

DECEMBER

an original screenplay by

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It's that time of year. Wreaths and red bows hang from the tall columns of a suburban mall.

The white polished floors reflect the feet of busy shoppers. Bags dangle from the fists of mass consumers.

A line of families and children winds before the center-piece of the mall: A large ornamented Christmas tree stretching to the ceiling.

Before the tree, in a grand chair sits our cheerful Santa Clause, PETER, 41. He fits the part perfectly: rosy cheeks, a comforting white beard, and a jolly belly. An eight year-old girl (HANNAH) sits confidently on his lap extending her fingers one at a time listing her wishes for the 25th.

Peter smiles warmly and listens intently.

HANNAH

...And an American girl doll, and a new diary. I'm running out of pages. And a basket for my bicycle. One with flowers on it. But if you can't do that, just white is okay too. And ummm... I think that's all of it. If there is more, I'll send you a letter.

PETER

My, my! That is quite a list. My elves will have to work very hard for all of those gifts, but we'll do our very best... I think you'll be a happy girl this Christmas.

Hannah glows.

Behind the camera, an ELF grabs their attention.

ELF

Okay! Look at the camera! And smile!

Peter and Hannah look into camera and smile.

FLASH INTO:

The locker room is a gloomy grey. A thin bench stretches across the room between the lockers.

Peter stands before an open locker. His black boots sit on the bench. He removes his round spectacles, slips off his red coat, and places them in his locker.

He stands motionless only in his old undershirt, suspenders and red pants.

The workday weighs heavy on Peter.

3 INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

3

A ten year old boy (MICHAEL) sits on the chair next to Peter.

MICHAEL

My mom says I'm too young for an iPhone, but I know I'm not. She's just mean. She says maybe when I'm in middle school. That's like in... forever. You can just hide it in my room. I won't tell my mom. She thinks she knows everything.

PETER

Well, I don't know if I can give you something your mother wouldn't like.

MICHAEL

Why not?

PETER

Well, your mother cares for you, and she knows what's best for you.

MICHAEL

Ugh! You sound just like her.

Peter doesn't let the child affect him.

ELF (O.S.)

Okay! Look at the camera! Smile!

FLASH INTO:

4 EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

4

Now in warm street clothes, Peter walks through the practically empty parking lot. His breath condenses in the winter air.

He reaches his car: mismatched paint, 200,000 miles, and still holding on to automotive life.

5 INT. PETER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

5

Peter rubs his bare hands together, sticks the key in the ignition, says a small prayer, and turns the key.

The car sputters to life.

Peter sits for a moment before putting the car in drive.

ELF (V.O.)
Okay, guys. Scrunch in.

6 INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

6

Begin Montage.

-Peter, still Santa Clause, is with a family of four children. He smiles with the bunch as the camera FLASHES.

-A little girl smiles big showing her missing teeth. Peter smiles warmly. FLASH.

-An infant cries in his arms. FLASH.

-A family of three children. One infant with Peter, a girl sitting next to him, and a grumpy boy with his arms crossed (too old for this type of thing). Peter still smiles. FLASH.

-We move in closer to Peter as more families and children file through. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. With each picture his smile stays strong but his eyes grow weary. FLASH.

End Montage.

7 INT. LOWER CLASS HOME - NIGHT

7

Peter slowly opens the front door. The blue flicker of a television from the living room illuminates the walls. The day's mail on the floor.

Peter stretches down to scoop up the envelopes. He flips through them. He pauses on one. His stomach sink. Peter lets out a sigh and sets the mail on the hallway table.

8 INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

8

The hustle and bustle of the mall has died down. A small girl (SARAH) sits on Peter's lap.

PETER
And what would you like for Christmas
little girl?

Sarah scrunches her face thinking.

SARAH
Mmmmm. I don't know.

PETER
You don't know? Well, surely, There
must be something.

SARAH

My rabbit ran away and just want him
to come home.

PETER

I see. And what was your rabbit's
name?

SARAH

Mr. Snowflake.

9 INT. LOWER CLASS HOME - NIGHT

9

Peter peers into the living room. His wife sleeps quietly on
the couch. A half decorated christmas tree stands in a corner.

Peter turns from the living room and steps lightly down the
hallway.

PETER (V.O.)

Well, I'm going to do my best to get
Mr. Snowflake back home.

Through a doorway. A spinning night light shines the shapes
of stars and moons across his face.

SARAH (V.O.)

You promise?

In the bedroom rests a young girl. Her hairless head rests
gently on a pillow. A small machine sits on the bedside table.

PETER (V.O.)

Oh... I don't know if I can promise
that.

The bedroom is calm and peaceful.

SARAH (V.O.)

Why not?

Clear oxygen tubes wrap around the girl's ears down to her
nose.

PETER (V.O.)

Sometimes we try our hardest, and we
do everything we can...

Peter stares down at his daughter hopelessly. The stars and
crescent moons float across his tired eyes.

PETER (CONT'D)

And we want things really really
badly. But no matter how much we
want, and hope, and pray...

Peter's face begins to give way to his emotions.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Sometimes there are things that are
 just out of our control.

Peter's eyes water. The weight of the world coming down on him.

SARAH (V.O.)
 Even for Santa Clause?

Peter breaks down sobbing. The jolly man from the mall is nowhere to be found.

10 INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

10

Sarah stares at Peter for answers.

PETER
 But, you know what? I'm gonna try
 my hardest. And we're going to see
 if we can get Mr. Snowflake back to
 you. I can promise you that.

The girl smiles, fully accepting Peter's words.

11 INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

11

The TV lights up the room. We move in on the Christmas tree. Peter's SOBBING from down the hall is the only thing that is audible.

An ornament hangs from the tree: A picture of Peter and his healthy daughter. They both smile. Peter is happy.

ELF (O.S.)
 Alright, guys! Give me a big ol'
 smile!

FLASH.

CUT TO BLACK.

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