the rifle)

Dusty: You gave it to me when I was ten, then took it back for the store a couple weeks later. I don't think I ever had BB's for it.

Wilma: How could you have known that I was frugal? Have you been casing the place?

Howard: Your son and his friend are the cashiers, that register hasn't been made in decades, and you tried to hide all the money from a man with a gun. Face it, you're cheap.

Bran: Too cheap to pay attention.

Dusty: I agree with Bran, this guy's cause is worth it. Let's just cooperate.

Wilma: Oh, you cooperate with everyone; pushover.

Bran: Your in-laws are coming over for dinner tonight, aren't they?

Dusty: Yes, but that's not why I said that. It's just a bonus.

Maggie: I'm surprised you're giving up your night with Cindy so willingly.

Bran: Cindy? Cindy who?

Maggie: That fit-little almost teenaged looking elf from the parking lot.

Bran: Cindy! Oh dear lord I forgot all about her. See what you made me do. Howy, I don't suppose I could slip outta here just a second and bring Cindy back here? I'll be right back, I promise.

Howard: No.

Bran: Don't you need another hostage?

Howard: I don't want what I've got.

Maggie: Mr. Concord I really do agree with them, this is the best reason I could think of to have a gun pointed at me, but I just- Could I use the phone?

Howard: You think you can do a better job calling the cops?

Maggie: No- I- Well I'm supposed to be meeting my boyfriend at this pizza place down town. He hates it there and I'm afraid he's going to be very upset with me, if I could just call him-

Bran: Bartollo's Pizza and subs?

Maggie: How do you know?

Bran: It's the only pizza place I know open on Christmas Eve, they throw a great party; I was meeting Cindy there. I love that place.

Maggie: Me too, but he hates it, and he's going to be so irritated if he just stands there waiting for me.

Linda: That's a pathetic excuse. I don't want to be here at all, whether or not his kid is missing. But come on, if waiting for you is going to irritate him-

Wilma: Then the man's just not worth it at all.

Linda: Exactly.

Bran: Agreed.

Maggie: Can it Bran!

Bran: What is your name?

Maggie: What?

Bran: We're all stuck together; why not get to know each other? That's the rich and powerful Linda Applebee.

Linda: I said my husband was rich and powerful.

Bran: You're right, correction: The demanding, arrogant Linda Applebee.

Alvin: Her cute but slightly hyperactive son Alvin.

Dusty: Dusty Peters

Bran: Enough said. And...

Wilma: I'm not playing this game with you Branson, We're short twenty-five dollars in the register, and this check wasn't signed.

Dusty: I'm sorry mom; let me see if I can find it.

Bran: Wilma Peters, the owner of this fine establishment. Howard Concord will be our captor for the evening and you are?

Maggie: Maggie, Maggie Grant. (Bran takes her hand)

Bran: And what would you Grant me Maggie?

Maggie: If you take your hand off me right now, I won't hurt you.

Bran: All right then. We all know each other.

Howard: I'm pointing a gun at the Mickey Mouse club. Is there anything I can use to cover these front windows?

Dusty: There's this half price wrapping paper.

Wilma: You're not cooperating you're conspiring.

Howard: I'll pay full price (He displays a roll of cash)

Wilma: Wrap up the windows boys.

Linda: I can't believe you just did that. You're helping our captor for cash?

Wilma: Not for cash, for a lot of cash. I haven't been able to unload that tacky gift wrap for three years.

Bran: As much as I'd enjoy wrapping up the windows, why don't we just pull down these shades?

Wilma: You're fired.

Howard: I'll pay for the paper anyway. Do any windows open?

Dusty: No.

Howard: I need to talk to the police when they get here.

Dusty: The door is the only thing that opens. I don't hear any sirens.

Linda: You people are being so passive- Alvin put down those toys!

Alvin: Ahgg, Mom.

Howard: Let him play.

Wilma: That's out of the question- the boy can't play.

Howard: Let him play.

Wilma: Fine, let him play. Don't you dare open any of the new boxes, play with the displays.

Alvin: Thanks Mr. Gunman.

Howard: Call me Howard.

Maggie: May I just use the phone?

Howard: Not right now- No! I'm trying to think this through. Where's the back door?

Dusty: We haven't got one.

Howard: Why?

Wilma: There was a fire a few months back, at the hotel behind us. They had to brick in our back door for repairs. I bribed the fire marshal to keep this place opened.

Dusty: The repairs are done, we just haven't got the door rebuilt yet.

Bran: Bribing the fire marshal is cheaper than the door.

Howard: Do you take anything seriously?

Bran: I try not to Howy. I may be just a store Santa at the moment, but one day I'm going to be a famous actor and comedian. You could say my whole life is a joke. Many people have.

Linda: I'm surprised you hire artistic types.

Wilma: He had his own Santa suit, and thought six-fifty an hour was a lot. Those are high commodities for a legal citizen.

Maggie: Why do you have your own Santa Suit?

Bran: It's a funny story-

Wilma: And I'm sick of hearing it.

Bran: Scoff all you want. One day I'll have an audience hanging on my every word. Just the name Bran Haste will bring laughter.

Alvin: It is a funny name.

Bran: You want to get an act together kid?

Alvin: I'm not sure about working with an amateur.

Dusty: Here's the twenty-five bucks mom, you threw it on the floor.

Wilma: That was a test. (She snatches back the money)

Bran: Anyone want to order a pizza and see if it gets here before the cops?

Alvin: I like pepperoni, Mom will tell you I'm allergic, but really, she thinks it smells.

Linda: What makes you think that?

Alvin: Dad told me why we're not allowed to order pepperoni.

Linda: I'm going to have a little talk with dad when we get home.

Bran: That's okay; Dusty's favorite is plain cheese, right?

Dusty: Yes sir.

Wilma: He's lactose intolerant; he can't eat pizza.

Dusty: Yes ma'am.

Bran: What do you say Howy? The kid is hungry.

Howard: Order the pizza.

Maggie: You're kidding me! You're going to let them order pizza but you won't let me call-

Bran: I'm ordering from Bartolo's.

Maggie: So can I - ?

Howard: Why not? If your boyfriends there, talk to him. Can you people just give me five minutes to think! (Bran and Maggie make the call) Are there any other ways in or out of this building I should know about?

Dusty: The bathroom window, but it's very small and mom had steel bars installed.

Bran: She didn't want people smuggling out toilet paper. (On phone)— Yes, I'd like to place an order for a delivery. (Pause) No actually, I can't come pick it up. (pause) Yes, I'll pay extra. Christmas? (Pause) Are they? Okay (talks to the others) the roads are getting bad, their charging a hazard fee. (Back to the phone) It's me, Bran. (pause) Bran Haste who else would name their kid Bran, (pause) yeah Chuck you know me. I'm at work 1214 Sea Ram Drive, All Good Things, (pause) yeah, that store. A Large, better make that two large, one with pepperoni and one with plain cheese, (pause) yeah.

Maggie: Is Trevor there?

Bran: Oh yeah, Chuck can I ask you a favor? (Pause) Is Trevor there? (Pause) Trevor who?

Maggie: Give me that. Hey Chuck, it's me, (pause) yes I'm here too. (pause) Well thank-you. Listen, that guy I've been seeing the tall red head, he was supposed to meet me- (pause) He what? (Pause) I see.

Bran: I thought I was Chuck's favorite customer.

Maggie: Could you put him on? (Pause) Thanks (To Bran) Chuck's dropping the hazard fee for me.

Bran: What about Trevor?

Maggie: He says he's got a blonde elf on his lap. Hold on- (pause) Trevor? Yeah it's me, who's the blonde? (Pause) Never mind how I can see you, who's the blonde? (Slight pause) You don't have a sister! Put the pizza guy back on. (Pause) Because I want to talk to the pizza guy! (Pause) Chuck, could you arrange a little accident with a pitcher of Pepsi, beer or water? (Pause) No, no diet doesn't matter, beverage of your choice. (pause)-Right on his head.

Bran: The pants.

Maggie: Yeah that's better, the pants. (Pause) I'll tip an extra twenty the next time I'm in. (pause) Thank-you. (She hangs up with gusto) Men!

Wilma: Be careful, that's my phone.

Bran: This is awful.

Dusty: You should be happy.

Bran: That's probably my blonde elf.

Howard: Is everyone done with the phone calls?

Wilma: Dusty hasn't called his wife.

Dusty: I guess I should do that.

Howard: Do you want me to let you?

Dusty: Yes please. (He dials) She'll be mad, but it'll be worse if I don't call. (Obviously gets the machine) Hey honey, it's me. I'll be a little late tonight, we got a little held up here at the store (He laughs at his choice of words) See you soon- bye.

Wilma: You didn't say I love you.

Dusty: I married her, didn't I?

Wilma: Don't get smart with me young man.

Dusty: Sorry mom.

Wilma: Branson is a bad influence on you.

Howard: Okay, phone calls are done, pizzas on its way, Alvin you comfy?

Alvin: Very Comfy, thanks.

Howard: Now I'm going to ask for a few moments of silence, everyone but Alvin please get over by the Santa Chair so I can keep an eye on you.

Linda: What?

Howard: Please get over by the Santa Chair.

Linda: What if I don't want to be over by the Santa chair?

Howard: You're a hostage; it's not your choice!

Linda: How dare you. Boss me around, referring to me as a common hostage, I'm *the* hostage! I'm the one the police are going to be here to save. Keep an eye on me! That's insulting!

Alvin: Not again.

Linda: I do not handle insults well Mr. Concord. I haven't tried to pull a gun on you; I'm not trying to sneak out for a date, why would you have to keep an eye on me? That implies that I'm not a trustworthy individual.

Dusty: You did tell your husband-

Linda: Don't interrupt me Mr. Peters, I'm sure your mother's taught you better manners than that. I've held my tongue so far tonight. I didn't even speak up about the pepperoni, but a line has now been crossed-

Bran: This is going to take a while isn't it?

Linda: I'm the one that is stuck celebrating Christmas Eve with retail clerks!

Alvin: Sometimes days.

Linda: I am a woman that speaks my mind! I'll tell it like it is, and I'm not at all ashamed of it. They couldn't silence Martin Luther king, They couldn't silence Gandhi- They didn't silence, what's her name? The one that wouldn't sit in the back of the bus, come on everyone knows it-

Maggie: Rosa Parks?

Linda: Yes her! And they will not silence me. I've got relatives and friends at my house that I don't even know. Jacob is going to screw it up! He'll probably put out paper napkins, when I just bought fresh linen ones with little wreath napkin rings, they were so adorable. He's not going to know any of my witty remarks. And there will be a camera crew there; oh, I hope the lawn looks okay. He's already been into the eggnog, I can tell-

Dusty: Please Mrs. Appletree, it's okay.

Linda: It's Applebee! And no it's not okay, nothing is okay-

Wilma: Could you just shut up about it?

Linda: I cannot be silenced! It is my God given right as an American citizen, no my responsibility as an American woman to never be silenced!

Everyone except Linda: Really? (Lights out)

(End of act one scene one)

Act One Scene Two

(The darkness is broken by the sound of helicopters, sirens and walkie talkies. Police Chief Doug O'Brien and his assistant Alex Camerun are visible in the darkness while search lights and flashing red and blue obscure the stage. The setting is the exterior of the gift store about forty minutes later. The Voices of the hostages and Howard Concord could be simply coming from off stage and O'Brien is "looking at them" Or they could be framed in a door. Staging is up to the director, I'm the story guy. The important facts are: It's snowing or has been snowing, the police are outside of the building, its night and O'Brien has a bullhorn.)

O'Brien: This is the police. We have you surrounded.

Howard: What took you so long, O'Brien?

O'Brien: Mr. Concord, why are you doing this to me? I told you we would get to this right after the holidays.

Howard: I'm not waiting any longer! It's time to speed up the system!

Camerun: Does he know how the system works?

O'Brien: Apparently not. May I speak to your Hostage?

Howard: Which one?

O'Brien: What do you mean?

Howard: I've got six hostages.

O'Brien: I'm always the last to know. Camerun-

Camerun: Sir, yes, sir! (With loud enthusiasm)

O'Brien: You're not in the army.

Camerun: Sorry sir.

O'Brien: You're going to break my ear drum doing that. Find out where every entrance and exit is to this building; blue prints if you can get 'em. I want all my options.

Camerun: Yes sir.

O'Brien: May I see the hostages?

Howard: All right! Come over here, can you bring her?

O'Brien: (Counting) Who is that you have tied up?

Howard: That's Linda Applebee.

O'Brien: Why is she the only one tied up?

Howard: The other hostages bound and gagged her. I didn't ask them to.

O'Brien: Why would the other hostages tie her up?

Howard: She kept taking the gag out of her mouth when her hands were free.

Maggie: If you happen to be down near Bartolo's Pizza, there's a yellow seventy-eight mustang in the parking lot, It's got a fake inspection sticker! It's owned by Trevor Roberts, he lives at-

Howard: Maggie, please.

O'Brien: May I speak to Mrs. Applebee?

Howard: If you insist. (he removes her gag)

Linda: What took you people so long?

O'Brien: Your husband didn't know which store you were in, we had to track through a month's worth of receipts to find you.

Linda: Then I do have that receipt.

O'Brien: What?

Linda: Nothing, is my husband out there?

O'Brien: No, he was entertaining house guests, he'll be joining us shortly.

Linda: Tell him to get down here this instant! How dare he not show up for me at a time like this! Are you married Officer O'Brien?

O'Brien: Its chief O'Brien and yes I'm-

Linda: You would be there if your wife was taken hostage, wouldn't you. Of course, you would have to be there, because you're paid to be at these types of things. I used to think you people weren't paid enough, but now that I see a pizza delivery man can beat you to a crime scene by twenty minutes I'm beginning to change my mind. Do you know how much of our taxes are being wasted by all this lollygagging around? What they're doing to me is torture! My son's in here, and young people should not be exposed to this kind of-

O'Brien: Mr. Concord?

Linda: How dare you interrupt me!

Howard: Yes?

Linda: Is there no such thing as gentlemen anymore?

O'Brien: Can you put the gag back on?

Linda: What! How dare you! I demand- (she is silenced)

O'Brien: What are your demands?

Howard: You know my demands; I want to see my daughter.

O'Brien: This might take some time.

Howard: This is how I want to work this, you've got six hours. I've got six hostages. You keep me informed every hour on the hour. Every hour that you make progress, I'll release a hostage, in order from youngest to oldest.

O'Brien: And if we don't make progress?

Howard: I start shooting them!

O'Brien: In what order?

Howard: I don't know, alphabetical. Does it make a difference?

O'Brien: Well, you told us-

Howard: Just find my kid, Check back with me in one hour! You're time starts now!

O'Brien: What time do you have?

Howard: What?

O'Brien: The time on your watch, I think we should synchronize watches.

Howard: Its ten till seven, just call it an even seven, the clock is ticking!

O'Brien: So you're starting at seven now? Or you're starting now now?

Howard: You're really killing the effect here. Contact me by eight!

Camerun: The blueprints say there should be a back door, but it's a brick wall. The only other way in is a bathroom window about one and a half foot square, with steel bars across it.

O'Brien: We know where this couple was last seen, don't we?

Camerun: Howard tracked down the moving van they rented, and followed them to a hotel about twenty minutes west of here. But he lost the track and came to us; would have been easier if he could've tracked them down himself.

O'Brien: If the public could do its own police work what would we do?

Camerun: Speeding tickets?

O'Brien: Send four officers, two to the hotel, and two to the rental place.

Camerun: Yes sir.

O'Brien: And get a sniper here by eight o'clock.

Camerun: Will that be necessary sir? I've talked with Mr. Concord several times the past two months, he's a nice guy he's just a little desperate.

O'Brien: I know that. Trust me if there's another way, I'll use it. I just want to be prepared.

Camerun: Maybe a couple of Swat guys can climb to the top of that overhang, you can talk him out to the door and they can swing down and ambush him with the bean bags.

O'Brien: We can try that, but I still want the sniper here, just in case.

Camerun: Okay, but I saw our sniper an hour ago at the Christmas Party; I don't know what good he'll be.

O'Brien: Would you just follow my orders?

Camerun: Yes sir.

O'Brien: And bring me a cup of coffee?

Camerun: Yes sir.

O'Brien: My wife was right; we should've spent Christmas in Tahiti.

(Lights out)

(End of Act one scene Two)

Act One Scene Three

(Lights up on the clock hanging on the store wall, it is moving forward at an unusually fast pace. Lights slowly go up on the rest of the store and the audience sees that Bran is turning the hands of the clock by a knob at the bottom or back. Howard is trying to concentrate, Dusty and Wilma are getting in each other's way trying to count the money, Maggie is sitting sulking, Linda is tied to the Santa Chair with tinsel and gagged with a bow, while Alvin Dances around her with a toy tomahawk then takes out a bow and arrow, -the suction cup tipped kind and is about to shoot her, there are two pizza boxes lying somewhere in the store)

Howard: Bran, quit playing with the clock.

Bran: I think the batteries are dead.

Wilma: You will be too, if you break my clock.

Howard: Alvin, give your mother a break. (He stops the execution)

Alvin: But I was having fun.

Howard: I don't think she is.

Alvin: Mom always says she's fit to be tied.

Bran: That's a good one; can I work that into my act?

Alvin: I don't know, can you?

Maggie: You should be nice to your mother.

Alvin: Okay, did you want any pizza? (He removes the gag)

Linda: No, I don't want any pizza, I can't believe you people- (Alvin replaces the gag)

Alvin: That's nice. Can't say I didn't offer.

Howard: I'm really sorry about- well everything Maggie.

Maggie: I just don't understand why Travis would do something like this.

Bran: I thought his name was Trevor?

Maggie: It is, why?

Dusty: You just called him Travis.

Wilma: Focus on business boy, mine not hers.

Dusty: Yes Mom.

Howard: Was your dad at home a lot when you were growing up?

Maggie: What?

Howard: It sounds to me like you're more in love with the idea of a boyfriend than you are with the guy. Could be just having a man around-

Maggie: So the guy that just took hostages and two pizzas at gunpoint is trying to psychoanalyze me?

Howard: I was trying to pay for those.

Bran: You answered the door with a gun in your hand.

Maggie: And the pizzas aren't the important part!

Howard: I'm sorry!- I always liked making a game of guessing people's stories. It always annoyed Alice too, I suppose my time for games is over. I apologize.

Maggie: Howard, I didn't mean it like that- well yes I do think you're absolutely out of your mind, but I sort of see why. You just hit a nerve, you guessed right. I was raised by my aunt. My mother died during labor, and my dad, well I guess he just couldn't stand me, I've never met him.

Howard: I didn't mean to do this to you, or Trevor, Travis, whatever his name is.

Maggie: It's probably for the best, if he couldn't wait ten minutes without finding someone else, like they said, he just wasn't worth it.

Bran: So now that you're single, could I have your number?

Maggie: No.

Bran: Would you like mine?

Maggie: I've already got your number.

Bran: What do you mean by that?

Maggie: You think that just because you're cute you can tell a few corny jokes and have women fall head over heels in love with you. Probably just long enough for you to take advantage of them, and then never see them again. I'm not naive enough to fall for that act.

Bran: So you think I'm cute?

Maggie: He's incorrigible.

Bran: No, I'm not, you can in-courage me.

Dusty: Do you even know what incorrigible means?

Bran: Of course I do, but what do you think it means? (Linda begins squirming a little dance)

Maggie: You can't be serious.

Bran: Don't know. Never tried.

Wilma: Branson, hand me that. (She confiscates his bottle to takes a swig)

Linda: (Muffled from the gag) I haphta podda mmnoser.

Maggie: What was that?

Linda: Bafffoom.

Bran: I think she's calling you a buffoon.

Maggie: Me?

Alvin: She has to go to the bathroom. (Linda shakes her head) I recognize the dance.

Maggie: Can I untie her?

Bran: Yes please, I've got to sit in that chair next year.

Alvin: It could be a trick.

Howard: You're sure she can't squeeze through the bathroom window?

Dusty: Yes, it's much too narrow.

Linda: I beg your pardon?

Dusty: I wasn't trying to insult you. I know you don't like being insulted.

Linda: Do you have to use the bathroom?

Alvin: No thanks.

Dusty: It's back there, first door to the left.

Howard: Be quick about it.

Linda: You, young man, are grounded till next year!

Alvin: That's what, a week?

Linda: What was that?

Alvin: I said eek. (Linda exits)

Maggie: May it go too?

Bran: You're already paying for the ceiling; you might as well save the floor.

Howard: I guess (She exits)

Bran: They always go in pairs.

Alvin: Mrs. Peters?

Wilma: What do you want, kid?

Alvin: Do you believe in Santa Claus?

Wilma: Do I?

Bran: Why do you ask her?

Alvin: The mean kids at school all tell me I'm a baby for believing in Santa Claus. So if I ask the meanest grown-up here, I should get the truth.

Wilma: Do I believe in Santa?

Alvin: Do you?

Wilma: Of course I do.

Dusty: Really?

Wilma: Look around you. That man is magic, this place makes good money for three months out of the year. From Halloween till Christmas I rake in the dough, and why? Because of Santa Claus; simply mention his name and the registers are ringing out the merry bells of profit! Take any idiot, like this one here, put him in a Santa Suit and everyone loves him. This mug, for instance is worth about twenty cents to some poor starving worker in Taiwan, but slap a picture of Santa on it, and I can sell it for ten bucks! Santa has the power of selling anything and everything, he's my hero. My fat, jolly red hero.

(Linda re-appears, dirty and disheveled)

Howard: What happened to you?

Linda: Nothing, Nothing at all.

Maggie: I told you not to try.

Bran: The window?

Linda: I would've fit if the bars weren't there.

Howard: Why would you try to escape? I still had your son.

Linda: I wasn't escaping; I just didn't like his comment about me being too wide.

Dusty: I didn't say you were too wide, I said the window was too narrow.

Linda: One comment implies the other; good gracious I'm a mess. That bathroom was a disgrace.

Wilma: It says employees only.

Linda: That means you don't clean it?

Bran: That means you're supposed to feel lucky you get to use it, and not complain about it being dirty.

Wilma: Dusty doesn't complain.

Dusty: When I do, she makes me scrub it.

Linda: Does anyone have a wet nap?

Howard: Go back and clean up in a little while, it's almost time, O'Brien should be calling soon.

Alvin: Are you shooting us by first name or last?

Howard: What?

Alvin: You said alphabetical order to the cops.

Howard: I'm not going to hurt you kid. I'm hoping not to hurt anyone.

Dusty: So you're just bluffing?

Wilma: Of course he is you big baby. He's as big of a wuss as you are. He already shot the roof, so he can't shoot all of us.

Howard: I'm not shooting a kid, so it's still five for five. Don't count on me being nice lady; I'm a little too desperate right now.

Bran: Don't shoot her Howard.

Wilma: Thank-you Branson.

Bran: At her age, you're just wasting a bullet.

Wilma: I never liked you.

Bran: I know.

Dusty: I wish you two would stop fighting.

Howard: It's eight o'clock.

Bran: I told you that clock is busted.

Wilma: Wait a minute. Before you talk to the cops, why don't you up the ante a bit?

Howard: What do you mean?

Wilma: Ask for some cash for our safe return. We could probably get about twenty million for the lot of us.

Linda: He's going to jail.

Wilma: For what? Two months? We'll hold onto his share while he's in jail.

Maggie: That would be a little over 2.5 Million a piece, if you could get that much.

Linda: Would anyone pay that? For you people?

Bran: I could open my own comedy club.

Alvin: You better buy some jokes first.

Wilma: I'll say goodbye to retail, and hello to my own Caribbean island. Or better yet, I could franchise.

Maggie: I do need a new car.

Dusty: A bigger house.

Linda: I could, I- who am I kidding; my life would be pretty much the same.

Alvin: I could buy a new bike.

Linda: You have a new bike.

Alvin: I could have two.

Howard: Everyone shut up! Listen to yourselves.

Alvin: If we shut-up, how can we listen to ourselves?

Howard: What have I done? This isn't what this is about. Money can't bring you happiness! I've got money, here have this. (He dumps a lot of bills out onto the counter.) Five-hundred thousand dollars! My life savings, sure I'm no Jacob Applebee, but I know how to save. All that money and I couldn't save my marriage! I couldn't bring back my wife and kid! I can't even find my kid to say goodbye for that! What good does it do? If you think it can make your life any better, divide it up. Have it. I have never and would never threaten anyone's life for money.

Maggie: This is a good cause.

Wilma: This isn't five hundred thousand- (She reaches for the pile)

Dusty: Mom, don't touch his money.

Wilma: Liberals. (Takes a drink, and presumably a bill or two.)

Howard: (Yelling out the door) It's eight o'clock O'Brien!

O'Brien: Mr. Concord there's a sniper that has his sights set on you. Don't make any sudden moves.

Howard: If your sniper can see me closely, I'm sure (he opens his coat) they can see that I'm wearing a vest that's rigged with explosives! My hostages are less than five feet away from me in here. Is your sniper really that good? (They all take a step back)

Alvin: That vest looks like something Bugs Bunny bought at the Acme Company.

Bran: That was Wile E. Coyote.

O'Brien: Could we have just a little more time?

Howard: No! I will not tolerate excuses! Bran! Get over here so they can see you.

Dusty: What?

Howard: You knew it might come to this.

Alvin: I gotta go to the bathroom.

Bran, Dusty, Linda Maggie Wilma: Now?

Linda: I just asked you.

Alvin: I didn't have to go then.

Howard: Its better this way, Maggie take Alvin to the rest room.

Maggie: Howard you can't-

Howard: Go!

Bran: If you're going to be shooting anyway, (he pushes Howard away from the door while opening the door to escape) I might as well run for it!

Howard: Dusty will take your place. (Bran Freezes) You set one foot outside that door, and I'll have to shoot Dusty instead. You can all start running, but I'm bound to hit one of you. I'm truly sorry Bran, but the police have to know that I'm serious.

Bran: The doors open. They can see me.

Wilma: Run moron!

Linda: You're just going to stand there?

Bran: I don't smoke, so it's pointless to ask for a cigarette. Dusty you're the best friend I've ever had, and he's a father. Maggie, she's too pretty to die young, and Linda's a mother.

Linda: Oh Bran.

Bran: How do you know I meant that in a good way?

Howard: You never take anything seriously.

Bran: Guess, I never will.

(Howard pulls the trigger and something is shot on the opposite side of the room. Bran is terrified for a moment then realizes he's okay)

Howard: You're the actor! Die already.

Bran: Oh, Arrgh, ya got me. He got me! Everything's going black!

Howard: (Closes the door as Bran stumbles to his death scene) Okay, that's enough. (Maggie and Alvin re-enter)

Maggie: Howard! How could you?

Howard: He's just-

Maggie: I don't believe you did this! (Rushing to Bran's Aid)

Bran: I'm slowly slipping into the darkness, of the next world. Tell aunty M I loved her. Make sure I turned off my stove this morning, and Dusty please feed my cat. Wilma, tell the boys back at the club I can't make tee time

tomorrow. Good bye cruel and un-bending world. I'll miss you all, you've meant so much to me this past, and final hour of my life.

Wilma: He should've shot him.

Maggie: Oh, Bran. I didn't have to be so mean to you. (She cradles him; his face is near her chest)

Alvin: There's no blood.

Bran: I see a tunnel. A light (He opens his eyes and sees his location) Good lord I am in heaven!

Maggie: (Tossing him to the ground) You freak! You're not even bleeding!

Bran: You didn't see the bullet miss me?

Maggie: I was in the back!

Bran: Scream out to the police.

Maggie: Why?

Bran: Dramatic effect.

Maggie: Help us! Please find this man's kid before he kills us all!

Ahhhhhhh! How was that?

Bran: Not bad for a beginner, but I could give you lessons.

Howard: You've got another hour!

O'Brien: Why did it take so long for him to feel the bullet?

Howard: It's an old gun! One down! Do you want another?

O'Brien: We'll find them Mr. Concord.

Bran: You could've told me. I wish I knew you weren't going to shoot me.

Howard: That was a last minute decision.

Bran: Oh.

Howard: Are you a middle child?

Bran: How'd you know?

Howard: This constant need for attention.

Bran: I get that a lot.

Dusty: (Picking up a nutcracker and handing it to Bran as if it was the academy award) For best performance during a hostage crisis, Bran Haste.

Bran: Thank-you, thank-you all so much. It's an honor. You like me; you really, really like me.

Wilma: I don't. This was stupid all along, but now it's really stupid. I don't know why we don't just-

Dusty: Mother.

Wilma: What is it?

Dusty: Would you shut up.

Wilma: What did you say to me?

Dusty: I said shut your old overbearing mouth.

Wilma: How dare you speak to me that way!

Dusty: How dare I? I don't know why I haven't dared before! I know you probably wouldn't turn the world upside down if I was missing, but I happen to like my kids! If I was in Howard's place, I might be doing the same thing.

Wilma: I don't believe this back talk from you. You've been hanging around Branson too long-

Dusty: He likes to be called Bran!

Bran: Way to go Dusty.

Dusty: Shut up Bran, let me finish. You call him Branson just because you know he hates it. But Bran stood there! He had no idea that Howard wasn't going to shoot him and he stood there, perfectly still. He was willing to give his life for me, and every one of us! He stood still with a gun to his head because he thought he was saving me! And that is the last time I ever hear you say one word about my loser friend Branson! That is my hero friend Bran! And that is final!

Wilma: Are you done?

Dusty: No! I am not! I have one more thing to say to you! I quit!

Wilma: You what?

Dusty: Quit! I am no longer your employee! I am now just your son! Give me any lip about it and you won't have that much! I have worked in retail so long I make love to my wife and say "thank-you for coming, have a nice day."

Bran: That's a good one. (Dusty stares) Sorry, bad time.

Dusty: I started working here, because you needed help and I needed money! Without Dad, you were so helpless, you needed me for this, and you needed me for that. But you never said thank-you; you always acted like I was some type of butler, some little worker ant sent here to serve you. Well I've served my time. Now I'm to be served, if you want my respect you're going to have to respect me! This man has paid for the roof; he's bought your ugly wrapping paper! So shut up and help us get Howard's Kid back!

Wilma: This is the first time I've noticed a backbone on you son, and I don't think I like it at all.

Dusty: Guess I've hung around Bran too long.

Wilma: Well I'm not hanging around any longer! He's not going to shoot us, why not just leave!

Howard: Wilma, don't!

Wilma: What are you going to do to stop me? Tough guy.

Howard: Stop Wilma! If you walk out there, you'll destroy everything for me!

Wilma: There's nothing you can do about it.

Howard: I'll shoot you!

Wilma: You don't have the nerve. (He shoots her in the foot.) I guess you do. (Dusty runs to grab his mother Linda pulls up the Santa chair, and Maggie elevates and tends to the foot)

Dusty: Mom!

Bran: Whoa!

Alvin: Cool.

O'Brien: (On the bullhorn) It hasn't been an hour.

Howard: I'm sorry! I'm sorry, but you wouldn't listen! I can't let you leave!

Maggie: It just appears to be a flesh wound.

Wilma: Easy for you to say, it's not your flesh!

Bran: Here you are (hands her a drink)

Wilma: Give me that! (She takes the bottle)

O'Brien: Howard?

Bran: He just grazed her. (Yelling out the door)

O'Brien: Who?

Howard: Bran! (Pushing him away from the door) You're dead, get away from there! I did Howard Concord; I shot an old woman in the foot!

Wilma: Who you callin' old?

O'Brien: Not you who. I meant which old woman?

Linda: Is he implying there's another old woman?

Wilma: I'm not deaf, shut up with the old woman stuff!

Howard: Wilma Peters.

O'Brien: Could I send in two paramedics, un-armed? You don't need another death on your hands.

Howard: Yes! just- Give me a minute!

Linda: I can't believe you're not crying.

Wilma: When I was growing up we couldn't afford tears, you get used to it.

Bran: Can I use that?

Wilma: If you pay me royalties.

Linda: Now Howard, how do you expect to get out of this without some major jail time?

Howard: I don't expect to get out of this at all! I want one last kiss from my daughter. I told you I didn't have this gun to take hostages, I walked in this store tonight because - because my daughter wanted that train set. You see, we built little towns together, that was our thing, my grandfather and I started collecting trains when I was her age and she's always loved them. She wanted a new train, one of her own. I was going to buy it for her for Christmas, but now I can't. I was on my way to the bridge and I saw this little store- I just wish- I should've bought her that train when she first saw

it. Why do you think I'm wearing this vest? It's in case I couldn't go through with it.

Bran: Go through with what?

Howard: Do I have to spell it out?

Maggie: She's bleeding badly. We need a tourniquet; a piece of cloth, something.

Bran: I could rip my shirt off, you know; go for that action hero look?

Maggie: If I want to see a man with his shirt off, I'll take it off.

Dusty: How about my tie?

Bran: It's a little loud.

Dusty: For the tourniquet.

Maggie: Of course, that should work fine! (She grabs and pulls)

Dusty: May I take it off first?

Maggie: Yeah (He takes off the tie and hands it to her) Thank- you. Is there anything we can use to elevate her leg?

Alvin: There's this doll box.

Maggie: Great, bring it here.

Wilma: That box? I can't bleed on that, it'll wreck the collector's value.

Linda: It's only money. (Everyone gives her a look of disbelief) What? You people don't think I'm that snobby do you? Okay, I get it; quit looking at me like that.

Bran: Wilma, take it easy on that stuff.

Wilma: I'll buy you a new bottle, this is pretty good stuff. Better than I'd expect you to have.

Bran: Good job Maggs. You bandaged that like a professional.

Maggie: Must you use stupid nick names for everyone?

Linda: Are you a nurse?

Maggie: Sort of, I'm a veterinary technician.

Dusty: Veterinary?

Linda: That's like a nurse in the animal world. I have a dog.

Maggie: Lift that leg just a little higher.

Bran: Do you have a uniform with a short white skirt?

Maggie: No, but I know how to neuter.

Bran: Good job, on that tourniquet.

Howard: I've got to get her out of here. I'm going to let the paramedics in.

Maggie: Don't you dare.

Dusty: Why not?

Maggie: They'll come in here and blow off his head.

Howard: What?

Bran: She's right, they would aim at your head, they wouldn't want to take a chance of hitting your dynamite vest.

Dusty: Okay, maybe they could slide a stretcher or a wheel chair up to the door.

Howard: (Back outside) Can you roll a wheel chair over here? I'm going to send Wilma out with the kid!

O'Brien: Good choice Mr. Concord.

Alvin: With what kid?

Howard: Is she in a lot of pain?

Wilma: Fat head over here caused me more pain.

Linda: Those things he said to you?

Wilma: No woman. When he was born, his head was thirteen inches in diameter! That was pain, not this.

Dusty: The bullet doesn't bother you?

Wilma: Dusty, I've had arthritis in this foot for the past twenty years. It doesn't hurt much more than usual. Not like you'd care, big Meany head son.

O'Brien: We've just received word Howard! We've located your wife and daughter. I'm sending an officer to the address.

Howard: That's great! Get my daughter here! And send over that wheel chair! Thank-you, it's out there, just outside the front door.

Wilma: Funny- I feel. Why is my store spinning clockwise? This chair is horrible.

Dusty: Mom?

Bran: Her pupils are different sizes. Oh no!

Dusty: What?

Bran: She drank all my vodka, didn't leave me a sip.

Maggie: Her pupils aren't different sizes, they're just dilating.

Dusty: I haven't seen her take a drink in at least ten years.

Wilma: Bubbles little girl, bubbles please.

Maggie: I think she's drunk.

Linda: That was fast.

Alvin: I'm a boy.

Wilma: Whatever just fetch me the bubble please. (Alvin goes and gets the bubbles, she opens them up and begins blowing bubbles)

Maggie: (Stopping Howard from walking out the front door) Where are you going?

Howard: I'm grabbing the wheelchair, Alvin you're going to push her back over to the ambulance all right?

Alvin: How strong do you think I am?

Wilma: Watch it kid.

Maggie: You can't go out there, it could be a trap.

Bran: I'll go.

Linda: You can't go, you're dead, remember?

Wilma: Kid, why don't you grab one of those dolls over there, my present to you.

Alvin: A doll?

Dusty: She means an action figure.

Wilma: What's the difference?

Bran: Dolls don't have kung fu grip.

Wilma: Dusty had one, I found it when I was cleaning his room- you were what sixteen? It was-?

Dusty: That's enough mom. We've got to get her to the ambulance, let me get the chair.

Howard: That's a bad idea; from a distance, they could mistake you for me.

Maggie: They won't mistake me for Howard, and I'm still alive, I'll get the chair. (She has her hand on the door, when a loud creaking then crash is heard outside.)

Linda: What was that?

(Maggie opens the door and sees that the wheel chair is crushed up against the underside of the overhang which is now blocking the entrance)

Alvin: I've got it!

Wilma: I should've replaced that thing. (She begins laughing) My overhang is hung over. That was stupid, why didn't you say it Bran?

Bran: I liked that one.

Maggie Dusty: We know.

Alvin: What's a hang over? I've heard dad talk about it before.

Linda: It's when you're sick.

Bran: It's when everything you hear makes loud crashing noises, like that one.

Dusty: I kind of like her this way. (The phone rings Dusty Answers) All Good things, Dusty Peters speaking, may I help you? (pause) Yes sir, he's right here. It's the police.

Howard: Yes? (pause) Yes, we got the wheel chair. (pause) I was aware of that, thank you for keeping us informed. (pause) Okay, but I've got one more demand now. (pause) Get us out of here! (pause) Thank-you.

Linda: What'd he say?

Howard: The overhang collapsed under the weight of the snow.

Bran: No, kidding.

Howard: They're trying to shovel us out now, but it's going to take a while.

Bran: So all we have to do is wait for the cops?

Alvin: That's what we did the first hour.

Howard: I'm sorry I shot your mother.

Dusty: Someone was bound to do it sooner or later.

(Wilma begins singing Christmas carols, something up beat like *Jingle bells*.
Just try to avoid copyrights)

Bran: I think we need to get her drunk more often.

Linda: She could hang out with my husband.

Maggie: Or Bran.

Bran: I don't drink that much.

Maggie: Who are you kidding? (Alvin begins singing and dancing next to Wilma)

Bran: New years and Christmas Eve, the occasional wedding.

Maggie: That's the only time you drink?

Bran: Honest. You caught me on the one night a year I buy that stuff and one bottle usually lasts till new year's, I don't always give it all to Wilma.

Dusty: He's telling the truth, he only drinks at work.

Maggie: Is that a good idea?

Dusty: It's because I can drive him home, or to meet up with some girl that will take over driving from there.

Bran: I'm not as irresponsible as you pegged me, am I?

Linda: This actually looks like fun. (She begins singing and dancing with Alvin)

Howard: Linda? Has Linda been drinking too?

Dusty: I'm putting vodka in mom's Metamucil from now on. (He joins in on the singing)

Howard: This is just ridiculous. What are the cops going to think if they hear you all?

Bran: If I start singing, they'll think we're being tortured.

Maggie: Care to dance? (Maggie and Bran Join in)

Howard: What are you doing? She's bleeding! Oh hell, why not (He joins them and as they dance the fourth wall dissolves they go into a chorus line and round out the song ending with Wilma shouting)

Wilma: Intermission!

(End of Act one Scene Three. Lights Out for Intermission)

Act Two Scene One

(It's now 9:15 pm. Lights up on the interior of the store, the hostages are now gathered around Linda who is finishing off the caroling with either Silent Night or Silver Bells. Bran is writing stuff down in a small notebook)

Maggie: That was Beautiful.

Linda: You really think so?

Dusty: Yes.

Howard: That's what Alice and I sang to Jessie last year; it put her right to sleep.

Maggie: I'm sorry Howard.

Alvin: Mom always sings me to sleep.

Linda: Alvin, they don't care to know that.

Maggie: You do have a lovely singing voice.

Bran: It's almost painful when you're talking, but it is really nice when you're singing.

(The phone rings Howard answers)

Howard: Hello? (pause) Oh, yes just a moment. (pause) Yes, I'm the one holding him hostage. (pause) I didn't have much of a choice. (pause) Would you like to talk to him? (pause) I can hang up or you can talk to him, which do you want? (pause) Dusty, it's for you.

Dusty: (Taking the phone) I knew she would be mad. (On phone) Hello? Hi honey, how are you? (pause) On the news? Really? Which channel? (pause)Wow! (to the group)We're a breaking story! We interrupted a wonderful life.

Wilma: My wonderful life's been interrupted too.

Dusty: Everything's all right, we've been taken hostage, but he's a nice enough guy. (pause) No-no he's fine, he just pretended to shoot him. Yeah, mom's been shot that was real, (pause) just in the foot. (pause) Oh, don't worry so much, Howard's not going to shoot me unless he has to. (pause) Tell the kids I love them and (He sings) I'll be home for Christmas you can plan on me- (pause) What? (pause) Yeah I had a little drink, why? I'll be fine. (pause) No don't bother coming down here everything will be fine. (pause) Are they? (pause) Oh- Okay that's wonderful. (pause) Sure, I can just swing by the convenience store on the way home, let me write this down: Milk, eggs, tampons, super absorbency right? Okay.(pause) No- no one can hear me. (pause) Well we have to be home by one in the morning that's Howard's deadline, or else he kills us all. (pause) No problem I'll see you in the morning good-night, (pause) I love you too. Bye. (He hangs up)

Howard: One in the morning?

Linda: I wonder if Jacob is out there yet.

Howard: Why did you say my deadline was one?

Dusty: Isn't it?

Alvin: Six hostages, six hours, I remember that.

Howard: I started at six.

Bran: But the police didn't start playing till seven.

Maggie: Your first hour was eight.

Howard: My god, what have I done? I have to be out of here by midnight.

Bran: Does your gun turn back into a pumpkin?

Howard: Something like that. (He opens the door and tries to push on the overhang, it doesn't budge.)

Linda: I'm sure they'll dig us out by then. How much snow could possibly be by that front door?

Wilma: The overhang is iron.

Linda: Iron?

Dusty: Weighs a ton and a half. That's why Mom didn't get a new one put on last spring it was too expensive just to haul that one away.

Bran: She wouldn't spring for it.

Alvin: Last Spring, I get it.

Maggie: They have the same sense of humor.

Linda: I'm not sure which one to pity for it.

Howard: Why would you make a roof out of iron?

Wilma: This place was built at the beginning of the cold war, they even made curtains out of the stuff.

Bran: Hey can I-

Wilma: Use it you've got to get some wit from somewhere.

Alvin: Can I see this act of yours?

Bran: Here's what I've got so far (The two of them talk quietly about the jokes written in notebook)

Wilma: I didn't know.

Dusty: Didn't know what?

Wilma: That saving a few thousand dollars would cost us our lives.

Howard: Don't blame yourself Wilma.

Wilma: Oh I don't. I blame you for this mess, you and little miss loudmouth I'm married to a powerful attorney.

Linda: Me?

Dusty: So why is it you never became a singer?

Linda: Well I wanted to once, but that's just you know, one of those silly dreams you let go of after a few decades of dabbling in it.

Wilma: Plus she married daddy more bucks, why should she do anything?

Linda: Now, that's not true. He wasn't rich when we first meet. I mean sure I like to go shopping, but I agree with Howard, money won't buy you happiness. As a matter of point the richer we get the less happy I feel. When we met he was dirt poor, he owed so much money from law school it was ridiculous. I was riding around in an ancient Chevy Nova that had a leaky gas tank, that's all I could afford; I was working as a waitress at the time.

Maggie: Was it lime green?

Linda: No, dirty blue. You had one?

Maggie: First car. The one I'm driving now isn't a lot better. It was parked in front of that pole that was holding up the thing. (she indicates the overhang) I wonder if I still have a car.

Linda: I'm sure the insurance will cover a new one.

Alvin: You were a waitress?

Linda: I was a waitress.

Alvin: You worked?

Linda: Yes honey, I worked and I came home and I cooked, and I cleaned. I even took your father cheese sandwiches for his lunch breaks, with two little sweet gherkins. One day I got to his office and he took the bag of food away from me and told me to wait outside, I stood out in the cold waiting and I was so mad at him, because I had forgotten my jacket. When he let me in there was a little candlelight lunch laid out, and on my gherkin was this diamond. That was the day he proposed.

Alvin: It's tiny.

Linda: Smallest one on my finger, but it's the only one that really means anything.

Wilma: That's so sweet, I could puke. Do you have any more booze Bran? I've got to drink my way out of this headache.

Bran: No.

Maggie: I think it's incredibly romantic.

Wilma: You would.

Bran: It's nice to know you're not as financially based as I thought you were.

Wilma: So when did Mr. Romantic pickle become the rich and powerful Jacob Applebee?

Linda: It was all with one case. Corrine Hampton.

Bran: The Hamptons?

Dusty: The wealthiest family in Crestview.

Linda: So now my name dropping works. I haven't thought about that woman in so long, she made my skin crawl.

Wilma: But she made your husband rich.

Linda: I almost wish he hadn't taken the case, she had hit some poor kids dog with her car, and not only was she claiming she wasn't responsible for going seventy in a twenty-five, she was suing the family for the damage the dog did to the bumper of her Bentley. That self-absorbed overbearing- The first thing she started doing was listing all of the famous people she was friends with- then she started- Oh, I do feel ill. I've become her, haven't I?

Dusty: Huh?

Linda: I am that pushy conceited blowhard, aren't I?

Bran: Is honesty best right now? Or is this one of those "do these jeans make me look fat" moments?

Maggie: I think silence is best now.

Linda: You've been walked on by people, right?

Bran: He named his son Matt. Get it? As in door-

Dusty: I get it. It's just not funny.

Bran: That's okay; I've got a million of 'em.

Alvin: Are any of them funny?

Bran: Can I adopt you?

Linda: I'll start by apologizing to you Dusty, and then to Maggie, I jumped right in front of you in line, you would've been out the door and with Trevor or Travis whatever his name was, I got you into this, I'm sorry.

Maggie: Really, you saved me. I was about to spend four fifty on a piece of cardboard for a guy that wasn't worth it.

Bran: You really didn't know how you were acting?

Linda: Do you realize that you've been treating Maggie like a customer on a used car lot all night?

Maggie: You don't have to be harsh.

Bran: I see her point.

Maggie: Wow.

Bran: What?

Maggie: You've just surprised me again, that's all.

Bran: Want to go for a test drive?

Maggie: You want me to kick the tires?

Bran: No, ma'am.

Linda: People used to call me tree hugger, hippie, those kinds of things. Pine scented air freshener is the closest I've gotten to a forest since he's been born.

Alvin: We went camping that time.

Linda: That was the pool house, while they were installing the Italian marble. I was being sarcastic.

Howard: Do you see the kind of interaction you get when people take the time to get to know each other?

Wilma: Time is money, you know.

Howard: I always wanted to be a psychologist.

Wilma: Then time is an awful lot of money. Haven't you heard, talk is cheap, unless you're talking to a shrink or a lawyer? You can use that one Branson.

Bran: Already written down.

Howard: I wouldn't charge a lot.

Wilma: You wouldn't, would you.

Maggie: You seem to read people pretty well; you might have a gift for it.

Bran: Will they let you do that? You know, now that you've snapped?

Linda: I would think he would have an insight for it, being a lunatic himself. I didn't mean that in a bad way.

Dusty: What are you? I mean what did you do before... before this happened?

Howard: I was the president of the PTA. I was the founding member of our neighborhood watch.

Bran: You mentioned work remember? You came home from work early on Halloween.

Howard: I'd rather not say.

Linda: Come on. I shared.

Maggie: I poured my guts out for you.

Bran: What you see is what you get with me, but if you want a story, I know one about an Irishman, a priest and two blondes-

Howard: Okay, I'll tell you. Promise not to laugh.

Alvin: I can't make promises like that.

Howard: I was a mail man.

Alvin: Like we couldn't have guessed that.

Bran: What is it with mailmen and guns? I know nothing can keep them from their rounds, but this is ridiculous.

Howard: I don't like these things. I vote for better gun control laws. I've never touched a gun before three nights ago when I got this thing.

Bran: Defensive much.

Howard: We don't need any more jokes at the expense of postal workers. My situation is not occupational.

Bran: Yet you've got the TNT strapped to your chest. Look a little eagle.

Howard: Don't pick on the post office Bran, they know where you live.

Bran: When they come to get me, they'll show up three days late at my neighbor's house.

Wilma: It was nineteen- nineteen something, damn, I've forgotten my own birthday.

Bran: Are you sure, it was nineteen- something?

Wilma: Nineteen thirty six! Shut up Branson I'm telling a story.

Alvin: Is this another trip down try to remember road?

Linda: That's Memory lane, now hush.

Wilma: We didn't have a lot. Dad had a job sorting spoons at this new plastics factory. Paid almost twenty-five cents an hour and he pulled some strings and got me a job there.

Bran: Was this during the great depression?

Wilma: I'm not that old. It was a small town in West Virginia, I'm pretty sure it's still like that today. Whole town only had one phone, we used it for long distance calls of course, and if you wanted to talk to a neighbor, you would just yell out the window.

Dusty: I thought you didn't have glass?

Wilma: We didn't they were holes in the side of the house, what do you want me to call 'em?

Dusty: Maybe if we both push. (He goes to help Howard Push the unmoving overhang)

Wilma: Anyway, I started out as a young girl. As most girls do when they're healthy and I was a normal healthy child. My cousin Louise however had distemper, leprosy, and a few diseases that hadn't been named yet. It snowed every winter. Three to four feet usually, we had to walk six miles to get to school or was it six minutes? It seemed like an awfully long way.

Bran: Up hill both ways?

Wilma: I don't think we even had hills, did we?

Maggie: Are you feeling alright Wilma?

Wilma: My head is pounding my foot is throbbing, my store's buried under a seven thousand dollar repair bill and for some reason I feel compelled to tell my life story to a room full of complete strangers. So no, I'm obviously not okay.

Maggie: Sorry.

Wilma: Anyhow, in the late sixties,

Bran: Your late sixties or the late sixties?

Wilma: In the year nineteen sixty- six. I meet this adorable, romantic man, he was a traveling salesman with a van full of junk and this brilliant idea to start a traveling five and dime store.

Linda: That's how this store was started?

Wilma: No, that idiot ended up going bankrupt. I followed him to this town because he was cute. The cute one's always let you down. I was in a new

town, I didn't know anybody and before too long I needed a job, so I started working at this hardware store, that's when I met Harold.

Bran: Harry Peters.

Wilma: Yes, my poor, poor, Harold.

Maggie: I'm so sorry, when did he pass away?

Dusty: He's still alive. I think.

Wilma: I got everything in the divorce, that's why he's my poor, poor Harold. He was three years older than me and not half as cute as my traveling salesman, but he was reliable. I first started fooling around with him to get a raise, but three months later we were married.

Linda: That was fast.

Maggie: It must've been love at first sight.

Wilma: You can say that, if that balances the books for you. Six months later Dusty was born. Use the love at first sight thing if you want. I was standing behind that counter dusting off the window ledge, I sneezed and went into labor. That's why I called him Dusty.

Bran: That's so cute.

Dusty: Can I have the gun?

Howard: No.

Linda: So this was a hardware store?

Wilma: Yes, it was. When Crane hardware opened up down the street we just couldn't compete with the prices. Plus I never thought the name Peter's Hardware was very catchy, especially when the light in the sign went out and the WARE disappeared. So I offered up an idea to save the business, and before you know it I'm running the place. Harold couldn't stand that I was so much better than he was at running a business, and one day he went out for a beer and never came back.

Maggie: So you're missing a dad too?

Dusty: No, I knew him. I'm not missing anything.

Howard: I'm gonna blow up.

Bran: You've got a mild temper Howy, that doesn't scare us.

Howard: I don't mean emotionally, I mean literally. This suit is designed to explode in three ways, one I push this button, two, I click this buckle or three; the timer goes off at midnight.

Bran: My car doesn't have that many options.

Howard: I wasn't sure I could go through with it.

Maggie: Howard.

Dusty: How do you un-do it?

Howard: I don't know a friend of mine made it for me.

Bran: You're going to have to reconsider who you call friends.

Howard: Well, a guy at work.

Alvin: Another mail man.

Wilma: If you didn't like my story, you just had to tell me.

Howard: I didn't want you all to know, I was sure this would be over before midnight. I wasn't thinking clearly.

Linda: Well duh.

Alvin: Did you just say duh?

Linda: Did I use it correctly?

Alvin: Yeah, that's the shocker.

Linda: Old mom is cooler than you think.

Alvin: Until you said that.

Linda: Now that's not fair, am I really that lame?

Alvin: I don't know, you don't talk to me very much.

Linda: You think that?

Alvin: I spend a lot of time with Janet the old pair.

Linda: That's au pair, it's French for babysitter. Janet is French you know.

Alvin: I know that, but she looks like an old pair, skinny top, wide bottom and wrinkly all over.

Linda: Alvin! That's not a very nice thing to say.

Alvin: Dad says she doesn't look French, 'cause French women are supposed to be sexy. He said she smells French though.

Linda: I do have a lot to discuss with your father.

Alvin: Am I in trouble?

Linda: No, honey. I'll work on you seeing less of the old pair.

Bran: So what do we do about this?

Howard: Can we get Alvin out, maybe through that bathroom window?

Alvin: I don't want to leave.

Linda: Mommy will be fine honey.

Alvin: Okay, but I still don't want to leave; I've got a toy store to myself in here.

Dusty: The bars are fitted into the brick from the outside.

Maggie: Let's not panic. We've still got a little over two hours; the cops might have us out by then.

Alvin: Where do babies come from?

Linda: What?

Alvin: This whole stork thing sounds a little fishy. Wilma made no mention of a stork in her story; she sneezed and went into what was that, labor? You sneezed went to work and got a baby?

Bran: It's amazing how fast we can jump subjects around here, we can go from we've got two hours to live, to where do babies come from.

Alvin: Well?

Dusty: The air conditioning!

Alvin: Babies come from the air conditioning?

Dusty: No, the vent might be big enough for Alvin to crawl through. Help me. (Someone helps him un-cover the air vent)

Linda: He could get hurt.

Dusty: It's December, the AC isn't running.

Alvin: Are you avoiding my question?

Bran: Of course we are.

Alvin: A room full of grown-ups and nobody can tell me?

Maggie: It's not that.

Bran: We just don't want to tell you.

Dusty: That's really something you should ask your Dad.

Alvin: Dad's always busy.

Linda: I doubt his father remembers anyway.

Maggie: Linda.

Linda: I haven't seen any signs. Look, when two people love each other, a whole bunch, a kind of magic happens and a baby sort of pops up inside the mommy's belly.

Bran: That's not all that pops up-

Maggie: Bran!

Dusty: Doctor Bills pop-up, then you have to buy the latest most expensive tennis shoes. Relatives pop up out of nowhere.

Alvin: Okay, you people obviously can't handle that one, but there are so many other questions I need answered. Like why is the sky blue? Why do dogs sniff each other's butts? What makes old people smell funny? And, what's so important about history? It's already over.

Bran: Ben gay makes old people smell funny, and moth balls, and in some cases formaldehyde.

Maggie: Dogs sniff each other's butts to say hello, it's like a hand shake without hands.

Dusty: Why is the sky blue?

Howard: It's not; really, it's an array of ultra violet tones coming from the reflection of the sunlight off the moisture in the upper atmosphere. It just so happens that the blue light waves are the ones that are easy for the human eye to pick up on, so to us it appears blue.

Alvin: Now I'm more confused than before.

Dusty: Me too.

Howard: It's simple; in the back of your brain is the visual cortex-

Bran: Howard, we've only got two hours.

Howard: It's just blue.

Wilma: When I was a kid, I knew the sky was blue, never questioned why.

Bran: Was it blue? I thought everything was black and white then.

Wilma: And history my boy, is one of the most important subjects there is, there's no way of moving forward if you don't know where you've been.

Dusty: I didn't know you were a history buff.

Bran: She's lived through most of it.

Wilma: I'm going to ignore him. Take a look at this (She pulls out a dollar bill)

Alvin: It's a dollar.

Wilma: It's a picture of George Washington; he helped fight the revolutionary war, and became the first president of the free United States. And here on a ten dollar bill, this is Alexander Hamilton the first US secretary of the treasury he had a heated battle with Aaron Burr and died in a pistol duel. This is Good old Ben, they put him on a one hundred because he was a great inventor, the pot belly stove, bi-focals,-

Dusty: Mom? Are all of your historic facts about money?

Wilma: If they're important, they're on money.

Bran: Okay kiddo, can you fit?

Alvin: I don't want leave.

Bran: Well you don't have to leave yet; we just need to see if you can climb out, you can wait to actually leave.

Alvin: I'd rather not.

Bran: How many chances are you going to get to climb through the ducts like James Bond?

Alvin: Who?

Bran: Like a super-secret agent spy. I would love to have a chance to do this, but I'm too big.

Alvin: Can I get a flashlight?

Dusty: Right here.

Linda: Be careful honey yell if you need us, and if it looks too dangerous-

Alvin: Yeah, yeah, danger is my middle name.

Linda: No, Jacob is your middle-

Alvin: Mom!

Linda: Okay, just go.

Howard: You do know how to talk to kids Bran.

Maggie: He's on the same maturity level.

Bran: I'm at least sixteen, how does he not know about babies? Can't he read bathroom walls?

Linda: Private school.

Bran: Well get cable or something. That's how I learned.

Maggie: That explains a lot.

Dusty: You're going to make a great father some day; you should see him with my kids.

Bran: I'm never going to have a family of my own, I have this commitment issue.

Maggie: All men have a fear of commitment.

Wilma: That's too bad I've always thought you should be committed.

Bran: That's not the issue, commitment has a fear of me.

Howard: I just wish I would've bought that train set for Jessie.

Maggie: Your daughter didn't leave you Howard, your wife did.

Howard: I know that was meant to make me feel better, but it didn't.

Maggie: I don't know if I'll ever find love. I doubt I know what it is.

Bran: With the way you look? Any man on earth could fall for you.

Maggie: I don't want a man that likes me for the way I look. They're the ones that run off with the Cindy elves of the world. I want someone to hold me while I'm sleeping, to understand when I'm grumpy. To wake me up from a nightmare and ask me what happened instead of just saying it's all right.

Bran: (Writing this down) Slow down, this is good stuff.

Maggie: It only applies to me, it won't help your dating tips.

Bran: Maybe your rules are the only rules I want.

Howard: That was a good line, you should give him that.

Linda: Boarder line.

Dusty: Sounded sincere.

Bran: Guys.

Wilma: I always thought a man should be like a VCR, blinking and ready to program.

Maggie: I think you've embarrassed the unstoppable Bran Haste.

Bran: They did not. (Turning to the duct) Alvin! How are you doing up there?

Maggie: You are embarrassed.

Bran: Alvin! Are you okay?

Alvin: (Entering from the backroom) Yeah, but it doesn't go outside, it leads to the bathroom.

Bran: Great, this place is a death trap Wilma.

Wilma: He brought the dynamite.

Howard: I don't think the vents are supposed to lead outside are they?

Dusty: How am I supposed to know?

Bran: It works in movies.

Howard: I wish I knew what was happening out there.

Maggie: There was music playing when we walked in wasn't there?

Bran: Just when you walked in.

Linda: You get one good line a night. Don't push it.

Maggie: Isn't there a radio?

Dusty: Oh yeah, hold on (he goes and fiddles behind the counter the radio comes on, they flip through various commercials and Christmas music)

Dave Jefferies: The Hostage situation at the local gift store All Good Things...

Wilma: Free Publicity.

Dave Jefferies: ...Has apparently taken a turn for the worst, as Howard Concord, a local mailman, civic leader and a previous lobbyist for gun control... (They all look at Howard)

Howard: If the laws were better, I wouldn't have this thing.

Dave: ...Was about to release two hostages, when the roof of the older building collapsed under the weight of the snow. Two officers were attempting to ambush Mr. Concord from the overhang, which police admit may have contributed to its collapse. The weight of those officers has not been released. Police have located Mr. Concord's estranged wife and his daughter and they are in route to the site. The problem will then be freeing the captives and the gunman from the building, which has only one entrance blocked by approximately a ton of snow and debris. They have called for county plows to assist but due to the storm, it will be quite some time before they arrive.

Howard: Turn it off, please.

Dave: On the brighter side the snow will continue off and on through the night giving us the first white Christmas in Crestview since 1899- (Dusty turns off the radio)

Dusty: Well, my kids will like the snow.

Alvin: Snow! No school, no school-

Linda: You have the rest of the month off anyway.

Alvin: Can't let me have it for a second can you?

Dusty: Have yourself a merry little Christmas.

Bran: Make the Yule tide bright.

Alvin: You two should sing solo.

Maggie: You think so?

Alvin: So low we can't hear them. What does you'll tide mean? Why do you want a bright one?

Linda: Yule. It's the pagan holiday that was Christmas before Christ was born.

Maggie: I'm surprised you know that.

Linda: I'm married to a high powered attorney, I have plenty of time to read.

Maggie: Yule is really just another word for wheel. The celebration of this time of year was in the middle of winter because the cycle of the seasons was about to start over again, completing the wheel. That's where we get the wreath, it symbolizes the never ending cycle.

Alvin: I thought it was for Christ's birthday.

Linda: That's what we celebrate, because we're Christian.

Maggie: My aunt was pagan she celebrated Yule, I didn't know the difference until I was in high school.

Linda: A bunch of different religions celebrate or honor this time of year for many reasons.

Wilma: The time of the profit.

Maggie: Mohamed? Moses?

Wilma: No! The profit woman, the profit. When I can pay the bills and have some cash left over. The Christmas colors are red and green because the green comes in and gets me out of the red.

Linda: It wasn't always about material things. Christmas for me anyway is supposed to be about family, and love.

Alvin: Okay, but I still get toys, right? I love toys, and I get them from my family.

Linda: Fine, if you must.

Bran: You've seen the Christmas Carol haven't you? It's about-

Wilma: Oh, I hate that story. Everyone wants to paint Scrooge as such a bad guy. Why doesn't anyone blame Bob Cratchit?

Dusty: Bob Cratchit is a poor family man that works for a greedy old miser.

Wilma: Bob Cratchit is in a financial fix because he and his wife produced more offspring then they could afford! What's Scrooge expected to do? Give Bob a raise every time the Cratchits' get frisky? Money isn't the only thing Bob can't keep in his pocket. Why didn't he get a visit from the ghost of Christmas prudence?

Dusty: Mom that's not fair-

Howard: Please. Let's not debate this now.

Bran: Can we play a game?

Dusty: What?

Bran: A game, you know, to pass the time.

Alvin: That's a great idea.

Linda: What game?

Howard: What happened to playing hostages? Where I hold the gun and you're the hostages?

Alvin: That got old fast.

Howard: I noticed.

Maggie: When I was little duck duck goose was always my favorite.

Dusty: That's a good one (they all sit cross-legged around Wilma)

Linda: That's one I remember.

Alvin: Duck who what?

Bran: What do they teach at private school? We'll show you, sit in the circle.

Howard: This is crazy, a bunch of grown people sitting around the floor like this.

Bran: Like strapping dynamite to your chest is sane?

Howard: Well no, but it's not silly.

Wilma: I was blowing bubbles boy. Silly is okay.

Linda: I agree. What happens in this building stays in this building.

Bran: Until midnight, when it's splattered all over the pavement.

Maggie: We can't all sit in the circle; one of us has to be it.

Wilma: Not me.

Bran: I'll be it.

Alvin: No, I want to be it. What do I do?

Bran: Watch me be it.

Maggie: I'll be it.

Bran: You can't start.

Maggie: Why not?

Bran: You're a girl. Being the only dead hostage here, I claim privileges.

Howard: Stop arguing or I'll shoot you all in the foot!

Alvin: You don't have enough bullets.

Linda: Alvin.

Bran: I'm sorry for calling you a girl.

Maggie: Okay. I think.

Bran: You know what I mean.

Maggie: I'm sorry for calling you stupid.

Dusty: You didn't call him stupid.

Maggie: I was thinking it.

Bran: Fair enough.

Alvin: Does this mean we can't play?

Howard: Duck.

Bran: I knew he'd cave in.

Alvin: Like the roof.

Howard: Duck

Alvin: I wish we had a cow here.

Maggie: Why.

Bran: So we could have milk and quackers

Howard: Duck

Maggie: That's a pathetic joke for both of you.

Alvin: It was on a happy meal.

Howard: Duck

Bran: I get some of my best material off those things.

Wilma: That explains a lot.

Howard: Duck. Duck. Goose (he tap's Alvin on the head)

Bran: No fair! That's just because he's the kid! (They run around and Howard sits leaving Alvin to tap the rest on the head.)

Howard: See how it works?

Alvin: I get it.

Bran: Bring it on.

Alvin: Duck.

Bran: I dare ya.

Alvin: Duck.

Howard: Don't tease him.

Alvin: Duck. Goose (he taps Wilma on the top of the head)

Wilma: That's just low kid.

Alvin: I'm no dummy.

Wilma: Dusty! Could you please grab that child for me?

Dusty: (he does) Gott'em! (He pauses and looks at his mother while Alvin squirms in his arms) Mom.

Wilma: What?

Dusty: You just said please.

Wilma: Yes, and?

Dusty: I don't think I've ever heard that from you.

Wilma: You told me to start respecting you.

Dusty: Yeah, but-

Wilma: I bullied away my husband, I can't lose you too.

Dusty: Mom, you could never. I didn't mean to be so hard on you-

Alvin: I'm getting sucked into a black hole of mushy here!

Dusty: Sorry.

Wilma: Does that mean you might consider working with me?

Dusty: I'm a little sick of that register.

Wilma: I said working with me, not for me; how about partner?

Dusty: Partner?

Wilma: This place has been half in your name for ten years anyway.

Dusty: Really?

Wilma: We'll split the profits sixty- thirty.

Dusty: Sixty-Thirty?

Wilma: Percentage by age.

Dusty: Close enough.

Bran: So who's it now?

Maggie: Technically Alvin, he didn't sit back down when Dusty caught him.

Alvin: Duck.

Howard: Times.

Alvin: What now?

Howard: I should call the police real quick, and let them know the situation with the vest, go on without me.

Alvin: Duck.

Bran: This was your favorite game?

Maggie: I don't remember cross legged being so uncomfortable.

Howard: I'd like to speak with Chief O'Brien,- Yes, yes I'll hold.

Linda: I do yoga, you should come to a class with me, it would really help that posture.

Howard: I'm at the hostage thingy! I'm in the building, I'm Howard Concord. Yes, please put me through.

(A cell phone is heard ringing from out in the audience The lights dim on the stage as O'Brien walks up toward the stage then stage lights go out)

End of Act 2 scene 1

Act two Scene two

(Lights up on O'Brien answering his cell phone, he is still positioned outside of the building.)

O'Brien: Yes? Yes this is O'Brien. Concord? Yes, I want to speak with him, put him on. Mr. Concord? We're still working on that Mr. Concord the plow is on its way. We've tried pulling the roof down with the squad cars but we don't have enough traction, did you know that roof is made of iron? I don't think we need a time limit Howard, your daughter is on the way here now. I'll have your wife call the moment they get here, if you're not out by then. What? Your vest what? Why would you put on a vest that did that? Oh, I see. That would do it. Okay Howard, All I can tell you is we're doing our best out here. Keep me informed. (He hangs up and Screams for Camerun)

Camerun!

Camerun: (He runs to his chief carrying a snow shovel) Yes sir.

O'Brien: We've got about an hour and twenty to get these people out of that building. How's the progress?

Camerun: Most of the snow is cleared sir, but the weight of that thing is just too much. The overhang still appears to be attached at the top.

O'Brien: Put the Swat guys up on the roof, brilliant plan.

Camerun: I'm sorry sir; I didn't realize how un-stable it was.

O'Brien: I think it was mostly Michelson's fault. He looks a little chubby.

Camerun: That's what I keep telling him, he works out every day but that's no reason to eat those fried foods, and the soda. That man drinks nothing but-

O'Brien: Camerun. I don't want to know how much soda he drinks. Can we get a bulldozer here?

Camerun: No.

O'Brien: Wrecking ball?

Camerun: No.

O'Brien: Snow plow?

Camerun: There's one on the way.

O'Brien: How soon?

Camerun: I think it'll be here in about an hour.

O'Brien: We can't get one sooner?

Camerun: The roads are just too bad. One is at the hospital, one is at the airport and one is on its way here. They were having troubles finding a driver.

O'Brien: Is this county really that small? We only have three snow plows?

Camerun: We have a fleet of snow plows. It's ten o'clock on Christmas Eve- We only have three drivers in town and sober.

O'Brien: That says something. Take a squad car down to the department of transportation and get a plow.

Camerun: I'm not licensed to-

O'Brien: I won't let you get a ticket! Howard's vest, the one with the explosives- is on a timer and he doesn't know how to stop it.

Camerun: Why wouldn't he know how to deactivate it?

O'Brien: He didn't care about that when he put it on. Look we have until midnight. We've got to get those people out of that building.

Camerun: I could try to talk him through cutting the detonation wires. I was with the bomb squad for six months.

O'Brien: I'll keep that in mind. But I'd rather get the vest out here and have the bomb squad deal with it firsthand.

Camerun: Okay. I'll get a plow. Hey, I'll get a trash truck.

O'Brien: What?

Camerun: We're having trouble because the top is still attached, but a trash truck that would have the lifting thing and we could get the leverage to lift the overhang from below.

O'Brien: Like raising a garage door?

Camerun: Exactly!

O'Brien: But then there is a chance the top would give way and fall.

Camerun: We should still have enough room to get the front door open.

O'Brien: It was your hair brained plan that collapsed the thing.

Camerun: Then let it be my hair brained plan that fixes it.

O'Brien: Take Michelson and Logan. Bring back two trash trucks and a snow plow.

Camerun: Michelson broke his arm, sliding off the roof.

O'Brien: Then take Logan and Williams.

Camerun: Yes sir! You won't regret it! (He runs off)

O'Brien: I already do. (O'Brien's phone rings) O'Brien here. Yes honey, well I don't mean to be all night. I was on call, you know that happens. Let them open the presents. Your mother hates me anyway. She does too. I'll try to meet up with you at Mass. I Love you- I will- Bye. (He hangs up) I should've been Jewish.

(Lights out)

End of Act Two Scene Two

Act Two Scene Three

(Interior of the store, the lights go up on the group now Howard stands at the counter counting. Alvin, Linda, Bran, Maggie and Dusty are hiding throughout the store. Wilma is now sitting in the re-built wheelchair.)

Howard: Ten, eleven, twelve, twenty, ready or not here I come!

Alvin: You skipped thirteen!

Bran: (Running for the chair) Yeah that's no fair! Base!

Maggie: (making it to the chair) I'm on too.

Bran: I knew I could make it to a base with you.

Wilma: That's it. I don't want to be base anymore.

Linda: Come on. Try and catch me. (She does some really cool trick to get to base)

Alvin: Wow mom. I didn't know you could do that.

Howard: (Sneaking up on Alvin) You're it!

Bran: (Picking the gun up off the counter) Should you leave this thing lying around?

Howard: (Grabbing the gun back.) Don't touch that!

Maggie: Howard, you don't need that anymore.

Dusty: Even if we wanted to leave, we're buried alive.

Howard: It's not that. I've been fighting the N.R.A. for years trying to keep guns out of the hands of idiots. I can't in good conscious let Bran hold one.

Bran: Fine.

Alvin: I'm getting hungry.

Bran: Me too.

Dusty: Remember that story about the soccer team that went down in a plane crash in the alps, the only way they could stay alive was by eating the dead bodies.

Linda: I remember that one. (They all look at Wilma)

Wilma: Oh, stop it you freaks, It's been a few hours, stop looking at me. We just had pizza!

Alvin: We're just playing with you Wilma.

Howard: I wish I hadn't started this, but I guess it's time to end it. (Howard begins to pull the counter in front of the door) Help me with this could you? (Bran and Dusty go to help move the counter with Howard, as they move it a toy falls out from the bottom)

Bran: What are we doing with it?

Howard: This vest blows up in thirty minutes; my plan is simple. I brace this door and duck behind the brick, there's a good chance you'll be safe and freed by the explosion.

Dusty: Would you look at that. (Picking up the fallen toy) We do have one more Mega-changer electro-man. There you are Linda.

Linda: Thank-you (Taking the toy)

Wilma: You're a partner for an hour and you're already giving stuff away?

Dusty: Yes Mom.

Linda: I'll be glad to pay for it.

Wilma: Well?

Dusty: We owe her a replacement.

Wilma: I've got to respect him. (Whispered to Linda) I'll take a check later.

Bran: I don't like this idea Howy.

Howard: I still, don't like you calling me that. This plan is the best one I've got.

Dusty: The plow is probably out there right now.

Maggie: The explosion will probably still bring down the front wall and collapse the building on us.

Howard: I don't hear any snow plows.

Alvin: What happens to you?

Howard: I'm going out with a bang. Now let's move Wilma away from the door.

Bran: It doesn't have to come to this; you know you never should've put that stupid vest on.

Howard: I've lost my job, my wife, and my kid. They're repossessing the house at the beginning of next year. I'm thirty-eight Bran; I can't start over from the middle of my life.

Bran: You know what that makes you?

Maggie: Is this a joke?

Bran: Not at all. That makes you? –ME. Maybe it is a joke, so I'm not middle-aged, but everything else matches. I don't even have the wife, kids and house to lose. Does that mean I should stand out there with you?

Howard: No Bran I don't think -.

Bran: You don't think what? You wouldn't expect me to give up would you?

Howard: No, but you haven't met the love of your life yet. I have and I lost her.

Bran: If she was the love of your life, she wouldn't have even looked at this guy!

Howard: If he was a decent counselor, he wouldn't have looked back.

Bran: So he was no good, you shouldn't pay him a dime, I agree. But she's the one that vowed to be loyal to you. No matter how much it may hurt you

to hear this, she never loved you the way you loved her. If she had we wouldn't be here having this conversation.

Dusty: I had no idea he was so deep.

Bran: I'm sorry Howard but, you're incredibly wrong. You haven't lost anything. You just see things for what they are now instead of what you thought they were.

Howard: My daughter.

Bran: Is probably outside right now. Do you think it's going to do her a lot of good to see pieces of her father splattering down with the snow on Christmas Eve?

Howard: You've got a point there.

Bran: Then let's not plan your death; let's work on our escape.
(The phone rings Linda answers it)

Linda: Hello? What was that? Was anyone hurt?

Howard: What's wrong?

Linda: The police had an accident no one was hurt. Why were garbage trucks out tonight? Yes, he's here, oh yes of course. Howard, your wife- or Ex-wife is outside; she wants to talk to you.

Howard: Great. (Taking the phone) Hello. Alice, it's been a while. (pause) You said you would be in touch, what happened? (pause) How could I put her through this? I don't know why I put any of us through this, just desperate I suppose.(pause) No dear, that was your fault.

Wilma: This whole thing is her fault.

Howard: Yeah, you heard right. My hostages are blaming you.(pause) Yes, you, it's kind of nice to hear your voice again. All these months I've dreamt about you, missing you, I had forgotten how raspy and annoying your voice could be, especially when you yell like that. (pause) Sorry I just figured out I'm not missing anything without you. (pause) No, I am taking my daughter back. (pause) Don't worry I've got a good lawyer; ever hear of Applebee, Duncan and Myers? (pause) Put O'Brien on-(pause) Because I'd rather talk to him than to you. O'Brien? (pause) Yes, Linda told me. We're bracing the door and then I'm going to try to slip out of the vest and use it to blow off the rest of the overhang. (Pause) Okay. Hold on- (To the hostages) does anybody know anything about electricity? Schematics?

Bran: I took shop in school. I can make a lamp out of coke cans.

Dusty: I rewired my kitchen once. It took a week.

Maggie: I only change batteries.

Wilma: Don't look at me.

Linda: I know how to hot wire a car.

Alvin: You do?

Linda: My old NOVA didn't have keys.

Howard: Yes, together we have some experience. Okay, all right. Thanks (he hangs up) they're calling us back. A bomb squad specialist is going to talk us through deactivating this thing. He said the explosion might work but he'd rather not risk it. It might just send the overhang through the roof.

Wilma: My insurance is going through the roof.

Howard: It would be best to just deactivate it. The plow just got here.

Maggie: Why don't we get that thing off of you?

Howard: It was meant to be fool proof.

Bran: They haven't met a fool like me. Raise your arms.

Howard: What?

Bran: Put your hands up, come on now, I did it for you. This wire goes along this strap, but how?

Maggie: There's a lot of give. Wait a second. No bottom.

Bran: Nope, Dusty, would you please.

Dusty: My pleasure (They begin to lift the vest over Howard's head)

Howard: Wait! Guys! Stop. The sleeves.

Linda: It doesn't have sleeves.

Bran: Wires.

Howard: He told me, if I break a connection. Boom.

Dusty: We don't want that.

Linda: We should wait till they call back with directions.

Alvin: She always makes us read the directions.

Maggie: I agree with her.

Dusty: How does breaking a connection make the thing go off?

Howard: I don't know, but I don't want to find out.

Bran: In the movies, you can cut the wrong wire and explode.

Maggie: Are these wires? They look like string?

Linda: She's right, it does look like string. (The phone rings)

Howard: Maggie, could you? (Maggie answers the phone)

Maggie: Hello? No this is Maggie. Oh, hold on. Okay, which one of you is pretending to be the most experienced?

Alvin: Mom!

Linda: I don't think so.

Dusty: No, he's right.

Bran: Hot wiring a car is more than I've ever done, and it's cool.

Alvin: You can do it mom.

Linda: Me? All right, I'll try.

Howard: Wilma, Alvin, Maggie, could you three step away from us?

Linda: Alvin, get behind that Santa chair. Better yet, go to the bathroom.

Alvin: I don't have to.

Linda: To get as far away as possible.

Alvin: I don't want you to blow up without me.

Linda: That's sweet honey. Watch from the hall, but run to the back if I start screaming.

Wilma: Maggie, don't you think we should watch from the hall too?

Maggie: Okay, Good luck.(Linda takes the phone from Maggie as Maggie moves away with Wilma and Alvin back to the door of the backroom, the trio are poised at the doorway but not necessarily to run)

Linda: Hello? This is Mrs. Applebee. Yes. I've hotwired a car before. Well it was my car, and it was years ago. Chevy Nova. I think it was a seventy-two. Okay, well there's a bunch of dynamite looking stuff, and wires coming out of each one and then in the middle it connects to a- hey, that's the same digital kitchen timer we have on my microwave. Does that mean it's nuclear? Good, okay three wires: red, blue, and then a yellow, oh wait. And a black, that's four wires then. (To Dusty and Bran) would you call that a teal or a blue?

Dusty: Maybe a sea green?

Bran: I'd say turquoise.

Maggie: This is our bomb squad? We're going to blow up.

Howard: Maybe this isn't such a good idea.

Bran: Okay, sea blue then.

Dusty: Sea green.

Bran: What he said.

Howard: I don't want to take you all with me. Let's just stick to the original plan.

Bran: Where you blow yourself up?

Howard: Not that original plan the second original plan.

Dusty: Which one is that?

Howard: I step outside and try to slip out of this vest.

Linda: What? Yes, I'm still here, hold on. (She had forgotten she was on the phone) That's a dumb plan Howard. We can deactivate this thing.

Howard: Maybe if I crawl out behind the door. Then you two have a better chance if something goes wrong.

Bran: What could go wrong?

Dusty: Boom, remember?

Bran: I'm being optimistic, or sarcastic- not sure which.

Howard: If this doesn't work out, I want to apologize one more time.

Linda: Apologize for what? If you didn't move that counter I wouldn't have this thing for Joey.

Howard: Dusty, you're kids, Bran. Maybe it's best if I try this on my own.

Dusty: What about your kid?

Howard: With everything I've done, I'm going to lose any visitation rights-

Linda: Jacob Applebee has never lost a case. And he won't lose yours. I won't let him.

Maggie: I'm pretty sure at least one of us would have to be willing to testify against you.

Wilma: Well twerp, are you going to tattletale?

Alvin: Never.

Wilma: I wouldn't tell them for a million dollars, two Million maybe, but not just one.

Howard: Thank- you so much, all of you.

Alvin: Getting a little sappy in here.

Linda: Anybody have any scissors?

Dusty: (Reaching a pair behind the counter) Right here.

Howard: I'm going outside. (Howard begins to climb over the counter)

Maggie: Wait (She runs over to hug Howard, and kisses his cheek) Just in case.

Bran: Maybe I should do this.

Howard: You're not wearing the vest.

Bran: But you got a kiss.

Dusty: I hope I can be as devoted a father as you (Shaking Hands) Not as psychotic, but as devoted.

Bran: Me too. You know, one day when I become a dad.

Linda: Oh, I'm getting all teary; Hold on (She puts down the phone and goes to kiss Howard)

Alvin: (Alvin steps out) This is very unusual for me but you must be a great daddy Howard. (He hugs Howard and accidentally sets off the detonator, we can hear a beeping that gradually gets faster.) Is that clock supposed to be moving so fast?

Howard: Out of the way! (One arm is grabbed by Dusty the other by Bran, he pushes them aside.) Save yourselves!

Bran: No!

Dusty: Hit the Deck! (They do)

(The group hits the floor as Howard jumps over the counter and smacks the overhang.)

Howard: Ouch. (The beeping gets really fast, then stops. They look at each other, and at the vest. Howard takes it off and lets it fall to the floor cringing as it drops)

Alvin: That was it?

Linda: Get away from there Howard! (Howard closes the door leaving the vest behind it, locking the door just in case.) Hello? Guess he hung up. Is everyone all right?

Maggie: I'm all right. Wilma, are you okay?

Wilma: No I'm not okay, I've been shot in the foot!

Howard: I think I've done something to my arm. (Linda and Maggie assist.)

Linda: Oh Howard, I think it's dislocated.

Maggie: Yeah it is, may be broken too.

Linda: I'll call that officer to let him know that vest is out there. (She picks up and dials)

Howard: What was I thinking? I don't want to die. I just wanted to see my daughter. My daughter, my wife, my life- I just wanted it back. I wanted my life back. The way it was supposed to be. I know- she doesn't love me anymore- I know I can't threaten my wife to come back to me. I'm so sorry I put you all through this. I didn't mean to pull you all in. I wasn't trying to scare you, or hurt you. I was just so ready to die. So ready to end everything, because my life wasn't the way I wanted it anymore- That's not the thing to do, giving up is not the option to take. I knew that in my heart the whole time, but it was too late. -He made that vest for me, and I put it on and that was it. -I thought I had a timer- a deadline. I do- I mean we all do. A person only gets so much time on this planet and then we're gone, but I thought that vest had my time set for tonight. I didn't think there was a way I would ever see tomorrow morning. I wouldn't have done this, I'm so sorry. As it turns out, there was never anything to worry about, we were safe all along.

(Boom! A loud explosion rocks the set and lights flash out of any visible crack. The characters do take cover, Howard nearly faints,

Alvin: Cool.

Linda: (Hanging up the phone.) I guess they know where the vest is.

Bran: It was a post office vest, figures it delivered late.

Dusty: (Cautiously opening the door.) The path is clear, and the cops are coming.

Maggie: They'll arrest Howard; he won't get to see Jessie.

Bran: Not if I can help it. (Bran Grabs the gun and picks up Howard putting his arm though Howard's and making it look as if Howard had the gun at Dusty's head in sight of the police, then he disguises his voice as best he can to be Howard's) Take one more step and this guy gets it!

Howard: Bran, you're killing my arm.

Bran: Now you guys let my daughter come over here, and I'll let all these nice people go!

Alice: (On the bullhorn) Howard! I can't believe you'd pull a stunt like this. You let those people go and we'll see if you can see Jessie again. Jessie (screaming off the bullhorn) Jessica Concord you come back here this instant!

Dusty: She's heading for the door!

Maggie: Bran! Help me move the counter. (He does, Maggie Opens the door and lets her in)

Jessie: Dad! (She hugs her father as Howard falls to the ground Bran lets go and he and Dusty look on)

Howard: Honey, I'm so sorry I put you through all of this. Oh, Agh, Dad's arms hurt.

Jessie: Mom made us leave, I didn't want to. I don't want to ever leave you.

Howard: Sweetie I hope I'll be able to stay with you.

Linda: You will, You Will.

Bran: You shouldn't make promises when you don't know Linda.

Linda: You're kidding, right? I'm Linda Applebee, and I've got connections in this town! (She smiles at Bran) from the highest judge to the corniest comedian.

Bran: She means you.

Alvin: Nuh-huh, she means you. Alvin Applebee, pleasure meeting you.

Jessie: Jessica. Hi

Alvin: I hear you like Trains.

Jessie: Yeah, I do.

Alvin: I've got quite a train set up at my place, little city, big action. If you'd like to see it, you're welcome to visit. I like a woman that's into trains.

Jessie: Do you?

Bran: How does he get away with that?

Alvin: I'll give you my tips later. Shall we escort your father to the ambulance?

Jessie: I guess so. Dad, who is this kid?

Howard: That's Alvin Applebee, he's a new friend of mine.

Dusty: Here come police and the paramedics.

Maggie: Get rid of the gun.

Bran: (He stuffs it away) What gun?

Howard: Put the safety on.

Jessie: I thought you didn't like guns. Why do you have a gun?

Wilma: He was convincing me to vote for tougher laws. Believe me I will.

O'Brien: (comes in the front door) Hands up! (They do) Put down your weapon Concord.

Howard: I don't have it.

O'Brien: Who does?

Linda: Don't look at me. I'm Linda Applebee.

O'Brien: Yes, I've heard an awful lot about you this evening.

Maggie: (Grabs Camerun and points out Wilma) This woman has been shot in the right foot; she's lost a lot of blood and consumed a lot of alcohol.

Wilma: Want to share an ambulance with me Mr. Concord? Don't forget your daughter's gift!

Howard: Gift?

Wilma: Dusty? Could you please give the girl her train set?

Dusty: Sorry, we didn't have time to wrap it (handing Jessica a train set box)

Jessie: You got it for me?

Howard: Thanks Wilma.

Wilma: Don't thank me, you're paying for it. I wasn't visited by three spirits or anything.

Jessie: Thanks, but you can keep it, I've got everything I want for Christmas. (She hugs her daddy)

Wilma: Oh no.

Dusty: What's wrong mom?

Wilma: If kids start getting sentimental, what's going to happen to sales?

O'Brien: You have the right to remain silent-

Dusty: Come on mom, why don't we stop by and pick up Muriel and the kids on the way to the hospital.

Wilma: You'd better.

O'Brien: You don't have the right to ignore me. I'm the chief of police.

Wilma: It's not every day grandma gets shot in the foot.

O'Brien: I have a badge here.

Linda: Come on Alvin, Jessica, Let's walk Howard to the ambulance and find your father. Jacob Applebee!

O'Brien: I've got a gun too.

Howard: Don't bother; they're desensitized. We blame the media.

(Wilma, Camerun, Dusty, Linda, Howard, Jessie, Alvin, all exit)

O'Brien: And you are?

Maggie: Maggie Grant and Bran Haste.

O'Brien: Now you're supposed to be the dead guy right?

Bran: Dead tired, yes. Can I buy you a cup of coffee?

O'Brien: Do you all know filing a false report is illegal?

Maggie: No, But I'll buy you one.

Bran: I might feel like I owe you something.

Maggie: Good. You should. (Bran & Maggie exit Alvin runs back in to grab his Captain Laser toy)

O'Brien: Okay kid what went on here?

Alvin: We had pizza, sang songs, tied up my mommy for a little while. There's my castle I built, Mrs. Peters gave me this. And you saw we were buried under a mountain of snow.

O'Brien: You realize, I could've been home with my family!

Alvin: Me too. But here nobody grabbed my cheeks or told me how big I was getting.

O'Brien: (Yelling to the crowd from the doorway) That's it you're all under arrest for obstruction of justice, filing a false police report, miss-use of county funds and anything else I can think of ! Unless you start talking right now! (They all begin talking mindlessly at the same time) Real cute people, you're paying for that snow plow! Someone could've been hurt! Mom was right; I should've been a dentist. (He exits Alvin returns to the front door)

Alvin: God bless us, everyone. (He turns out the lights to the store and closes the door, as he exits the bell rings.)

(The Play is over, you can go home now.)