

Lost Claus

an original script
by Dan Fiorella

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EXT. THE CITY -- DUSK

It is a wintery day in the big city. Christmas decorations are up throughout the town. Snatches of Christmas music are heard above the normal hustle and bustle.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Good will towards man? Not in this town, brother. Times were tough and the people were tougher. And I needed a case...

INT. OFFICE BUILDING HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Well-worn and dingy hallway. Dimly lighted. Office door ahead a with pebbled glass pane importantly labeled (well, as least at one time) "Nick Flebber, Private Investigator." One lone Christmas card is duct-taped to the glass in a feeble gesture to the season.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Certainly not my rush season. But then, it was my own doing. Or should I say undoing...

INT. NICK'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

A rather shabby affair with faded, peeling walls, cluttered with Nick's artifacts: a diploma from the "Forsdick School of Investigation," hardware calendar opened to Miss December, some darts.

Other belongings include a statue of the Maltese Falcon wearing a tie, a picture turned to the wall, piles of books: paperback romances, detective novels, sex manuals and comic books, and a Peanuts collection. A copy of the National Idolator, opened to a page reading "Cult Family's Ordeal of Terror."

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

The Barlow case didn't help much. Was supposed to rescue the Barlow's son. Ran off with some cult religion thing. Worshipped Jimmy Dean. Not the fifties actor, the singer who makes the pork sausages. Anyways, I got the kid, no problem. Started the deprogramming with the parents. Make a long story short, the Barlows wind up joining the cult with the kid. Makes you wonder. Tried to pay my fee in breakfast links...

Additional earthly belongings include shelves of bowling trophies, a recently finished fast food Mclunch, a dirty window, labeled with a eyeball logo, overlooking an alley. Broken blinds fail to block the view. Half empty bottle of whiskey sits on the desk.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Soon it was the usual schlock jobs; serving summonses, helping carnival shills, locating lost luggage, falsifying family trees for genealogy companies; basic rock bottom. Wasn't long before they even stopped coming. I was all set to enter a career in air conditioning repair. I needed a case now and I needed it bad...

NICK FLEBBER, a taut, tightly-wound man with an angry undertow. He has a five o'clock shadow that's running fast. He wears a hat, pushed back on his head, a shirt and loosened tie and a shoulder holster with a gun.

He is seated at his desk, feet resting on the desk. He cleans his nails with a letter opener. A cigarette dangles from his mouth. He re-fills his coffee mug with whiskey and takes a sip.

His appointment calendar is on the desk, opened to December twenty-first.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I wasn't choosy. Just as well I wasn't.

There's a knock at the door. Nick, startled, pulls his gun. He thinks better of it and puts it back.

He straightens his tie, takes a last pull from the bottle and puts it and the mug into his desk drawer. He puts out his cigarette.

NICK

Come in...

There is no shadow cast upon the door's glass pane. Slowly, the door seemingly opens by itself.

Nick does a take, then stands up to see TWEEDLE at the door. Tweedle is an elf on a mission. He is dressed in a hooded parka with typical elf clothing underneath. He wears earmuffs, covering his pointy elfin ears. He holds Nick's Christmas card.

Nick reaches into his pocket for change.

NICK (CONT'D)
Sorry, kid. All I have is some loose
change.

TWEEDLE
(very business-like)
What?

NICK
You collecting for UNICEF or
something?

TWEEDLE
No.

NICK
Not caroling, right?

TWEEDLE
Right.

NICK
What do you want?

TWEEDLE
I am in need of your services.

NICK
You want to hire me? What's the
deal?

TWEEDLE
Missing person, sir.

NICK
Your parents?

TWEEDLE
No, my employer.

NICK
(nods thoughtfully)
I see.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
I had no idea what was going on.

NICK
Take a seat and give me the
particulars.

Tweedle comes up and takes the seat opposite Nick. Tweedle
hands Nick the Christmas card.

TWEEDLE
Here, I found this in front of your
door. I think it's yours.

NICK
Thanks. It's from my insurance agent.
Shows he cares. A lot of insurance
agents wouldn't do that.

TWEEDLE
That's very true.

NICK
Now then, your boss is missing?

TWEEDLE
That's right.

NICK
Been to see the police?

TWEEDLE
Can't.

NICK
Why not?

TWEEDLE
We must avoid publicity.

NICK
Big shot?

TWEEDLE
You might say that.

NICK
Okay, let's get down to brass tacks...

Nick pulls out the bottle and the glass. He pours himself
one and downs it.

NICK (CONT'D)
Care for a drink, Mr.---?

Nick turns to the shelf to a glass being used as a pencil
holder. He takes out all manner of writing utensils and
wipes it clean with his shirt tail. Tweedle is attempting
to pluck duct tape off his fingers and isn't looking.

TWEEDLE
Tweedle.

NICK
Care for a drink, Mr. Tweedle?

TWEEDLE
No, just Tweedle.

NICK
Uh-huh. Care for a drink, Tweedle?

TWEEDLE

No, thank you.

Nick replaces the glass and picks up a pen.

NICK

Twweedle, huh? How do you spell that?

TWEEDLE

With one "weedle."

NICK

Okay, Twweedle, what's your boss' name?

TWEEDLE

Claus.

NICK

(writing)

Claus.

TWEEDLE

Yes. Santa.

NICK

(writing)

Santa---

(pauses)

Santa. Santa Claus.

TWEEDLE

Yes. You heard of him?

Nick puts down the pen. He leans back in his chair.

NICK

Yeah, you might say the name rings a jingle bell.

TWEEDLE

Good. You don't know how hard it's been.

NICK

Right. Who sent you here? McCormick, right? This is something those morons at Pinkerton would do.

TWEEDLE

Who's McCormick?

NICK

Okay, cut it. Gag's over. You done good. Now you can go on back to McCormick and get your money.

TWEEDLE
 (pleading)
 Mr. Flebber, I'm serious.

Nick leans all the way back in his chair, feet on desk.

NICK
 Okay, fine. But look, Tweedle, right
 up front, I should tell you, my fee
 is five hundred dollars a day, plus
 expenses.

TWEEDLE
 We assumed as much...

Tweedle pulls out a large wad of money.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)
 Is two thousand enough as a retainer?

Nick goes over backwards in his chair. Quickly, he gets on
 his feet.

NICK
 That would about do it.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
 If this was a case, I'd take it. My
 landlord would have wanted it that
 way.

Nick takes the money.

TWEEDLE
 Then we must go back to our hotel
 and then head home.

NICK
 Let me check my appointment book...

Nick goes to his desk calendar. He flips through a couple
 of pages of doodles and "art" work.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Nothing I can't push back. I can
 squeeze you in.

Tweedle jumps off the chair.

TWEEDLE
 Great!
 (composing himself)
 I we can go now.

NICK
 Certainly.

Nick puts on his suit jacket and gets his trenchcoat. He goes to the desk and takes out a box of bullets and a hip flask.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Sure, it sounded like an elaborate April Fool gag but this wasn't April. Besides, it's like my old man always said, "Never refuse a midget with money."

TWEEDLE

The others will be waiting.

NICK

What others?

TWEEDLE

My workmates.

NICK

Where are you staying?

They leave.

TWEEDLE

The Holiday Inn.

NICK

Naturally.

Nick shuts the door, shaking his head.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- CONTINUOUS

Nick and Tweedle walk to the curb. Tweedle waves his arm to hail a cab. Then he waves both arms. Excitedly, he jumps up and down. Nick raises his arm. A cab pulls up. They get in.

EXT. HOTEL -- NIGHT

The cab pulls up. Nick and Tweedle get out and enter the hotel.

INT. LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

They cross the lobby to the elevator. Doors are closing, so Nick rushes ahead and catches them. A DOWAGER is already in and she looks annoyed. Nick and Tweedle get in and the doors shut.

INT. ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS

Dowager gives Nick and Tweedle the once over and looks vaguely disgusted. Nick looks at her and gives her a flashy, phony smile.

NICK
Good evening.

DOWAGER
Yes.

A moment of silence. Dowager looks at Tweedle, who is totally absorbed in the floor indicator.

NICK
(in confidence)
Sad case.

DOWAGER
I beg your pardon?

NICK
A sad case. Used to be six foot
one. Leprosy.

Dowager looks concerned. She edges away a bit.

DOWAGER
Shouldn't he be in quarantine?

NICK
Normally, yes. But we're here for
the convention.

DOWAGER
Convention?

NICK
The Leper's convention. We're staying
at this hotel. Reserved the main
ballroom. Good fun.

Elevator stops at floor.

DOWAGER
You're a leper, too?

NICK
Sure am.

Nick raises his coat sleeve. He hand is tucked inside, so that all she sees is the empty sleeve. The Dowager is visibly agitated. She hits the next floor button. The elevator stops and she hurries off. The elevator resumes it's climb.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
One of the specialties included in
my services is lying through my teeth
for the client's privacy and
convenience. Sure sounds like I
took the case.

TWEEDLE

Here we are.

NICK

Right.

Elevator opens and they exit.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Nick and Tweedle walk to the room. Tweedle knocks twice. Three knocks answer. Tweedle knocks once. Four knocks reply. Door unlocks. Tweedle and Nick enter.

TWEEDLE

Meet the gang.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Very nice, large, elaborate room.

Filled with elves. There are seven elves running about; BARCLAY, the elder elf with specks and a beard, along with ZITHER, a dim elf, RIPLEY, the southern elf, ELFIS, who looks and sounds like Elvis, HOPSY, a straight lace elf, ARSENIO, a hip and happening elf and TRUMAN, a snippy, snide elf. They are in full elf regalia: green suits, felt hats, pointy shoes.

Tweedle's true character comes out. He's a very excitable little guy.

TWEEDLE

Here he is, guys, Mr. Flebber. He's a private detective. He said he would help!...

Elves let out a cheer. Tweedle brings Nick to Barclay.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

Mr. Flebber, this is Barclay, our fore-elf.

NICK

What's shaking, Tom Thumb?

The elves begin shaking their heads and going "tsk-tsk."

BARCLAY

(to Tweedle)

This was the best you could do?

TWEEDLE

He'll be okay. I just know.

(to everyone)

He cleared his entire schedule just for us!

The elves cheer again.

NICK
So, what are you guys, fairies?

BARCLAY
No, we are elves, Mr. Flebber.

NICK
Elves.

BARCLAY
Yes. Allow me to introduce my staff.
This is Zither, Hopsy---

NICK
Sneezy, Dopey and Doc.

BARCLAY
Quite. If I may continue, this is
Zither.

ZITHER
Hello.

BARCLAY
Hopsy.

HOPSY
How do you do?

BARCLAY
Ripley.

RIPLEY
(in a southern accent)
Hey, you all.

NICK
(aside to Tweedle)
What's with the accent?

TWEEDLE
Ripley's originally from the South
Pole.

That's worth a take on Nick's part.

BARCLAY
Elfis.

ELFIS
Hello, Colonel.

BARCLAY
Arsenio.

ARSENIO

Yo.

NICK

So, what now? Do you take me to your pot of gold?

TRUMAN

Stuff a stocking in it, flatfoot.

BARCLAY

And that's Truman.

NICK

You getting short with me?

TRUMAN

What do you think, gumshoe?

BARCLAY

Excuse him, Mr. Flebber. He's been under a strain. We all have.

NICK

Right.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

I was really trying to keep a straight face. Excuse the pun.

BARCLAY

Mr. Flebber, you have been fairly paid for your services. We would appreciate a change in attitude.

NICK

Sorry. Just takes a little getting used to. I never worked for a gang of dwarves before.

TWEEDLE

We're elves.

NICK

Natch. So, your boss is missing.

ELFIS

Yes, Colonel. He's just plum disappeared.

ARSENIO

We think he was kidnapped.

NICK

When was the last time you saw him?

RIPLEY
Day before yesterday.

NICK
Day before yesterday? Why'd you
wait so long to act?

Various elves begin fudging answers like, "Well, we wanted
to---," "We were going to---," "Didn't we---?," all at once.

BARCLAY
We really didn't know how to handle
it. We couldn't possibly report it
to the authorities. Can you imagine
what would happen if word leaked out
Santa Claus was missing?

NICK
Boggles the mind.

BARCLAY
I shudder to consider the
implications.

ZITHER
The children would be house-broken.

RIPLEY
He means heart-broken.

ARSENIO
And 'tis supposed to be the season
to be jolly!

HOPSY
We simply were at a loss as to what
actions to take.

RIPLEY
Then Tweedle came up with the idea
of going out and hiring a private
eye.

TRUMAN
They all felt it was a marvelous
idea. Personally, I think Tweedle
has O.D.ed on those cheap-o detective
paperbacks he reads.

TWEEDLE
Did not.

TRUMAN
Tweedle, Tweedle, Tweedle. You
wouldn't recognize a real private
eye if he was wrapped with a big red
bow.

TWEEDLE

I found him.

Tweedle points to Nick as Nick takes out a cigarette and looks for matches.

TRUMAN

Precisely.

NICK

Anyone got a light?

Zither pulls a wand from his pouch and touches it to Nick's cigarette. It lights.

ZITHER

There you are.

NICK

Thanks...

Nick pauses a moment to think about what just happened. He shakes it off.

NICK (CONT'D)

Where was he last seen?

ARSENIO

The North Pole.

NICK

What was I thinking?

BARCLAY

He left the workshop to check on the generator and never came back.

NICK

Anything else missing?

TRUMAN

A miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer.

ELFIS

Nine reindeer.

RIPLEY

Yes, Truman. You can never recall the most famous reindeer of all.

TRUMAN

Oh, that's just a lot of hype, Ripley.

NICK

Did you receive a ransom note?

TWEEDLE

Nope.

HOPSY

I haven't seen one.

ZITHER

What's a ransom note?

NICK

Then what makes you think he was kidnapped?

BARCLAY

Mr. Flebber, Santa is not the type to wander off.

NICK

I'll tell you right off, it's a little difficult to work this case from here. I mean, what with it happening at the North Pole and all.

BARCLAY

I realize that. That's why we've made arrangements to bring you there now. If it's convenient.

NICK

Sure, what the hell? I came this far, right? How do we get there, magic carpet?

TRUMAN

Oh, wake up gumshoe. This is the twenty first century.

NICK

Oh. Right.

Nick feigns setting his watch. The elves put on their parkas.

BARCLAY

Are we ready? Our private jet is at the airport.

They start out.

NICK

Lead on. You got somebody to fly us there?

HOPSY

That would be me.

NICK

He's a licensed pilot?

TWEEDLE
Hopsy's the best, Mr. Flebber. He's
been flying since he was nine.

NICK
Piper cubs?

TWEEDLE
Reindeer.

Nick closes the door behind them.

NICK
Why do I keep asking these questions?

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

Private jet in flight.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
Before you could say "Heigh-ho, heigh-
ho" we were winging our way north.
To as north as you could get.

INT. JET CABIN -- NIGHT

Nick is seated. He holds an empty glass. The elves are all
in their seats, talking. Tweedle is seated next to Nick.
An ELF STEWARDESS, BEADY, walks down the aisle with a push
cart.

BEADY
Can I get you anything else, sir?
More orange-aid, perhaps?

NICK
Fine. Fill'er up, doll.

BEADY
That's your fourth glass. You really
must like it.

NICK
Can't get enough...

Beady fills Nick's glass and walks on. Nick feigns looking
out the window.

NICK (CONT'D)
Hey, isn't that Graceland?

All the elves look out the windows. Nick whips out his flask
and adds some to his glass.

ELFIS
Hunk-a, hunk-a, that's not Graceland.

RIPLEY

That all is Toronto.

NICK

Sorry. I guess I don't get out of the city enough.

He takes a drink, then opens up a newspaper.

It opens to a full page advertisement for a department store, O'Kiley's World O'Bargains; "Where quality is contagious." Ad is for a super pre-Christmas sale; "You can't always depend on Santa to bring you what you want, so shop at O'Kiley's World O'Bargains."

Featured is a photo of the O'Kiley Kiddie Kopter, a bizarre but attractive child's helicopter.

Nick flips through a few more pages.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Since it didn't look like Allan Funt or Rod Sterling were about to step out and explain any of this, I figured now was as good a time as any to try and get a line on my pint-sized passengers.

Nick closes the paper and eyes up Tweedle.

NICK

So, Tweedle, how did you midgets happen upon me?

TWEEDLE

We're elves, Mr. Flebber.

NICK

Sure, sure. Did you hear about my incredible investigative skills? Maybe it was my mind boggling track record in the business? What was it that convinced you that I was the man for your job?

TWEEDLE

You were the first one to say yes.

NICK

Say what?

TWEEDLE

No one else would believe me.

NICK

I wasn't the first guy you came to?

TWEEDLE

You were when we came to the "F's"
in the yellow pages.

NICK

You went through the yellow pages
and nobody snapped up the dough?

TWEEDLE

Dough?

NICK

The two G's. The money.

TWEEDLE

No one let me get that far into the
story before they had me escorted
out. You were the first to listen.
So we "snapped" you "up." But I
know we got the right man, Mr.
Flebber. I bet it's fate. I just
know everything will be fine.

Nick takes a long swig from his drink. He takes out a
cigarette.

NICK

Got a light?

TWEEDLE

Sorry, this is a smoke-free flight.
Besides...

Tweedle points to the "No Smoking/Fasten Seat Belts" sign
which is now flashing.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

We're landing. It won't be long
now.

Plane speaker clicks on.

HOPSY (O.S.)

(on speaker)

This is your captain speaking...

He giggles. All the elves giggle.

HOPSY (CONT'D)

We are now making our final approach
and have been given clearance for
landing. Please fasten your seat
belts. We hope you have enjoyed
flying Air Claus.

The elves cheer. Nick tucks the cigarette behind his ear
and fastens his seat belt.

Tweedle has trouble fastening his. Nick reaches over and buckles it for him.

TWEEDLE
Thanks, Mr. Flebber.

NICK
Don't mention it.

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

Jet in flight, making its descent.

EXT. POLAR LANDING STRIP -- TWILIGHT

A snow covered tundra. Beautiful, clear weather. The whole area is bathed in a magical glow, a constant twilight effect. The plane has landed and the boarding ramp is out. Everyone de-planes.

NICK
I'm on top of the world, ma...

There are SEVERAL ELVES unloading mail bags into a horse-drawn sleigh. Several dog sleds await the group. Nick notices the mail.

NICK (CONT'D)
Hey, short stuff.

TWEEDLE
Yes, sir?

NICK
What's with the mail? I believe that's a federal offense.

TWEEDLE
No, it's addressed to us. Those are the letters to Santa.

NICK
No kidding? I always figured it all ended up in the dead letter office.

TWEEDLE
It does. But we get it. After Thanksgiving, we start making trips down to pick it up.

NICK
And Santa Claus reads all of it.

TWEEDLE
Don't be silly. Of course not.
(MORE)

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

We have an entire department to read the letters and catalogue the gifts requested.

NICK

Very efficient.

They walk over to a dog sled. The others load onto theirs and head off.

TWEEDLE

Get in, Mr. Flebber.

NICK

In that?

TWEEDLE

Best way around. Quick and environmentally safe. It's not far.

NICK

When in Nome.

Nick gets on the front of the sled. Tweedle drives it.

TWEEDLE

Oatmeal...

Nothing happens.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

Cream of wheat!...

Nothing continues to happen.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

Cheerios!

NICK

Try "mush."

TWEEDLE

Mush!...

They take off.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

Gosh, you know everything. I knew we got the right man.

They ride off. The crew finishes unloading the mail into the sleigh.

EXT. TUNDRA -- MOMENTS LATER

Off in the horizon, Santa's Workshop Village. A large, colorful house with the other buildings on the grounds, including the stables and the warehouse-like workshop. The sledders pass a red and white striped pole with a sign, "North Pole" and speed toward the village.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

This was it. The North Pole. Not the bogus magnetic north pole. The real McCoy. Pretty as a postcard. Up ahead, a little house on the tundra.

EXT. FRONT YARD -- CONTINUOUS

The main building. A fairy land house with a smoking chimney. Tweedle and Nick go in the front door.

INT. FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

The inside is a charming abode with elaborate woodwork. Nick enters, hat in hand. He sips a quick shot from the flask. Tweedle catches him.

NICK

For the cold...

Tweedle takes his coat off and hangs it on a small coat tree for the elves.

NICK (CONT'D)

Cute. What is that, a coat bush?

TWEEDLE

Excuse me?

NICK

Never mind.

TRINKET, girl elf and Tweedle's main squeeze, comes in.

TRINKET

Oh, Tweedle! Thank goodness you're back.

They rub noses. Nick makes phlegmy "ahem" noises. Embarrassed, they stop.

TWEEDLE

Trinket, this is Nick Flebber, private investigator. Mr. Flebber, this is Trinket, Santa's elf-Friday.

NICK

Really. And what do you do the rest of the week?

She doesn't know how to take the remark, so she ignores it.

TRINKET

Mrs. Claus is in the living room. She's been waiting and waiting. I hope you can help, Mr. Flebber.

NICK

That's why they pay me the big bucks, babe.

TWEEDLE

Once he finds Santa, we'll be able to begin our life together in wedded bliss...

They start rubbing noses again. Nick starts "aheming" again.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

We're on our way in.

TRINKET

May I take your coat and hat?

NICK

Why not?...

Nick takes off his coat and practically buries Trinket with it. Then he puts his hat on top.

NICK (CONT'D)

Thanks, doll.

TWEEDLE

Come on, Mr. Flebber.

TRINKET

She's terribly upset. You'll be gentle, won't you?

Nick reaches into his jacket and pulls out an empty pack of cigarettes. He crumbles it up and drops it on the floor.

NICK

Consideration is my middle name.

He remembers the cigarette behind his ear and pulls it out. Trinket catches a glimpse of Nick's gun and holster. Nick heads into the house, Trinket grabs Tweedle.

TRINKET

Tweedle, come here.

TWEEDLE
I'll be right back, Trink...

She pinches his arm.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)
Okay, okay. Mr. Flebber, just go
straight down. You can't miss it.

NICK
Gotcha.

He leaves.

TWEEDLE
What is it?

TRINKET
He's got a gun.

TWEEDLE
Of course he's got a gun. He's a
private eye. They all pack rods.

TRINKET
They all what?

TWEEDLE
Carry guns.

TRINKET
You know how the Clauses feel about
that.

TWEEDLE
I know, but this isn't just any twelve
days of Christmas, you know.

TRINKET
Why does he need it here? Santa's
not here. The problem's not here.
I don't like it. It makes me nervous.

TWEEDLE
All right, all right. I'll talk to
him. Maybe I can get him to put it
in the safe while he's up here.

TRINKET
Would you?

TWEEDLE
I'll ask. But he's a tough hombre.
He might slap me around.

TRINKET
Oh, Tweed, be careful.

TWEEDLE

Don't worry about me, doll.

He tilts his hat forward and goes in.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Done in red and white, with green trim. Roaring fire in the fireplace. Big cushy chairs and an assortment of furniture scaled down to elf-size.

In a rocking chair is MRS. CLAUS, wife of Santa; you know the type. She is trying to be brave. Nick is lighting his cigarette from a piece of kindling wood from fireplace.

MRS. CLAUS

We've all been terribly upset by this. The workshop has all but been shut down. And here it is, our busy season.

Tweedle enters.

TWEEDLE

Everything okay?

MRS. CLAUS

Oh, Tweedle. Yes, Mr. Flebber and I were just getting acquainted.

NICK

I know this is hard on you, Mrs. Claus, but these questions have to be asked if I'm going to begin my investigation.

MRS. CLAUS

I understand.

NICK

Did your husband have any enemies to speak of?

MRS. CLAUS

Papa? Why I should say not. He's beloved.

Nick's ash is getting longer and unstable. Tweedle fetches an ashtray and holds it for Nick. Nick flicks his ashes in it. Nick begins to pace back and forth. Tweedle follows with the ashtray.

NICK

Have you known your husband to go off without warning for any amount of time?

MRS. CLAUS

Not but once a year. And hardly without warning.

NICK

Of course. Mrs. Claus, please don't take offense but I'm just trying to touch all bases on this deal here. Is it possible Mr. Claus was seeing anyone?

MRS. CLAUS

Whatever do you mean?

NICK

You know, a...girlfriend.

Nick goes to ashtray's former spot. He can't find it, then realizes Tweedle's behind him. He flicks his ash and resumes pacing.

MRS. CLAUS

I hardly think so, Mr. Flebber.

TWEEDLE

The man's a saint.

NICK

It had to be asked. Frankly, I'm hard put to say what happened. It is possible he may have had an accident or wandered off.

MRS. CLAUS

Saints preserve us.

NICK

I have to make you aware of all the possibilities.

MRS. CLAUS

I understand. I hope you're mistaken.

NICK

So do I, ma'am. Yo, half-pint.

Nick looks around for Tweedle who is standing behind him again.

TWEEDLE

Yes, sir?

NICK

Did you and the other trolls search the area for Claus?

TWEEDLE
We're elves, sir.

NICK
Right.

TWEEDLE
A search party was formed but they
didn't find anything.

NICK
I'll want to talk to them. But first,
I'd like to clean up and chow down.
It's been a long day. To say the
least.

MRS. CLAUS
Oh yes, of course.
(calling)
Trinket, dear.

Trinket appears at the doorway.

TRINKET
Yes, ma'am?

MRS. CLAUS
Would you please take Mr. Flebber to
the guest room?

NICK
I imagine it doesn't get a whole lot
of usage.

TRINKET
Hardly ever. This way, please.

She leaves.

NICK
I'll see you later, Mrs. Claus.

MRS. CLAUS
Thank you for coming, Mr. Flebber.

NICK
Just doing the job I was paid to do,
ma'am.

Nick leaves. Tweedle follows him out. Tweedle then dashes
back in and drops off the ashtray.

TWEEDLE
He'll find him, ma'am. You'll see.

He darts out again. Mrs. Claus smiles, then wipes a tear
from her eye, rocking and gazing into the fire.

INT. STAIRWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Trinket leads Nick and Tweedle up the stairs.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

I couldn't help feeling it was all a dream. Or maybe I had taken some powerful mind-altering drugs which would produce these effects. Then I remembered, I can't afford any powerful mind-altering drugs.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

They go down the hall. It has several doors running down the hall. Trinket opens the door to the guest room.

NICK

Thanks, babe.

He walks in. Tweedle goes to follow.

TWEEDLE

Thanks, babe.

Trinket grabs his arm and pinches it.

TRINKET

The gun!

TWEEDLE

Okay, okay, okay.

She releases him.

TRINKET

I'll be back with some food.

INT. GUESTROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The room is nicely furnished, fireplace going, windows overlooking the stables. It's just that everything is scaled down to elf-size: tables, chairs, canopy bed. It has a low ceiling with a hanging lamp.

Nick comes in and arches an eyebrow. He gives it a quick once-over. Then he loosens his tie.

NICK

Nice digs...

Nick takes off his holster and gun and hangs it on the small coat tree. The tree promptly falls over.

NICK (CONT'D)

Good.

Nick leaves it be. He turns and walks into the lamp.

TWEEDLE

Mr. Flebber?

NICK

Yo.

TWEEDLE

About your gun, sir.

NICK

What about it?

TWEEDLE

Well, sir, there are some house rules here concerning weapons and, well, I mean, you won't be using it up here, will you?

NICK

Not unless one of your hobbit friends gives me a hard time.

TWEEDLE

Elves, sir. We're elves.

NICK

Sez you.

TWEEDLE

(tensing up)

Could you possibly see your way clear to say, check your gun in during your stay up here?

NICK

No sweat.

TWEEDLE

Not that I mind your piece, however. It's just that it makes some of the womenfolk nervous---"No sweat?" Excellent! I mean, we can lock it up in the workshop safe.

NICK

You're the boss...

Nick gets the gun. He empties the bullets and gives it to Tweedle.

NICK (CONT'D)

Just take good care of it.

TWEEDLE

You bet! I mean, not worry, sir.
I'll watch over this gat like it was
my own.

NICK

Good man, Tweedle.

TWEEDLE

I'm an elf, Mr. Flebber.

NICK

Call me Nick. All these formalities
are making me edgy. Only one man
ever called me mister. And I had to
shoot him.

TWEEDLE

Gosh. Sure thing, Nick.

NICK

Now for the million dollar question.

TWEEDLE

What?

NICK

Where's the john?

TWEEDLE

Oh, bathroom. It's the third door
down.

NICK

Is it full size or compact?

TWEEDLE

Full size. It's the boss'.

NICK

Good. My aim's not that great.

TWEEDLE

Let me check on your food and put
this in the safe.

Tweedle dashes out. Nick starts out, takes another hit off
his flask, bumps into the lamp and leaves.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Nick walks out of his room. He looks at the doors.

NICK

Third door. Was that counting mine?

He goes to the third door, counting his, and enters.

INT. SANDRA'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

SANDRA CLAUS, a beautiful blonde, clad in a robe, is seated at her vanity, brushing her hair. The room is an utterly charming affair, just so cute.

When Nick comes in, she is startled and jumps up, closing her robe tightly around herself. Nick is stunned. Sandra is lit from behind, giving her an other-worldly-ness halo.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

It wasn't the door to the toilet.
But it was the door to my heart. Or
one of my other organs. She stood
there aglow, this blonde Nordic
goddess; a woman whose looks could
wreak havoc with the metabolism of a
lesser man. Yet beaming with the
innocence of a child. Sort of like
Heidi Does Dallas.

NICK

Oh, excuse me, doll. I was looking
for the john.

SANDRA

He's not here.

NICK

Who's not here?

SANDRA

John. I don't know any Johns.

NICK

I'll bet your don't, babe. But I
was referring to the bathroom.

SANDRA

That's the next door down.

NICK

He wasn't counting mine.

SANDRA

Excuse me?

NICK

Tweedle and the doors.

SANDRA

Should I know what you're talking
about?

NICK

Skip it. My mistake.

SANDRA

You must me the man they brought up
to find my father.

NICK

Your father?

SANDRA

Yes, Father Christmas.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

So, Jelly-Belly had a daughter.
This would certainly stop the presses
down at People Magazine.

NICK

Yeah, I'm the man. Nick Flebber.
I'm a private investigator. The
gnomes came down and hired me.

SANDRA

You mean the elves.

NICK

I guess I do.

SANDRA

I'm Sandra Claus. A pleasure to
meet you.

NICK

Ditto.

They shake hands.

SANDRA

Have you had any success?

NICK

(hedging a bit)

Well, I only just arrived and it's
just too early to tell.

SANDRA

I understand. You know, we don't
get many men, er, guests up here.

NICK

I know, I've been in the guest room.

SANDRA

There's so much you have to tell me.

NICK

I imagine so. But now, duty calls.

SANDRA
Perhaps at supper, then?

NICK
I'll be there with silver bells on.

SANDRA
I'll look forward to it.

Nick winks and leaves. Sandra watches him go, very intently, very curious, and slightly aroused. She returns to her vanity, thoughtfully brushing her hair.

INT. GUESTROOM -- EVENING

It's later on. Nick is seated at chair and table. There is a finished tray food out.

Nick takes the flask out and adds some to the cup and drinks. He is trying to get comfortable: he stretches his legs out under the table, then leans back in the chair. Tweedle bursts in excitedly followed by Zither, Ripley, Elfis, Hopsy, Truman, Arsenio and Trinket. Nick flips over backwards.

TWEEDLE
You wanted to see us, Nick?

Nick gets up.

NICK
Yeah. How's it hanging?

TWEEDLE
By the chimney with care. Why?

NICK
Never mind. I suppose you're wondering why I've sent for youse.

ARSENIO
Youse?

RIPLEY
That's Yankee for "you all."

TRINKET
What did you want us for, Mr. Flebber?

NICK
Well, Santa Claus is missing.

TRUMAN
No wonder you get top dollar.

NICK
And you were the elves who supposedly went searching for him.

TRINKET

Supposedly?

TWEEDLE

Are we suspects?

NICK

Everybody's my suspect until I say otherwise. That's the way I do business.

RIPLEY

But we wouldn't do a thing to hurt Santa.

ZITHER

No. We're Santa's helpers. We help Santa.

NICK

Doesn't mean you can't help yourselves, eh? Everybody says he was kidnapped. What if it's something bigger? Why are you all insisting he was kidnapped? How do I know he wasn't murdered or worse!

(to Truman)

How about you? You make a big stink about everything, you got something to say? Got any skeletons in your closet?

TRUMAN

I've nothing in my closets that isn't in excellent taste, gumshoe.

NICK

(to Zither)

And where were you on the night of the nineteenth?

ZITHER

I'm not sure, my calendar stopped running.

NICK

(quickly turns to others)

You, short stuff---

ALL ELVES

Yes?

NICK

(singles out Ripley)

No, just you. And what's your alibi?

RIPLEY
That depends, sir.

NICK
Depends on what?

RIPLEY
What's an alibi?

HOPSY
It's a defensive plea or fact that
an accused person was elsewhere during
the commission of a crime.

NICK
Oh, very good. And how do you know
that? Maybe you...need one!

ELFIS
You hound dog!

NICK
I see you're all shook up. Maybe
you're hiding something!

ELFIS
Don't be cruel. You don't think I'd
do anything to Santa, do you? I'd
have a blue Christmas without him!

NICK
Look you frostbitten Fabian, you'd
better 'fess up right now, or you'll
be singing the jailhouse rock.

ELFIS
You got a suspicious mind.

NICK
I'm a detective. If we have any
mind at all, it's suspicious. That's
all for now for you.

ELFIS
Thank you, thank you very much.

NICK
How about you, Arsenio? What is it,
you do exactly?

ARSENIO
I'm in charge of tracking trends and
fashions.

NICK
Really? And what does that mean?

ARSENIO

Well, for instance, I could do some research and find out when your clothes were in style.

NICK

Ho, ho. So, is this trend tracking important?

Nick sits down.

TWEEDLE

Important? If it wasn't for him watching our for different fads, we would've gotten stuck with a whole lot of Waterworld action figures and Atari games.

ARSENIO

Not to mention that whole Newton disaster.

NICK

So, I guess you make contact quite a bit with the outside world.

ARSENIO

I have feelers and agents throughout the lower continents.

NICK

So, I mean, if you ever wanted to, say, go into business for yourself, you could easily contact certain individuals who might be able to help you step out from somebody else's shadow?

ARSENIO

I don't get it.

NICK

Where's Santa?

TWEEDLE

Nick!

NICK

Well, maybe the butler did it.

TWEEDLE

We don't have a butler.

He gets up and turns on Trinket. The chair is stuck to his butt.

NICK

Then is must be the maid! Where were you on the night in question?

Trinket bursts into tears.

TRUMAN

You have a lot to learn when it comes to dealing with polite society, you big, stupid jerk.

Suddenly, Barclay bursts in. He carries an envelope and its letter.

BARCLAY

Mr. Flebber! Mr. Flebber!

NICK

What do yo want?

BARCLAY

We've received a note from the kidnapppers!

NICK

What? Where?

BARCLAY

One of our mail clerks just opened it now!

As Nick attempts to escape the clutches of the furniture, Tweedle takes the letter. It is a typed note on plain white paper. A gold ring is taped to the bottom of the page along side a hoof print.

TWEEDLE

Listen. It says, "We have your employer. If you ever want to see him again, you'd better follow our instructions. First, do not go to the authorities or try to locate him." Oh-oh.

Nick frees himself and takes the letter.

NICK

Let me see that. "Second, you are to shut down all sections of your workshop. Cease production. Thirdly, no Christmas deliveries are to be made. Just so you know we mean business, see if you know who belongs to the following..."

Nick removes the ring. The inscription reads "K.Kringle."

NICK (CONT'D)
This his, Tweedle?

TWEEDLE
Sure is, Nick.

NICK
What's this mark here?

BARCLAY
That's Vixen's hoof print for certain, sir.

NICK
Looks legit. Come in with the last batch of mail?

BARCLAY
The United States run, sir.

NICK
Postmarked Detroit. Claus was copped on December nineteenth. This is postmarked the nineteenth. Interesting. Good work.

ZITHER
What does it mean?

NICK
It means you Ompah-Lommpahs are off the hook...for now.

TWEEDLE
We're elves, Nick.

NICK
That's your story. So, we got ourselves a snatch, for what that's worth. I want to see the stables and the generation shack. Maybe that'll tell me something. You're all free to go. But don't try to leave town. Tweedle, you can show me around.

Nick grabs his coat and head out. The other elves follow suit. Trinket and Tweedle remain.

TRINKET
He has to go, Tweedle.

TWEEDLE
Aw, Trinket, you're just annoyed from him saying you bumped off Santa. He must have needed a red herring or something.

TRINKET

I don't care what color fish he needs,
that was very rude.

TWEEDLE

He's a rough and tumble flatfoot who
plays by his own rules. You have to
give him a chance.

TRINKET

Says who?

TWEEDLE

Oh, please. You have to. It was my
idea to hire him. Everyone is
counting on me. He has to find Santa.

TRINKET

All right. But only because of you.

TWEEDLE

I'm just trying to do what's right.
I don't understand it. Why would
anyone want to take Santa away from
us?

TRINKET

I can't imagine. But the world's a
different place today.

TWEEDLE

Is there room in this world for the
likes of us? I want us to have a
future together, Trinket. I want to
have a family, hear the pitter-patter
of little-re feet around the house,
to grow old together. But do a couple
of elves like us even have a chance?

TRINKET

I'd like to think so, Tweedle. And
I like to think you can make it
possible. You're a special elf.

TWEEDLE

Thank you, Trinket.

TRINKET

But your choice of detectives---

TWEEDLE

Trinket!

NICK (O.S.)

Yo, Tweedle! Shake a leg!

They kiss and Tweedle hustle off. Trinket shakes her head.

EXT. VILLAGE GROUNDS -- EVENING

Tweedle and Nick step out of the house. They are now wearing snow shoes.

TWEEDLE
Come on, Nick!...

Nick puts his foot over the back of Tweedle's snow shoes. Tweedle goes through the motions of running but doesn't move. He stops and looks back to Nick.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)
You keep up real good.

NICK
Take it easy, runt. Let's not muck up the grounds any worse than they are.

They slowly head out toward the generator shack.

TWEEDLE
See, over there. These boot prints are Santa's.

NICK
So they are...

They follow the prints to the shack, then stop and head over to the stable.

NICK (CONT'D)
Looks like he never made it to the generator. Heads off this way. What's that?

TWEEDLE
The stable.

Tweedle continues on to the stable. Nick pauses and takes out his flask. He goes to sip but it's empty. He shakes it a bit. Nothing.

He puts his finger on the inside lip, wipes around and puts it in his mouth, savoring the last taste. He pockets the flask and takes out a cigarette and lights up.

He looks back to the house. A light is on in Sandra's bedroom. He can see her. Nick is staring at it when Tweedle comes back.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)
Come on, Nick. I found something.

NICK

I would have never guessed that Santa Claus had a kid.

TWEEDLE

Not really.

NICK

What do you mean?

TWEEDLE

Years ago, there was a plane crash. A private plane. When we went out to look for survivors, we found everyone had perished.

NICK

Except Sandra.

TWEEDLE

Yes. She was all bundled up. She couldn't have been more than a couple of months old. She must have been thrown clear. We found her wailing away. We took her back. Santa had us give the people a proper burial. And then he raised her as his own.

NICK

Sweet kid.

TWEEDLE

We like her.

NICK

You found something?

TWEEDLE

Yeah, yeah. Come on.

Tweedle dashes off to the stable. Nick gives a last look toward Sandra's window, tosses away his cigarette and follows.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Interesting bio. An ice princess raised by a pack of frost-bitten short people. Never met a full sized man. This was something to keep in mind for future reference.

INT. STABLE -- EVENING

Row of stalls for small reindeer. Each stall is labeled: Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen, Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen and Rudolph. Tweedle runs in and goes over to a pile of hay. Nick comes in. Tweedle pulls a book of matches from his pocket.

TWEEDLE

Look, I found this.

NICK

Why didn't you just give me that out there?

TWEEDLE

I figured you would want to be at the scene of the find.

NICK

That's scene of the crime. What's it say?

TWEEDLE

"Close cover before striking."

Nick takes the matches and examines them. Pictured is a bar front. "Benny's Bar & Grill. If we can't mix it, you can't drink it. Detroit, MI. Ask for Big Louie."

NICK

Detroit. Same as the postmark on the ransom note. Must have dropped it during the snatch.

As he pockets it, he notices a gold chain in the hay. He pulls it out. It is an elaborate pocket watch. He opens it and it plays "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town." The watch face is demarcated by the months of the year, with Christmas in the 12:00 position (and it's almost there, say, Dec. 22.).

NICK (CONT'D)

Yo, stretch, what's this here?

TWEEDLE

It's Santa's pocket watch. He never goes anywhere without it.

NICK

I guess there's a first time for everything.

(noticing stalls)

These horsies big?

TWEEDLE

What horsies?

NICK

(indicating stalls)

Those.

TWEEDLE

Reindeer.

NICK
Yeah. Are they big?

TWEEDLE
They are to me.

NICK
Could a joe my size pick one up?

TWEEDLE
Sure. They're pretty light. They have to fly, remember?

NICK
Right. That'll explain the lack of hoof prints.

TWEEDLE
But a man carrying one would still make footprints.

NICK
I'm working on it...

Nick examines the stalls. On a protruding nail, he sees a torn piece of cloth.

NICK (CONT'D)
This'll do nicely. You guys got any kind of laboratory up here?

TWEEDLE
Sure do. The best darn lab on the North Pole.

NICK
How reassuring.

TWEEDLE
We use it for safety and product testing.

NICK
Well, let's see if we can't turn it into a criminology lab. Let's keep moving for now.

They leave the stable.

EXT. VILLAGE GROUNDS -- EVENING

Nick and Tweedle walk from the stable, away from the house.

NICK
Okay, we see that the prints go from the generator to the stable then disappear.

He lights a cigarette.

TWEEDLE

Which means they copped, er, snatched,
er, kidnapped Santa at the stable.

NICK

He was probably lured in and then,
wham.

TWEEDLE

But there aren't any prints anywhere.

NICK

I told you I'm working on it. Let's
widen our radius...

Nick and Tweedle walk further out and come to a pine tree.
There is a patch of yellow snow. No prints can be seen.

NICK (CONT'D)

Bingo.

TWEEDLE

Yellow snow.

NICK

Somebody made a pit stop. Man-sized
judging from the projectory...

Nick looks more closely.

NICK (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. This is fresh.

TWEEDLE

Fresh?

NICK

We got company.

TWEEDLE

Suffering sugarplums! Somebody's
spying on us?

NICK

Reasonable guess. Let's see something
else...

Nick positions himself as to relieve himself on the yellow
patch.

NICK (CONT'D)

I would stand about here. Which
would mean there should be prints
here. Tweedle, take a close look at
around my feet.

Tweedle goes to the ground. He sees a slight indentation that circles Nick's snow shoes at a wider perimeter.

TWEEDLE
Something was here.

NICK
Snow shoes this big keep our feet from sinking in the snow. If you follow that logic, then even wider ones would distribute a man's weight even more, leaving almost no print at all. Slight wind, a couple of trampling feet; surprise, no evidence.

TWEEDLE
Gosh.

NICK
My thoughts exactly. Come on, Tweed, we got plans to make.

TWEEDLE
Gosh.

They head back to the house. Nick tosses down the cigarette. Tweedle picks it up and drops it in a handy trash pail.

INT. DINING ROOM -- EVENING

Nick, Mrs. Claus, Sandra, Barclay and Tweedle are seated at the table eating a light meal.

Nick has his napkin tucked in the front of his shirt. Sandra keeps stealing glances at him. Nick does the same. Finally, their eyes do meet. Sandra blushes and shyly looks away.

Nick hits his spoon and it flips into his glass. He looks pleased.

NICK
---So what we have now is a spy to make sure that the demands of the ransom note are being carried out.

MRS. CLAUS
My heavens. Well, we have stopped working, haven't we, Barclay?

BARCLAY
Yes, ma'am. We were now just finishing up. We don't have much left to do but it has to be finished.

SANDRA
Isn't that putting papa in danger?

NICK

Papa?

SANDRA

Papa Noel.

MRS. CLAUS

What about Christmas? How can we do it at all without Nicholas?

NICK

Obviously the kidnappers, for whatever reason, are assuming you can't.

SANDRA

There is an old contingency plan we drew up years ago.

BARCLAY

I remember.

SANDRA

However, I can't imagine little children the world over getting much excited about the arrival of the Federal Express man.

NICK

He'll be back and safe in plenty of time. Don't you worry your pretty little head about that. Nick Flebber's on the job.

He drains his glass.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

I don't know why I said that. I get real cocky sometimes. Truth is I still didn't know what was going on, really.

NICK

Could I perhaps get a wee-drop of refreshment?

MRS. CLAUS

Of course, Mr. Flebber. Trinket.

Trinket enters.

TRINKET

Yes, ma'am?

MRS. CLAUS

More sarsaparilla for Mr. Flebber.

NICK

Not to seem out of place, but is it possible to get something a teensy-bit stronger?

MRS. CLAUS

Oh, certainly. Trinket, please bring out the egg-nog.

TRINKET

Right away, ma'am.

She leaves.

NICK

(forcing a smile)

Thank you.

BARCLAY

So, Mr. Flebber, what are we supposed to do? We do have a deadline to meet.

TWEEDLE

Yeah, Nick, it's not like we can fake being closed until we get Santa back.

NICK

(inspired)

Why not? That's exactly what we'll do!

Others stare at him, bewildered.

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

Frontier-style kitchen; butter churn, water pump, etc. Sandra and Mrs. Claus are doing the dishes.

SANDRA

Mother?

MRS. CLAUS

Yes, dear?

SANDRA

What...what do you think of Mr. Flebber?

MRS. CLAUS

He seems like a capable young man.

SANDRA

Yes, he does. But anything more than that? Do you like him?

MRS. CLAUS
He certainly is someone off the beaten trail, but yes, yes I do like him.

SANDRA
Oh. Good.

MRS. CLAUS
Why do you ask? Do you like him?

SANDRA
Now that you mention it, he is attractive.

MRS. CLAUS
Aaaah, but do you like him?

SANDRA
Mother, what is it like?

MRS. CLAUS
What dear?

SANDRA
Love. I mean, I know I love you and father. And Trinket and Tweedle. And Vixen and Donner and all the rest, but, to love a man; what is it like?

MRS. CLAUS
It varies.

SANDRA
Can a person fall in love at first sight?

MRS. CLAUS
Poets and scribes seem to think so.

SANDRA
Can a person be attracted to someone else even though they have nothing in common.

MRS. CLAUS
Stranger things have happened.

SANDRA
What if I said I was, say, attracted to Mr. Flebber?

MRS. CLAUS
I'd say my little girl was growing up.

SANDRA

Would it displease you mother?

MRS. CLAUS

Nothing that brings you happiness could displease me, love. Sandy, my dear, your father and I always knew that someday it would come time for you to mature and become a woman. And we weren't sure how to deal with it. Papa and I are certainly old fashioned and we prayed and believed that it would all work out somehow. And from what I can see, it may have done just that.

SANDRA

We're from different worlds, mom. Literally. He's guns and danger. I'm elves and sugarplums. We're polar opposites. Literally. Can a pair like that have anything to share?

MRS. CLAUS

Only time will tell.

Sandra dries the dishes, deep in thought.

EXT. VILLAGE GROUNDS -- EVENING

Nick, Barclay, Trinket, Tweedle and Sandra approach the actual workshop, a large warehouse-style structure with windows. Nick is pointing out things for his plan.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

With a spy watching our movements, we had to buy some time and try to throw him off the scent. The scam was simple enough. Just basic camouflage. They had the artists and woodworkers who could pull it off. Maybe it was a stupid idea but it was just crazy enough to work.

NICK

---Think you can swing that?

BARCLAY

I'll get some elves on it right away.

Barclay goes ahead into the workshop. Tweedle and Trinket follow. Nick takes Sandra off to the side.

NICK

Could I speak to you a second, Miss Claus?

SANDRA
Call me Sandy, Mr. Flebber.

NICK
Please, Nick, Sandy.

SANDRA
All right, Nick.

NICK
I never did apologize for bursting
in on your boudoir there before. No
offense intended.

SANDRA
That's quite all right, Mr. Flebber.

NICK
Nick.

SANDRA
Nick. Mistakes happen.

NICK
Well, let's just call it a merry mix-
up. I don't mind telling you, though,
I liked what I saw.

SANDRA
Thank you. I suppose.

Barclay pokes his head out the door.

BARCLAY
Are you coming in, Mr. Flebber?

NICK
Into Santa's workshop?

Nick looks at Sandra, who is looking at him.

NICK (CONT'D)
What the hell, sure.

Nick walks in. Sandra follows.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP -- EVENING

Nick steps in. He is overwhelmed by everything. Sandra has
to shove him the rest of the way through the door.

It is the most joyous, eye-pleasing, colorful place ever.
The elves are all hard at work, singing their merry elf song
(lyrics available upon request). Truman, carrying a riding
crop, is working with some elves designing doll clothes.
Hopsy paints smiles on doll faces.

Zither tunes toy pianos. Ripley operates a jigsaw which cuts pictures into jigsaw puzzles. Elfis has a toy car up on a lift and is looking under it. All in all, a busy place.

BARCLAY

Excuse me, would you?

(calling off)

Vitelli, Bug, come here. We've got a job to do.

Barclay joins a group of elves.

NICK

This is it. You do it all here.

SANDRA

Most of it. These days we subcontract out to a lot of the toy companies to fill those orders the kids see on T.V. commercials. I'm afraid the elves can't keep pace with everything.

They pass an electronic workbench. Several JAPANESE ELVES are working around a T.V. set with wires sticking out. The screen lights up for a moment with pretty colors. There's a spark and explosion and the set shorts out.

TWEEDLE

Those video things are murder to build.

SANDRA

We order those toys through several different corporations we've set up throughout the world to deal with the big manufacturers and ship it to warehouses the world over, where father can stop and re-load Christmas Eve. But we do the quality stuff here.

NICK

This is really Santa's workshop. Up here at the North Pole. I'm up the North Pole in Santa's workshop.

Nick picks up a yo-yo, strings it up and twirls it down. Only it won't go back up. He keeps jerking on the string trying to get the yo-yo to respond.

TRINKET

(to Tweedle)

Where did you find this guy?

TWEEDLE

Hush. He'll be okay. He's a mortal, remember. And face it, I'm sure he hasn't dealt with much Christmas spirit in his line of work.

TRINKET

Why did you hire him then? He's not a believer.

TWEEDLE

Maybe he needs us as much as we need him. Besides, you were pretty overwhelmed your first time, too, doll.

TRINKET

You remember?

TWEEDLE

Of course I do. You were all giggles.

TRINKET

I guess I was.

TWEEDLE

It was cute.

TRINKET

Oh, you.

She blushes and gives him a punch in the arm.

SANDRA

Nick?

Nick turns quickly, the yo-yo swinging out, crashing into a table of toys, knocking them all over.

Nick goes to pick them up. He stumbles, Sandra reaches out and grabs his hand to steady him. He looks at her hand and then at her and smiles.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Be careful, you'll fall.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

I was afraid I already had. But there was a lot to do and I'm not one to mix work and pleasure. Besides, I really couldn't see making points with her until after I found her old man.

Tweedle calls Truman over.

TWEEDLE
Hey, Truman, come here.

TRUMAN
Yes, yes?

Tweedle hands him the swatch of torn cloth.

TWEEDLE
What can you tell me about this?

TRUMAN
(fingering cloth)
Low grade material. Maybe 50%
polyester, 40% rayon, 3% nylon, 2%
cotton, 1% lint.

NICK
Rayon, huh?

TRUMAN
The content and color are those of a
low-grade style of overalls, I think.
(sniffing)
Definitely work clothes of some kind.
(writes on a pad)
Have the professor cross check with
these manufactures.

TWEEDLE
Great, thanks, Truman. Come on,
Nick.

EXT. WORKSHOP GROUNDS -- EVENING

The grounds are being observed through a pair of binoculars
by the unseen spy.

INT. HALLWAY -- EVENING

Nondescript hall. Tweedle is leading Nick to a door at the
end of the hall.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
With the elves working to fake the
spy out, we still had some real clues
to follow up on.

TWEEDLE
It's right down here.

NICK
Lead on, half-pint.

Tweedle knocks on the door. An accented voice answers.

THISTLE (O.S.)

Comen ze in.

They enter.

INT. LABORATORY -- EVENING

A bizarre and colorful lab. Array of gizmos, doohickeys, flasks and test tubes bubbling and smoking in playful patterns.

One test involves two dolls seated on potty chairs. They have fluid tubes running into their mouths. One doll is labeled "Betsy Wetsy," the second is labeled "Other Leading Brand."

At a desk is PROFESSOR THISTLE, an elf in a lab coat, goatee and glasses. He speaks with a German accent.

TWEEDLE

Nick, this is Professor Thistle, in charge of product development and quality control. This is Nick Flebber.

THISTLE

Ah, yes, gutten tag. Well, Mr. Flebber, I've examined those items you sent me...

Thistle goes to his desk and takes out a folder and removes the ransom letter and envelope.

THISTLE (CONT'D)

Checking the water mark of das paper, I found it is made by the Wasserman Company. An inferior grade, if I may say. I checked with our invoice Department---

NICK

Invoice Department?

TWEEDLE

They list the manufacturers, distributors and retailers of just about everything in der whole wide world.

THISTLE

Ja, Invoice checked it und they learned that das paper is manufactured for and distributed by the O'Kiley Corporation.

He shuffles through some more papers.

NICK

Which is?

THISTLE

O'Kiley's is a group of basic five and dime stores in the Midwestern United States. Also they own a chain of discount department stores, O'Kiley's World O'Bargains. Hmm. I see they are headquartered in Detroit.

NICK

Detroit?

A beaker on a bunson burner begins sudsing up and over. It is next to an electric fan.

TWEEDLE

That's where the letter's from.

THISTLE

Next we have the swatch of clothing.

Nick and Thistle walk over to another counter with some microscope-like device. Tweedle leans up to see the sudsy beaker and accidentally turns on the fan. It blows the suds.

THISTLE (CONT'D)

Truman was correct regarding this.

TWEEDLE

Of course he was.

Nick picks up an empty flask and looks it over. Thistle takes it away from him and puts it back. The bubbles from the beaker are starting to blow around.

Tweedle tries to turn the fan off but the switch comes off in his hands. He follows the cord to the floor where it crisscrosses with dozens of other cords.

Thistle is engrossed in his microscope.

NICK

I'm glad the little guy's right, but can they be traced?

Bubbles start drifting into the scene.

THISTLE

Oh, ja, sehr easy. The invoice department.

Tweedle is sorting through the wires, following one. He follows it right back to the fan.

NICK
Invoice monitors clothing?

THISTLE
Ja. Santa gives children clothing
also.

NICK
Oh, yeah. I used to hate that...

Thistle goes to another file. He passes a display of two
chemistry sets.

NICK (CONT'D)
What's that gizmo?

THISTLE
We test each chemistry set to make
sure they all make a really decent
stink bomb. Das secret is the sulfur.

NICK
I always thought it was.

Thistle pulls out paper. Tweedle, meanwhile, tries to pop
each bubble.

THISTLE
Our records show that these overalls
are mad by the Emperor's Clothing
Company. Hmm. They too are carried
exclusively by the O'Kiley
Corporation.

NICK
Sounds like we have some budget
conscious kidnapppers.

THISTLE
That's about all I can tell you.

Bubbles are drifting all over the place. The self-absorbed
Thistle is just beginning to notice them.

NICK
More than enough. Thanks, Professor.

He grabs Tweedle and they leave. Thistle is staring at
bubbles. He takes out a clipboard and writes.

THISTLE
Test, negative.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
Postmark, Detroit. Letter, Detroit.
(MORE)

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Matchbook, paper, clothing, all
 Detroit. I couldn't help feeling
 there was a pattern developing here.
 It was soon to be confirmed.

EXT. VILLAGE GROUNDS -- EVENING

All is calm. All is bright. A bush moves. A head pops out. CLAUDE, a burly, dingy fur trapper with a beard and fur coat steps out.

On his feet he wears two large disks with inter-locking teeth and a small flap of cloth dragging on the heel. He wears a backpack. He reaches back, pulls a cord and a helium balloon instantly inflates from it. He looks around and heads toward the workshop.

He skims across the surface, barely leaving footprints. He goes to a window and peeks in. What he sees is an empty and dimly lighted workshop. It is, in fact, a painting.

Claude walks down to the next window. Same deserted scene.

Claude nods with a sly grin. Claude sneezes. The painted scene drops away, revealing a bright and busy workshop filled with elves.

NICK (O.S.)
 Gesundheit.

Claude turns to see Nick standing in the shadows.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
 Okay, it was a stupid idea. What do
 you want? It must have been the
 sarsaparilla talking.

Claude makes a break for it. Nick gives chase. He tackles Claude. Claude comes out of his snow disks but shakes Nick off. Bouncing higher and higher, he heads for over the workshop. Nick gets up and follows.

Nick spies an icicle hanging off the building. He breaks it off and flings it at the balloon. It pops. Claude falls, crashing through the workshop skylight. Nick, startled, has to hustle inside.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP -- EVENING

Claude crashes in. The elves shriek and scatter.

TRUMAN
 What's going on here?...

Claude gets up. Nick grabs him by the backpack but Claude slips out from it and flees.

Nick throws down the backpack and gives chase.

Nick tackles Claude and they fly over a counter into a collection of inflatable punching clown-bags. Claude breaks free and throws a punch. Nick ducks and Claude punches a clown. Nick throws a punch and hits another clown.

Claude runs off. Nick gets hit by the clowns as they bounce back. Claude pulls a gun and aims it at Nick. Nick goes to reach for his gun and realizes he doesn't have it. Claude's gun is the same type as Nick's.

Truman whacks Claude on the hand with his riding crop. Claude drops his gun.

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

Uncouth ruffian.

Nick dives to get the gun, but knocks it under a counter.

NICK

Get the piece!

ZITHER

Piece of what?

Claude kicks Nick in the side, turns to run and trips over a bean bag chair. Nick jumps him. They wrestle into the Paint Section.

INT. PAINT SECTION -- CONTINUOUS

They crash into the supplies, knocking over everything. Nick gets his head caught in a can of orange paint. Nick gets up.

NICK

Hey, everything went black. I mean orange.

Claude gets up. Claude throws a punch, punching the can and hurting himself.

INT. WORKBENCH -- CONTINUOUS

A group of elves, including Truman, gather off to one side, by a see-saw. Truman, unknowingly, is standing on the edge of it.

Claude, to avoid another group of elves, leaps onto the workbench. He runs, steps on a toy dump truck and flies off the bench. He lands on the other end of the see-saw, launching Truman into the air and onto a hanging lamp.

INT. COUNTER -- CONTINUOUS

Tweedle gets the gun from under the counter.

INT. PAINT SECTION -- CONTINUOUS

Nick gets the paint can off and the elves point out Claude to him.

INT. WORKBENCH -- CONTINUOUS

Nick dives over the counter and lands on Claude. They struggle.

INT. COUNTER -- CONTINUOUS

Tweedle runs to aid Nick and trips, sending the gun flying into a box of identical-looking toy pistols.

INT. WORKBENCH -- CONTINUOUS

Claude breaks free and runs. Nick grabs a handful of marbles and throws them at Claude's feet. Claude slips on them. Nick leaps on Claude. They wrestle, rolling into the furniture.

INT. FURNITURE SECTION -- CONTINUOUS

They get up swinging. Nick gives Claude an upper-cut, which sends Claude reeling backward into a rocking chair.

The chair rocks back and forth, hurling Claude back into Nick. Nick is ready and punches him back into the chair. This time Claude flips over backwards. Claude is out.

Nick grabs a jump rope and ties Claude up. Tweedle comes running over with a gun.

TWEEDLE

You okay, Nick?

NICK

Just ducky.

TWEEDLE

I got his gun.

NICK

Way to go. You put that in your safe for now. Be careful with it...

Looking the worst for wear, Nick walks the dazed Claude out of the workshop.

NICK (CONT'D)

Come on, Nanook. You got some explaining to do.

All the elves follow them out. The room is empty except for Truman, still hanging from the light.

TRUMAN
 Hey, guys! Get me down! Yoo-hoo,
 fellows!

INT. SANTA'S FOYER -- EVENING

Nick comes in with Claude. Trinket meets him. Tweedle carries the gun. Barclay, Arsenio, Zither and others follow.

TRINKET
 Oh my goodness.

She runs off.

NICK
 Anywhere we can put him?

TWEEDLE
 You can lock him in the root cellar.

ZITHER
 We have a root cellar?

ARSENIO
 Yeah. It's in the basement.

NICK
 Fine.

They head off.

INT. STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

Trinket and Sandra comes downstairs.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Nick closes and locks the sewing room door.

TWEEDLE
 (displays gun)
 I'll lock this away.

Tweedle goes off. Sandra and Trinket enter.

TRINKET
 What happened?

TWEEDLE
 I'll tell you later. You'll love
 it.

TRINKET
 I doubt that.

SANDRA
 Nick, what happened to you?

She examines his face, closely.

NICK
We caught ourselves a trespasser.

HOPSY
He was spying on us and we caught him.

ZITHER
Yes, we did.

SANDRA
You're hurt.

NICK
I've had worse.

SANDRA
I don't doubt that. Fortunately, this time you have someone to take care of you. Come upstairs, we'll fix you up.

NICK
Whatever you say, mother. You guys watch the door.

BARCLAY
It's under control.

Sandra takes Nick upstairs.

INT. GUESTROOM -- EVENING

Sandra walks Nick to bed. He bumps his head on the lamp. She takes off his coat and jacket. He loosens his tie and lies down on the bed.

Sandra pours out water into the washbasin and washes off Nick's face. He has a few cuts and bruises.

SANDRA
Oh, Nick. Does it hurt?

NICK
Only when I wince.

SANDRA
Does this happen to you often?

NICK
Getting into fights at Santa's workshop? Hardly ever.

SANDRA

No. Do you get beaten up like this a lot?

NICK

Occupational hazard.

SANDRA

I guess you meet all kinds in your line of work.

NICK

And then some.

SANDRA

All kinds of men.

NICK

All kinds.

SANDRA

And women.

NICK

I've bumped into one or two along the way.

Sandra unbuttons his shirt to wash him. Elfis bursts in carrying Claude's snow disks. Nick is startled and sits up, ripping through the bed canopy.

ELFIS

Mr. Flebber! Look what I found!

NICK

What?...

He hands Nick the disk. Nick looks at the bottom. He sees a label which reads "Manufactured especially for the O'Kiley Corp."

NICK (CONT'D)

Very good. Thanks.

ELFIS

I'm going down and help guard the prisoner now.

Elfis leaves.

NICK

Elfis has now left the building.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

What? Like nobody's been waiting for me to say that.

Nick tries to look nonchalant caught up in the bed canopy.

SANDRA
I can't expect you to get better
here. Come with me.

Sandra leaves. Nick tears his way out of the canopy. Then he heads out, bumping his head on the lamp.

INT. SANDRA'S ROOM

Sandra is turning down the bed. A bundle of Nick's clothes sit on a chair.

SANDRA
Are you coming out?

NICK
(from closet)
Do I have to?

SANDRA
Come on. No one is going to bite
you.

NICK
I'd take that over having someone
see me.

SANDRA
Be good. You're a big boy.

Nick steps out wearing a frilly robe of Sandra's.

NICK
Then why am I wearing this?

SANDRA
Do you want your clothes cleaned or
not? Besides, you look kind of cute.

NICK
You wouldn't say that if I had my
gun.

SANDRA
Lay down and let me finish you.

NICK
Aah, the times I've heard that line.

Nick lays down on the bed. Sandra applies bandages to Nick's forehead and the bridge of his nose. They gaze at each other.

Trinket comes in.

TRINKET

Yes, ma'am?

They are flustered.

SANDRA

Oh, Trinket. Would you please take Mr. Flebber's clothes to be cleaned?

TRINKET

As you wish.

Trinket takes the clothes and leaves.

NICK

Must be hard to get any privacy with all these smurfs running around.

SANDRA

They're elves. And yes, I suppose. Although I've never had a real reason for privacy.

NICK

That's too bad.

SANDRA

Not really, Nick. It's a good life I have up here.

NICK

I'm sure it's aces.

SANDRA

Truly. Certainly you've seen how happy we all are.

NICK

Certainly.

SANDRA

Then why do I suddenly feel like I've been missing something?

NICK

Beats me.

They kiss.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Yeah, I know, the mush part. But I gotta tell you, it had to be the sweetest tasting, most natural-like kiss I ever had. It made the next part of the investigation even harder...

EXT. AIRFIELD -- EVENING

Nick is dressed in his trenchcoat and hat. He is saying good-by to Sandra as he prepares to board the plane. Trinket is by Sandra's side.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Claude Pierre, our friendly polar spy, couldn't tell us much, except that he was a fur trapper by trade and had been hired to spy on the workshop by a couple of hairy knuckle-types outta Detroit. Seems he was a baby seal clubber who had fallen on hard times and needed the dough.

SANDRA

Are you sure you have to go?

NICK

Positive.

SANDRA

Tomorrow is Christmas Eve.

NICK

Which means in the race against time, the clock is pulling ahead. I better get the lead out.

SANDRA

Wait...

Sandra takes off a necklace and puts it around Nick. A small charm hangs from it.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Take this.

NICK

Sharp. What is it?

SANDRA

I call it my good luck charm. Father says I was wearing it when they found me. I only hope it protects you as well as it did me.

NICK

Thanks, Sandy.

He gives Sandra a peck on the cheek. Sandra gives him a good kiss right on the lips. Nick boards the plane. Sandra waves. He gives her the "thumbs up" sign. He checks the necklace and goes inside.

SANDRA
How about some hot cider, Trinket?

TRINKET
With a cinnamon stick?

SANDRA
Have you ever known me to make hot
cider without it?

TRINKET
That would be nice. Miss Sandra?

SANDRA
Yes, dear?

TRINKET
Is it hopeless? I mean, when I read
the letters Santa gets and I see the
hopes and desires and dreams of every
child, I want to cry. Why would
anyone ever want to take that away
from them? Why?

SANDRA
I know, dear, I know. So many people
are needed to hold a dream and it
only takes one to dash it.

TRINKET
Sure, children write to ask for
presents for themselves. But so
many write for presents for others.
For sisters and brothers. For mothers
and fathers. For world peace. Food
for the poor. They all count on
Santa. They all know as long as
he's around it can be all right.

SANDRA
Not just Santa. As long as any of
us are around, it can be all right.
Never lose hope. And never lose
faith.

TRINKET
You think so?

SANDRA
I'm ever the optimist. I always
look at the stocking and see it half
full. C'mon, let's head back.

They head back to the village, Sandra giving one, final,
wistful glance.

INT. PLANE -- NIGHT

The plane is in flight. Nick is the only passenger. He sits, thinking. He pulls out Santa's pocket watch, reading the 23rd.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Seems all roads lead to Detroit. Claude had been radioing the status of the workshop to the states. It took a little doing, but I got Claude to drop a few names before I dropped him. I had some friends in Detroit who were always good in a pinch. And time was running out. Air Claus was going out on a last mail run to the midwest and could drop me off. I don't know why but the thought of hitting the home turf bothered me.

One of the bathroom door signs read "Occupado." The latch turns and Tweedle pokes his head out. He walks up the aisle to Nick, carrying a gun. He taps Nick on the shoulder, gun lazily pointed at Nick.

TWEEDLE

Nick?

Nick is startled and jumps.

NICK

Don't do that! What the hell are you doing here?

TWEEDLE

You forgot your gun.

Nick checks his holster and realizes it's empty.

NICK

Oh crap. Nice catch, Tweed...

Tweedle gives the gun to Nick, who checks it and holsters it.

NICK (CONT'D)

But you could have given it to me back there.

TWEEDLE

I know. But then I'd still be back there. Here, I'm up here.

NICK

What about Claude the Clubber? Who's going to take him to the cops?

TWEEDLE

Ripley and Elfis can handle that.
They always deal with the Mounties
up there.

NICK

I should send you right back.

TWEEDLE

You could.

NICK

This is a tough business, Tweed.
I'd have a tough time explaining a
goblin dogging my heels.

TWEEDLE

I'm an elf.

NICK

That really wouldn't make a whole
lot of difference to the people I
have to deal with.

TWEEDLE

I can handle myself. I've taken elf-
defense classes.

NICK

Aww, what the hell. I can use the
company. But we got a lot of leg
work ahead of us. All I got is a
couple of nicknames to go on. I
could sure use Helen's help on this.

TWEEDLE

Helen who?

NICK

Oh, she's an old...friend of mine.
Helen Lansing. Shame I lost contact
with her. She had connections all
over town. She'd probably know these
two clowns.

Tweedle climbs into the next seat and pulls out a laptop
computer. Nick observes.

NICK (CONT'D)

What's that?

TWEEDLE

It's Santa's lap-top computer. I'm
going to call up Helen Lansing's
name from the list.

NICK

What list?

TWEEDLE

The list of all the boys and girls who are naughty and nice.

NICK

What? The one he checks twice?

TWEEDLE

The very same.

NICK

It's all done by computer?

TWEEDLE

Wake up, man. This is the twenty-first century. Santa's workshop is hi-tech and happenin'!

Tweedle fingers keyboard.

NICK

Hmm, you might want to check under "Naughty" first.

Tweedle nods and continues

NICK (CONT'D)

And you have everybody's address?

TWEEDLE

Of course. How do you think we know where to deliver all the toy?

(looks at display)

It's accessing now. I hope this works.

NICK

Me, too.

TWEEDLE

If we can't find him, I don't know what Trinket and I will do.

NICK

What's the problem?

TWEEDLE

Elfin tradition says elves must get Santa's permission to marry. But what's the point? How can we start a life together when our way of life is falling apart around us? I want to do right by her, Nick. I love her so.

NICK
Don't sweat it, pal. We'll find
him.

TWEEDLE
You think so?

NICK
That's what you're paying me for,
ain't it? And I don't figure to
give refunds.

TWEEDLE
Oh, Nick, I hope you're right.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
I hoped I was right, too.

Computer beeps. They look at the screen. It lists one Helen
Lansing and her address, 222 Floogle Street, Detroit.

INT. POOL HALL/BAR -- NIGHT

A sleazy dive in a questionable section of town, filled with
equally questionable BARFLIES and GUYS.

HELEN, a prostitute (but the kind with a heart of gold) is
drinking beer and playing pool. She smokes a cigarette.
Lame and ratty looking Christmas decorations are up. A small
artificial tree is decorated with empty beer cans and a chain
made out of flip-tops. Television at the bar is on, a
football game in progress. Tough-looking BARTENDER is on
duty. Nick and Tweedle enter. Tweedle is in parka and
earmuff gear. They go to the bar. A commercial comes on
the T.V.

T.V.
Christmas is coming, will Santa?
No, you can't always depend on jolly
old Saint Nicholas, but you can depend
on O'Kiley's World O'Bargains, your
Official Christmas store---

Bartender turns down the sound, Nick orders a beer. He
takes a sip and winces a bit. He checks the label and shrugs.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
Helen of Detroit. A bad girl with a
good heart. Concubine to the great
and near great. She knew all the
right wrong people. They say she
had connections going right to the
Vatican. I believed. She wasn't
home, but we tracked her to one of
her favorite watering holes.

He takes a mouthful of beer, walks up behind Helen and gives her a whack on the rump. She spins and hits Nick in the gut with the pool cue. He sprays the beer out and crumbles to the floor, dropping his beer. Tweedle ducks under the table.

TWEEDLE

Nick, you okay?

NICK

(gasping)

Sure, Tweed.

(indicating Helen)

This is the old friend I was telling you about.

HELEN

Oh my God. Nicky.

NICK

Hey, dollface. What's shaking?

HELEN

The usual parts. Where you been? Who's this, your son?

NICK

Business associate. Tweedle, get me another beer, please.

TWEEDLE

You sure you want to be left alone with her?

NICK

It's okay.

Tweedle goes to the bar. Helen helps Nick up.

HELEN

Geez, Nick, long time, no see.

NICK

That explains the warm reception.

HELEN

Sorry, Nicky. A girl can't be too careful these days. You know, they found two more girls cut up last week.

NICK

So why don't you get out, kid?

HELEN

What and give up all this?

Tweedle climbs onto a barstool. Bartender turns the T.V. back up. We see:

INT. O'KILEY'S OFFICE - DAY

The fancy-schmancy office of SEBASTIAN O'KILEY JR., retail mogul. Humorless, expensive-suit-and-power-tie-type of yuppie executive. He's at desk, addressing everyone in TV land. On the wall behind him is a portrait of his father, the company founder, Sebastian O'Kiley, Sr., an older, jolly looking type of immigrant stock.

ANNOUNCER(O.S.)

And now a word from the president of O'Kiley's World O'Bargins, Sebastian O'Kiley, Jr.

O'KILEY

You know, my father came to this country and began this company with only a few hand-made toys. Today, we sell millions of toys, nationwide. It was more than a business for him. He really loved the look on the children's faces as they came into his store. I have to protect his legacy, his memory. That's why we are proud to offer this Christmas, our latest toy, the O'Kiley Kiddie Kopter. You won't be able to get this out of Santa. It's sold exclusively at O'Kiley's World O'Bargains Toy Departments nationwide. Thank you and Merry Christmas.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

So remember, Christmas isn't Christmas unless you spend lots of money.

O'Kiley commercial jingle plays. Football game returns.

TWEEDLE

Could I get a beer, please?

BARTENDER

You got proof, sonny?

TWEEDLE

Proof?

BARTENDER

Yeah, proof. I don't need no trouble with the cops for serving minors.

TWEEDLE

Oh, well, see, I don't work in the mines, sir. That would be Snow White's people. I'm a toymaker.

BARTENDER

You got I.D. or don't you?

TWEEDLE

Identification! Oh, sure!

Tweedle pulls out a wallet and hands the Bartender his Elf's Union Card.

BARTENDER

A hundred and forty-two? You're a hundred and forty-two?

TWEEDLE

Is that enough?

BARTENDER

Here, take your friggin' beer.

TWEEDLE

No, make it a lite.

Nick has now taken up a pool cue and is hitting a few balls.

HELEN

So, what brings you to the Motor City, Nicky?

NICK

I'm on a case.

HELEN

Good to see you working again. I figured you packed it in after that Ekland fiasco.

NICK

Hey, all I was paid to do was to tail that guy who stole the stocks and bonds. Once he sank into that tarpit, it was outta my hands.

HELEN

Whatever you say, honey.

Tweedle returns with the beer.

TWEEDLE

Here, Nick.

NICK

Thanks.

HELEN
So, Nicky, what can I do you for?

NICK
I'm working on a kidnapping.

HELEN
Anyone I know?

TWEEDLE
Oh, sure. You've heard of him---

NICK
Zip it, Tweed. Here, make like
Minnesota Shorts.

Nick hands the cue to Tweedle. Tweedle drags a stool over to the stable and sinks a shot.

NICK (CONT'D)
The mark's a philanthropist who lives
up north.

HELEN
That where you got hurt?

NICK
You know how it goes. Anyway, the
names Jake the Rake or Tommy the
Hook ring any bells?

He takes a sip of beer and grimaces. Tweedle continues sinking the rack.

HELEN
Tommy the Hook? No. Jake the Rake.
Yeah. Small time thug. Parolee,
last time I heard. Yeah, he was
working over at the discount store,
what'sit? World of Crud?

NICK
World O'Bargains?

HELEN
Yeah, that's it. He unloads the
trucks or something.

NICK
Respectable job.

HELEN
Not like us.

She blows smoke in his face. He gags.

NICK
 (wheezing)
 Right.

He takes a swig of beer, dribbling it down his chin. Helen pulls out a hanky and wipes his mouth. Tweedle's cleared the table at this point.

HELEN
 Don't waste it, babe. There are children sober in China.

TWEEDLE
 Rack 'em!

They look at him. Helen racks up the balls. Tweedle resumes his game.

HELEN
 So, Nicky, how'd you like to get a little nostalgic later? Re-enact old times?

NICK
 If only I could, doll. But I gotta get a line on this Jake character. This is major league stuff and I don't have much time. Christmas is coming. And my rental's double parked.

HELEN
 Too bad. I would've enjoyed a Christmas goose.

NICK
 Thanks for the offer, babe. Can I tip you for the lead?

HELEN
 Nicky, you insult me. I never charged you. For anything. Call it a Christmas present, from an old friend.

NICK
 Thanks, kid. I owe you. Come on, Tweedle.

TWEEDLE
 Already?

He gets down and hands Helen the cue.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)
 Thank you, miss.

HELEN
Don't mention it, stretch. Hey,
Nick, Merry Christmas.

NICK
Thanks, sugar. You too.

They leave. Helen looks on, puzzled. She returns to her game. Helen bends over the table to make a shot. DRUNK comes up behind and gooses her while making kissing noises. Helen swings around and clubs the Drunk.

HELEN
Where do you see any mistletoe,
sleazeburger?

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

Nick drives along. They come up to a shopping mall.

INT. MALL -- DAY

A mall which features a World O'Bargains store and Benny's Bar and Grill. Nick and Tweedle leave the bar and head for O'Kiley's. TWO THUGS pass them and enter Benny's.

INT. BENNY'S BAR -- CONTINUOUS

Thugs sit at the bar. BENNY the bartender serves them beers.

THUG #1
Still no word from Claude.

THUG #2
I told the boss that but he said it
don't matter. Everything's set.

BENNY
You guys just missed that.

THUG #1
What?

BENNY
Some guy with a midget comes in here
looking for Jake and Tommy.

THUG #1
When.

THUG #2
Those two guys!

The Thugs run out.

INT. MALL -- DAY

Mall is jammed with SHOPPERS. Tacky decorations spot the mall. Tweedle is shocked, amazed and astounded even by the Christmas goings-on.

Tweedle suddenly sees the mall's center court, which has a Santa's workshop set up with an overworked BOGUS SANTA listening to a line of KIDS. Thrilled, Tweedle runs straight for it, trying to cut the line. A hassled BOGUS ELF stops him.

BOGUS ELF

Yo, kid, where you goin'? Gotta wait in line like the odder kids.

Tweedle takes off ear muffs.

TWEEDLE

I'm one of you!

BOGUS ELF

Oh, geez, 'bout time. I wanna go to lunch.

Tweedle enters, working his way up to Bogus Santa's lap.

TWEEDLE

Boy, am I glad to see you! You really had us worried! We've been looking everywhere for you! Are you okay?

BOGUS SANTA

Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks.

TWEEDLE

We have to talk. I have to ask you something, Santa.

BOGUS SANTA

Sure, kid. Whatcha want?

TWEEDLE

Well, sir, it's Trinket and me. As you may have noticed, we have been forming a relationship. A deep and meaningful one. We love and respect each other and feel it is time to formalize our commitment. We would like your permission to marry.

BOGUS SANTA

How about a nice train set? You want a train set?

TWEEDLE
 Santa, this is important. We need
 your blessing, you know that.

BOGUS SANTA
 Fine, you got it. Next.

Tweedle gets down.

TWEEDLE
 My, that was easy. You stay here.
 I'll get Nick.

He heads out, passing Bogus Elf.

BOGUS ELF
 Hey, where ya goin'?

TWEEDLE
 I have to get Nick. Wait, what's
 your name?

BOGUS ELF
 Sid.

TWEEDLE
 I don't remember you at any of the
 union meetings.

BOGUS ELF
 I ain't in no union.

TWEEDLE
 Not in the union? What kind of elf-
 respecting self are you?
 (pulls out card)
 Here's my card. Give me a call,
 we'll do fruitcake. Later!...

Tweedle meets up with Nick.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)
 (pointing)
 I found Santa.

NICK
 (looking)
 That's not Santa.

TWEEDLE
 It isn't Santa? Who is it then?

NICK
 He's one of Santa's helpers.

TWEEDLE
 I'm one of Santa's helpers!

NICK
He's here---he's hired by the mall,
Tweedle.

TWEEDLE
A Santa for hire? Then all this
is...commercialization?

NICK
Right.

TWEEDLE
You know, Santa told us about the
dark side of Christmas but I never
would have guessed.

NICK
No time to reflect on this, we have
to press on.

They head for World O'Bargains.

INT. WORLD O'BARGAINS STORE -- DAY

Nick and Tweedle walk in. They pass the courtesy desk with
sign, "O'Kiley's World O'Bargains; Satisfaction Almost."
Tweedle gets jostled by the crowd and they get separated.

Nick finds Tweedle being yanked around by some UPSCALE BRAT.

UPSCALE BRAT
I want this, mommy! I want one of
these!

TWEEDLE
Hey, you, let go!

UPSCALE BRAT
And look, it's interactive!

TWEEDLE
Nick!

Nick comes over and grabs Tweedle.

UPSCALE BRAT
Hey, let go, I saw it first!

NICK
Get lost kid, before I deck the halls
with you...

Brat runs off calling for his mother. Nick grabs Tweedle
and puts him in a shopping cart.

NICK (CONT'D)

You certainly have a knack for getting into situations.

TWEEDLE

Mush.

They wind their way to the back of the store. The P.A. crackles to life.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Attention, Bargain hunters: we have a flashing light special in aisle nine. Delicate glass Christmas ornaments only one dollar each. So rush on over to aisle nine...no, not that fast. Back, get back---

(crash is heard)

Janitor with broom to aisle nine, please.

Nick and Tweedle continue on. On display is a model of the O'Kiley Kiddie Kopter. It doesn't look very safe, but the KIDS flock to it. Nick and Tweedle reach the doors to the stockroom.

NICK

Keep your eyes peeled.

Nick goes into the stockroom. Tweedle stands lookout, hand shading eyes.

INT. STOCKROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Dimly lighted stockroom, stacked high with boxes and crates. Nick walks lightly. A voice comes out from behind some boxes.

HERBIE (O.S.)

You're not allowed back here.

NICK

I'm looking for something.

HERBIE (O.S.)

If you don't see what you're looking for on the sales floor, don't ask, we don't have it.

Nick sees a pair of eyes behind some boxes.

NICK

No, no, some information. Is Jake here?

HERBIE (O.S.)

No, he's on vacation.

NICK
 Vacation just before Christmas?
 Isn't that a little unusual, Mister,
 uh,---

HERBIE (O.S.)
 Herbie. I'm Herbie in the stockroom.

NICK
 Pleased to meet ya, Herb.

HERBIE (O.S.)
 It's Herbie.

NICK
 Whatever you say, Herbie.

HERBIE (O.S.)
 Who are you?

NICK
 Name's Nick Flebber. I'm a friend
 of Jake's.

HERBIE (O.S.)
 Then how come you didn't know he was
 on vacation.

NICK
 We're not good friends.

Tweedle comes in, carrying a pair of snow disks, like those
 worn by Claude the spy.

TWEEDLE
 Nick, Nick, look at these!

NICK
 Well, well.

TWEEDLE
 They were on unadvertised special.

HERBIE (O.S.)
 Who's the short dude?

NICK
 Another friend of Jake's.

HERBIE (O.S.)
 He's a friend of Jake's?

NICK
 Not a big friend.

HERBIE (O.S.)
 I can see that.

NICK
Why don't you come out so I can see
you?

HERBIE (O.S.)
No.

NICK
Fine. Where did Jake go?

HERBIE (O.S.)
North.

NICK
North?

HERBIE (O.S.)
Yup. O'Kiley took Jake and Tom,
packed them up and took them out.

TWEEDLE
Who's O'Kiley?

HERBIE (O.S.)
Sebastian O'Kiley. The guy who owns
all these stores.

NICK
And he took them north? You sure
about that?

HERBIE (O.S.)
Positive.

NICK
How do you know so much?

HERBIE (O.S.)
I'm nosy.

NICK
I guess that's it. By the way, what
are you doing back here?

HERBIE (O.S.)
I'm hiding. It's a zoo out there
this time of year.

NICK
Well, thanks for the info.

TWEEDLE
Merry Christmas.

HERBIE (O.S.)
Spare me.

The Thugs enter from a far entrance, just in time to see Nick and Tweedle leave. Worried, they follow.

INT. WORLD O'BARGAIN STORE -- DAY

Nick has Tweedle back in the cart. He's working his way through the store, and happens to catch sight of the two Thugs.

NICK
I don't remember leaving a trail of
bread crumbs.

TWEEDLE
What?

NICK
Someone's tailing us.

Nick, pushing Tweedle in cart, starts off. The Thugs stay after them. Nick picks up the pace, zigzagging through the aisles. The Thugs close in. They are reaching for guns.

TWEEDLE
Nick, do something.

Nick spots one of the store's phones. He checks to see he's in aisle ten. He reaches the phone and quickly punches up the intercom number from the list posted next to the phone.

NICK
Bargain hunters! Flashing light
special aisle ten!

Suddenly, a throng of SHOPPERS appear, sweeping the Thugs away. Nick and Tweedle rush out of the store and into the mall.

INT. MALL -- CONTINUOUS

Nick and Tweedle hustle off.

TWEEDLE
If you see a corn dog stand, pull
over.

NICK
Shut up.

EXT. ROAD -- EVENING

Nick and Tweedle drive out of town.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
This was incredible.
(MORE)

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A trail leading from a destitute clobberer of seals to the president of the country's largest retailer of second rate goods. Global economy indeed. And that little chase in the store made it all very possible in my mind. My heart was pounding. The blood was racing through my veins. My senses were sharpening. Sensations I hadn't experienced in years were returning. I was coming back to life. And in Detroit. Amazing.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Nick looks in the rear view mirror. A pair of head lights are following. Suddenly the lights go out.

NICK

I guess our mall pals are back on track.

TWEEDLE

What?

Nick nods to behind them. Tweedle sees the car.

EXT. ROAD -- EVENING

The car catches up to Nick and Tweedle. The Thugs can be seen. They pull up and ram Nick's car.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

NICK

Looks like tailing us ain't enough for them.

Nick guns the engine and they pull ahead.

TWEEDLE

Suffering Sugarplums! A gratuitous car chase!

INT. THUG'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Thug pulls out a gun and fires.

EXT. ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

Nick begins zigzagging. The Thugs continue firing.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Nick increases speed then hits the cruise control. He pulls his gun out. Tweedle is shouting at the Thugs' car.

TWEEDLE
Hey, you! It's a rental!

NICK
Tweedle, come here. Steer.

TWEEDLE
I can't drive.

NICK
Think of it as a crash course. Now
come here and hold it steady.

TWEEDLE
You're going to shoot? But Nick---

NICK
I have to take care of these clowns
before they turn us into highway
sculpture...

Tweedle takes the wheel as Nick climbs into the back. He rolls down the window and leans out to fire. Suddenly, Tweedle swerves. The back door swings open and Nick hangs from it.

NICK (CONT'D)
Tweedle.

EXT. ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

The chase continues as Nick hangs onto the car door.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

TWEEDLE
Oh, Nick, how do you stop?

Tweedle starts hitting switches: the radio, lights, wiper, heat. Car voice begins nagging.

CAR VOICE (O.S.)
A door is ajar. A door is ajar.

Finally, he pulls the trunk release.

EXT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

The trunk pops open. The spare is loose and bouncing around.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Nick struggles to get back in the car but drops the gun.

NICK
Damn!

EXT. ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

Tweedle swerves, going off onto the shoulder of the road, then into the guard rail.

EXT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

The spare tire bounces out.

EXT. ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

The tire bounces out, hits the front of the Thugs' car, bounces up into the windshield, shattering it. The Thugs can't see and they go off the road, down a gully and crash. Nick pulls himself into the back seat.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Tweedle is now into driving, making motor noises at the wheel.

NICK
Nice going, Andretti.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Car continues down the road.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
Well, if I had any doubts, that little incident sure put them to rest. Better the doubts than me. It's a rule of thumb in my business that if people start trying to kill you, they must have a good reason. We were closing in on something and somebody didn't like it. And I thought the vacationing Sebastian O'Kiley might provide some answers.

EXT. O'KILEY CORPORATION HEADQUARTERS -- NIGHT

Large spacious grounds. Modern-looking office building. The car drives up and goes around back, a darkened parking lot. Nick is in the passenger seat. Tweedle's hands reach up to the wheel as he drives.

NICK
Now to the left. Okay, park it.

They park. Nick jumps out.

TWEEDLE
Are we there yet?

NICK
Yeah. Now keep quiet and follow me.

INT. EXECUTIVE LOBBY -- NIGHT

Large, plush reception area, dark and empty. Elevator rings and opens. It is empty.

Nick drops down from the escape hatch. Tweedle drops down and lands on Nick. They both go down and shush each other. The elevator doors start to close. Nick stops it with his hand just in time.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

One of the things you learn in this business is that the quickest and easiest way to get information is without the person's knowledge. Sure that whole Watergate thing gave breaking and entering a bad name but we try to live with it.

Nick takes out a flashlight and they go to the office doors. He picks the lock. They enter.

INT. O'KILEY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Spacious office with large desk in center. Bar in back, couch, etc. Portrait of both O'Kileys hang behind the desk. Nick sees the bar as he goes to the desk and decides to fix himself a drink. He sips it but doesn't enjoy it.

NICK

I guess that eggnog is killing off my taste buds...

Behind the bar is a traditional painting of Santa Claus on the wall. It has darts sticking in it.

NICK (CONT'D)

Real party guy.

TWEEDLE

And he has very poor aim.

NICK

Curse of the rich. Go watch the door.

Tweedle wanders over to the door and steps behind it. Nick goes to the desk. Nick picks the drawer lock.

INT. EXECUTIVE LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

The elevator rings. A SECURITY GUARD gets off.

INT. O'KILEY'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Santa's pocket watch begins chiming. Nick tries to stop it. He drops to the floor.

INT. EXECUTIVE LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

The Guard shines his light into the office.

INT. O'KILEY'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Nick ducks. The Guard enters the room. Tweedle steps out from behind the door and follows the Guard as he circles the room. Nick crawls around the desk, staying opposite the Guard.

The Guard walks behind the bar, Tweedle stopping in front. The Guard takes a drink. He heads for the door, Tweedle falling back into step with him.

The Guard reaches the door, Tweedle returning behind it. Guard takes one last look around and leaves, shutting the door. Nick pops up and listens. The elevator leaves.

NICK
Real cute, Tinkerbell.

TWEEDLE
Sorry. It's the elf in me.

Nick goes back to work on the drawer. It opens. He goes through the files. In a side drawer he finds a file labeled "The Kringle Project." Intrigued, he opens it.

He comes up with several pages of data, store charts showing dropping sales and profits, computer printouts. Then he comes to a map of the Arctic region of Alaska. On it is a red cross labeled "Glacier Alley." Then Nick finds a copy of the original ransom letter.

NICK
Bingo.

TWEEDLE
Find something?

NICK
I hit the jackpot. Now we have to get back to the North Pole, PDQ.

Tweedle goes to the phone and dials.

TWEEDLE
No problem. We have a toll free number for just such an emergency.

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

Jet in flight.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)
 And before you could say
 "Rumplestillskin---"

INT. DINING ROOM -- EVENING

Back at the Pole, Nick, Sandra, Tweedle, Barclay, Trinket, Zither, Hopsy, Ripley, Elfis, Arsenio and Truman are gathered around the table with maps laid out. The room is dark, save for a low hanging lamp right over the table. The elves are chattering away.

NICK
 All right you munchkins, listen up.

ELVES
 We're elves!

NICK
 Big deal. Everything we've done has brought us to this point.
 (points to map)
 Glacier Alley. I'm certain this is where they are keeping Mr. C...

Chimes are heard. Nick looks at Santa's watch. It reads quarter to Christmas.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Time is not on our side, gang. We're down to the wire and the kidnapers haven't given us any chance to have Claus released.

TRUMAN
 Get on with it, man. What's the point?

NICK
 It's coming.

TRUMAN
 So's Christmas.

The elves giggle.

NICK
 We're going to unkidnap him.

BARCLAY
 Unkidnap Santa?

ZITHER
 You mean dekidnap him.

RIPLEY
 Wouldn't it be diskidnap him?

NICK
 Whatever. Tweedle's gotten some
 background on the area. Tweed?

Tweedle produces a pointer.

TWEEDLE
 Checking with Bopper over at the
 Surveyor's Office, I can tell you
 Glacier Alley is an abandoned oil
 field. About five years ago they
 set up to drill. All they hit was
 an underground lake with lots of gas
 pockets.

ARSENIO
 They struck seltzer?

Elves giggle.

NICK
 Serious up.

ELVES
 Yes, sir.

TWEEDLE
 Thanks, Nick.

NICK
 No sweat.

TWEEDLE
 Anyway, the oil companies left. Now
 there's nothing for miles and miles.
 The closest thing is an United States
 military base to the west. Glacier
 Alley is a fenced-in area with only
 a few barrack-like shacks standing.
 And a hangar. And the main house,
 there.

ELFIS
 And you're sure he's there?

NICK
 These guys wouldn't want to travel
 far with Claus and they want to keep
 him isolated. This place was made
 to order. And here's the order; a
 bill of sale for the Glacier Alley
 site purchased for the O'Kiley
 Corporation.

SANDRA
 Nick, if he's not back tonight, it's
 over.

NICK

I know, kid. That's why we have to work toot-sweet.

(to elves)

We're going in after your meal ticket and I need volunteers. I'm looking for a few good elves.

Elves glance at one another.

TWEEDLE

I'm with you, Nick.

NICK

I wouldn't have it any other way.

TRINKET

Tweedle!

TWEEDLE

Nick needs me.

TRINKET

Tweedle, I need you, too.

TWEEDLE

Oh, Trinket. Duty calls.

Trinket looks to Sandra. Sandra can only share her concern with a wistful smile and a shoulder-placed hand.

TRINKET

Just be careful. Or else.

NICK

Well?

TWEEDLE

How about it you guys? Huh? This is Santa Claus we're talking about here! Are you elves or mice?

TRUMAN

I adore all this macho talk. I'm in.

ZITHER

Will there be refreshments served?

RIPLEY

Hush. I'm in.

ELFIS

It's now or never.

BARCLAY

You've got me, Mr. Flebber.

Others voice their support.

NICK
I knew I could count on you guys.

EXT. VILLAGE GROUNDS -- EVENING

The elves are bundled up and preparing three dog sleds. Nick, dressed in a parka, stands and watches.

He takes out a cigarette, goes to light it. He thinks better of it and doesn't. He breaks it in half and tosses it aside. Thinking again, he picks it up and tosses it in a waste pail. Tweedle runs over to Nick with a gun.

TWEEDLE
Here's the other gun, Nick. Straight from our safe to you.

NICK
Thanks.

Tweedle joins the others. He's about to check the gun when Sandra, dressed to travel, walks up to Nick. As they talk, he absentmindedly holsters the gun without ever checking it.

SANDRA
When do we leave?

NICK
Just about ready now. What do you mean, "we?"

SANDRA
I'm going.

NICK
No, you're not.

SANDRA
I'm his daughter. I have to go.

NICK
Something could happen. I can't endanger two Clauses. Two Clausi? Two Clauseeses?

SANDRA
Without father, there's no reason to go on.

NICK
What about Mrs. C?

SANDRA

Mr. Flebber, I have every intention of coming back. Mother know that. So let's not dwell on it. Besides, I know this tundra better than anyone. I can help.

NICK

I got the leprechauns to help.

SANDRA

The elves are quite resourceful. However, sometimes it helps to have one of your own kind along. If only to get stuff off the top shelf.

Nick sees she won't be swayed.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

What could I do? Who knows, she might come in handy.

The sleds are set to go. Nick and Tweedle in the lead sled, Tweedle driving. Sandra drives the second, with some elves riding, Barclay, the third with the remaining elves. Sandra gives last minute instructions to Trinket, who jots them down on a clipboard.

SANDRA

---wire all warehouses. I want them on stand-by. Clear the stables. Food and water ready. Load the bins and be ready for a swift departure. And find that phone number for Federal Express.

They head out.

TRINKET

Right away, Miss Sandra. Good luck. Be careful, it's a tundra out there!

EXT. TUNDRA -- NIGHT

The three dog sleds race across the frozen tundra. Nick gives Tweedle the "thumbs up" sign. Tweedle gives him a double thumbs up in return and almost falls off the back of the sled. Nick grabs him by his scarf.

EXT. GLACIER ALLEY -- NIGHT

The sleds are parked behind a snow bank. Everyone is peering over the top of the bank. Nick looks through his binoculars. He can see the large fenced-in area. Several buildings dot the compound. There is a large main house in the center and an airplane hangar.

BARCLAY

Do you see anything, Mr. Flebber?

Nick sees lights on in two buildings. One lone figure, JAKE, a thug, exits the main building and runs to another building. No other movement is observed.

NICK

A lot of activity for an abandoned soda fountain. We're going in.

TRUMAN

(excitedly)

Couldn't you just spit?

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS -- NIGHT

They come up to the fence. Hopsy and Zither pull out large wire cutters and cut through it. Quickly, they have a hole and are sneaking up to the barracks.

NICK

Okay now, we should split up and check each building. Be careful and stay low.

TRUMAN

We are low.

Elves giggle.

NICK

Shush. Sandra...

The elves scatter. Nick takes Sandra's arm.

NICK (CONT'D)

You be careful. Please.

SANDRA

You too.

NICK

I got reason to now.

They kiss quickly and split up. Tweedle comes from around a corner and follows Nick. Nick goes to the main building and peeks into a window. It is an empty hall way. Nick goes around to a door. He tries it and it opens. Nick slips in.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

It is a dark and desolate hallway. Nick goes down, checking rooms. There is a room at the end of the hall with the light on. Nick heads for it. Tweedle slips in and follows. Nick reaches the door and listens. Tweedle meets up with him. Nick signals him to be quiet.

O'KILEY (O.S.)
 No, you heard me. All stores open late. We begin our final media blitz in just an hour. And the rumor mills are already in action. This should convince everyone that there'll be no Santa this year. When we open...

INT. O'KILEY'S LAIR -- NIGHT

Large plush office. Large desk with phones. O'Kiley is on a red phone. A large line graph hangs on the wall, showing a declining profit margin. A model of the Kiddie Kopter is on the desk.

O'KILEY
 That's right, open tomorrow. Bright and early. I know it's Christmas. What do you think we're doing up here? Just do as I say.

He hangs up. Opening the door into the room, Nick enters, gun drawn. Tweedle follows.

NICK
 Yes, Virginia, there is a Grinch that stole Christmas.

O'Kiley jumps up flustered.

O'KILEY
 Who are you?

NICK
 Nick Flebber. I'm one of Santa's helpers.

O'KILEY
 What are you doing here?

NICK
 I'm here to help Santa.

O'KILEY
 What do you mean?

NICK
 Cut the crap, O'Kiley. The jig's up. I know the whole scam.

O'KILEY
 How could you?

NICK
 I did my homework, guy.
 (MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

Hire a couple of thugs to snatch the Fat Man and his wheels. Stash him here for the holidays. Make sure the workshop closes down. Then an ad blitz to coyly announce the Santa won't be coming to town. And you corner the Christmas market. Cute.

TWEEDLE

Suffering sugarplums!

O'KILEY

Very astute, Mr. Flebber.

NICK

Well, I'm here to take him home. So I guess that makes you a rebel without a Claus.

O'KILEY

I'm a rich man, Flebber. How much are you being paid? I'll double it.

NICK

I can't be bought, O'Kiley.
(second thought)
I get expenses, too.

TWEEDLE

Nick!

NICK

Just asking.
(to O'Kiley)
Maybe there was a time but things have changed as of late.

O'KILEY

This is very important to me, Mr. Flebber. I cannot be allowed to fail. The economic health of my retail empire is in the balance because of that over-jolly threat to the capitalistic system. He'll ruin me and he must be stopped!

NICK

I think you've been in the Arctic too long, O'Kiley. You're becoming un-igloed. I don't know if you're aware of this up here at your North Pole vault, but your stores are jammed, mister. Why pick on Santa?

O'KILEY

Yes, yes. Packed now. Fine. Up until the day after Christmas. Then they stampede back in for refunds because Santa brought them everything they wanted. Times are hard and sales are soft. The bottom line, Mr. Flebber, is the bottom line.

NICK

All's fair in love and retail.

TWEEDLE

What was all that about your dad and seeing the smiling faces of the children?

O'KILEY

Dad was a senile old twit. That's why I fired him as soon as I bought him out. It's my company now. You can't stop me. You're too late. Christmas is only hours away. Soon little children will be waking up to barren tree bottoms and empty stocking. Their parents will make feeble excuses about Santa being late. They'll say he's socked in over Oswego. He forgot his EZ pass. They'll jump into their cars in desperation and guess what?

TWEEDLE

What?

O'KILEY

O'Kiley World O'Bargains stores the nation over will be there to service their last minute needs. And for that, they will be eternally grateful. It's brilliant! It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas after all!

NICK

Gee, O'Kiley, your tree's up, but the light's aren't on. Don't you know what Christmas really means?

O'KILEY

Certainly. It's the highlight of our fourth quarter.

(he picks up model)

And this year we're exclusively offering the O'Kiley Kiddie Kopter. Little kids the world over will want these.

(MORE)

O'KILEY (CONT'D)

And they'll be able to fly all over their neighborhood! Fly, Mr. Flebber, fly!

NICK

Excuse me, but isn't that, like, dangerous?

O'KILEY

Life is fraught with dangers, what's one more? I've been up here all year building these things, they will be sold.

TWEEDLE

Why up here?

O'KILEY

Industrial spies. They stole my idea for the twirl-a-rod. They stole my idea for the tummy-slider. They won't get this way up here! Has there ever been such a Christmas?

TWEEDLE

He's babbling, Nick.

NICK

What are you, the anti-Claus? You certainly missed the boat on this one, Sebastian. If that's all you think Christmas is, you're sorely mistaken. There's a whole spirit. A Christmas spirit.

O'KILEY

Oh, stop. If I can't sell it discount, it doesn't exist.

NICK

Wake up and smell the egg-nog, O'Kiley. Sure, Christmas is a time to trade off gifts. But it's more. It's finding something, something like love, for instance, that makes it all worthwhile. Gives you the moxie to go on for another year. It's an excuse for displaying a little affection once a year. It's a shared moment with people all over the world and for that one day at least maybe they'll realize what the whole ball of wax is about.

TWEEDLE

Not to mention the vast religious
significance.

O'KILEY

Humbug.

TWEEDLE

Humbug?

NICK

I'm not here to sing a carol about
the merits of the damn holiday,
O'Kiley, I'm just here to free the
Jolly One and be on my merry way.

O'KILEY

I can't let you do that.

NICK

I figured that. That's why I brought
the gun.

O'KILEY

I'll sound the alarm and my men will
be on you like shoppers on a dollar
day special.

NICK

I wouldn't...

O'Kiley sneers and reaches for a button on his desk.

NICK (CONT'D)

Don't do it, O'Kiley...

O'Kiley continues to reach.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'll use this.
(stiffens to fire)
O'Kiley!

TWEEDLE

Nick, no!

Nick pulls the trigger. A little flag pops out of the gun
barrel, it unfurls and says "BANG."

NICK

Tweedle??

TWEEDLE

Suffering Sugarplums! The guns got
all mixed up!

O'Kiley pushes the button. An alarm rings. Nick grabs the wire and yanks it out of the wall.

O'KILEY
It's too late, Flebber.

Nick punches O'Kiley. O'Kiley lands in his chair and rolls into the wall. The line graph falls and crashes on O'Kiley. His face sticks out through a column labeled "liabilities."

Suddenly, Jake bursts in, armed with a shotgun. He dashes toward Nick. He doesn't see Tweedle and trips over him and skids into the desk. His gun fires into the ceiling. Plaster falls. Nick overturns the desk onto Jake. Tweedle crawls up the middle and lets it pass right over him.

They run out the door. Nick still carries the wire.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Nick closes the door. He grabs a handy section of pipe. He puts the pipe across the door and wraps the wire around the doorknob and the pipe.

NICK
C'mon, we still have to find the man
in red.

TWEEDLE
Gotcha.

They run down the hall, checking various doors. They turn down a corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

A room at the end of the corridor has a light on.

TWEEDLE
(pointing)
There, Nick!

NICK
Nice catch.

Nick runs ahead. TOM the Hook, yet another thug, turns the corner with his pistol drawn. He fires. Tweedle falls. Nick stops and turns in horror.

NICK (CONT'D)
No!...

Nick, enraged, charges Tom. Tom goes to shoot. The gun jams. Nick tackles Tom and slides him into the wall. He then knocks him senseless and grabs his gun. He goes back to Tweedle and kneels beside him and cradles his head.

NICK (CONT'D)

Oh God, not Tweedle. Please not
Tweedle. You can't die. Not now.
I'm just getting the hang of all
this. Please don't die.

Tweedle opens his eyes.

TWEEDLE

(weakly)

Nick. Nick, you got the Christmas
spirit back, didn't you?

NICK

Of course I did. If nothing else
comes outta this, at least I learned
to feel it again. But you gotta
hang around. I might forget. I
need you, Tweed.

Tweedle gets up.

TWEEDLE

I'm okay, Nick. Elves can't die.
Not as long as the Christmas spirit
lives.

Nick grabs him by the collar and pulls him nose to nose.

NICK

You little fink. Go find the others.
Tell them we found him.

TWEEDLE

Gotcha.

Nick pushes Tweedle off and he scoots away. Nick looks at
Tom's gun, cocking it to fire. He sees a plate, "S.S. O'Kiley
Mgt.."

NICK

Must be one of them unadvertised
Saturday night specials.

Nick heads for the door. He tries the knob. It turns. He
checks the gun, seems satisfied and enters the room.

INT. SANTA'S CELL -- CONTINUOUS

The room glows with the mere presence of the prisoner, SANTA
CLAUS, a jolly old soul, sans cap and jacket. His clothes
hang on a coat rack. Santa is tied to a wooden chair and
gagged. A tray of food is nearby.

Santa is surprised by Nick's entrance. Nick is equally
startled by Santa's presence. He shades his eyes to see.

NICK
Damn, it is you.

He runs over to Santa and ungags him.

SANTA
Bless my soul! Thank you, son. Who might you be?

NICK
Nick Flebber, Santa.

Nick unties Santa.

SANTA
Flebber. Flebber. Oh, yes. You got the Dick Tracy Detective Set when you were ten. And some underwear, too.

NICK
Yeah. You remember that?

SANTA
Ho-ho-ho. A fine Santa I'd be if I didn't remember all of my children. But what are you doing here, son?

NICK
Your pixies hired me to find out.

SANTA
You mean the elves? They hired you?

NICK
I'm a private detective now. And I found you. And now I have to get you home.

SANTA
I knew the elves wouldn't let the children be disappointed.

NICK
No, sir.

SANTA
Cutting it a little close, though.

NICK
Be thankful you're not spending Easter here. Sir.

SANTA
Oh, that Sebastian has been bad before but he really takes the fruitcake for this stunt.

NICK
You know O'Kiley?

SANTA
Certainly. Over the years, I brought
him enough coal to power a locomotive.

Tweedle comes running in.

NICK
Hey, Tweedle, look, it's Santa!

TWEEDLE
You were expecting maybe the Little
Drummer Boy? Sandra and the guys
found the reindeer and sleigh.
They're in the hangar. Wait'll you
see this set up. He's got all these
kiddie kopters in there!

SANTA
Tweedle, you imp.

TWEEDLE
Elf, sir.

NICK
He knows that, Tweed. Get his coat
and let's move...

Tweedle runs over to the coat rack. He can't reach the coat
and hat. He jumps up but still can't. Nick comes over and
grabs them.

NICK (CONT'D)
Sandra had a point. Come on, let's
roll.

Nick gives Santa his clothes and they duck out of the room.

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS -- NIGHT

Santa, Nick and Tweedle cross the compound to hangar.

INT. HANGAR -- CONTINUOUS

Inside is a military-type helicopter with rocket launchers.
Also several Kiddie Kopters in various stages of completion.

Barclay and Dimple are leading the dog sleds in from the
rear entrance.

Sandra and the others wait by the sleigh, a bright red and
ornate sleigh with bells and great elaborate runners. It is
up on cinder blocks.

NINE REINDEERS are tied up in a corner. One reindeer has a bright red nose. You might even say it glows. Nick, Tweedle and Santa come in the front entrance.

NICK
Everyone okay?

SANDRA
Dad! You're safe.

Sandra and Santa embrace.

SANTA
Oh, Sandra. You are a sight for these old eyes. All of you are.

Tweedle motions to the helicopter.

TWEEDLE
Look at that, Nick.

NICK
(despondent)
Terrific.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

The door to O'Kiley's office ceases rattling. Suddenly, there is a shotgun blast. It blasts the door open. Jake and O'Kiley dash out.

INT. HANGAR -- NIGHT

NICK
If they have this kind of mobility we can't beat them out on dog sleds.

SANDRA
Then how do we get dad out of here?

TWEEDLE
How about the reindeer?

Nick and Sandra react.

INT. CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Jake and O'Kiley come upon Tom.

O'KILEY
Get him up...

They get him up.

O'KILEY (CONT'D)
Come on, let's get to the copter. They can't get far.

INT. HANGAR -- NIGHT

The elves have hitched the reindeer to the sleight, Rudolph in the lead.

NICK

Okay, Santa, into the dog sled.

SANTA

What?

NICK

The dog sled. Get in.

SANDRA

He's got to ride in the sleigh.

NICK

And O'Kiley knows that. He'll be after that sleigh in a shot. My job is to protect Santa. So, I'll take up the sleigh as a diversion and right after we go out the front, you duck out the back.

SANDRA

Nick, you can't.

NICK

Santa, you're going on that sled. If you don't, you'll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow. But soon and for the rest of your life. There's no time to argue, Claus! Me and Tweedle can handle it. What's important is that you get back to the North Pole. Everything else amounts to a pile of beans. We'll meet back at the workshop.

(to Tweedle)

You can drive this thing, right?

TWEEDLE

Are you kidding?

NICK

Let's move.

Yelling is heard from the outside.

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS -- NIGHT

Jake, Tom and O'Kiley run toward the hangar.

JAKE

Hurry up, Tom.

TOM
I'm with you, I'm with you.

INT. HANGAR -- NIGHT

Dimple and Snap stand by the front door. Truman and Ripley man the rear. Santa is getting in a dog sled. Nick helps Sandra in.

SANDRA
Are you sure you know what you're doing?

NICK
Sure. I use flying sleighs to escape the clutches of profit-crazed store owners all the time.

SANDRA
I'll bet. Please be careful.

NICK
Sure, what the heck.

SANDRA
And please drop the cocky attitude.

NICK
Sorry. But what can happen? I still got this.

Nick shows the good luck charm. They kiss. Sandra gets bundled into the sled. Nick goes over to the sleigh. Nick grabs Tweedle by the back of his collar and the seat of his pants and loads him into the sleigh.

TWEEDLE
But, Nick---

Nick hops in.

NICK
Ready, gang? Let's make snow tracks.

TWEEDLE
But Nick---

Dimple and Snap open the doors.

NICK
Giddy up!

The reindeer run off. Dimple and Snap board a dog sled. They all start out the back, Truman and Ripley holding the doors. They hop on as the sleds go pass.

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS -- NIGHT

The sleigh is out and headed at Jake, Tom and O'Kiley. Jake aims his gun. Suddenly, the reindeer take flight. O'Kiley's men are shocked and stare at it as it flies overhead.

O'KILEY
Move you goldbricks! He's getting
away!...

The men look at him.

O'KILEY (CONT'D)
The helicopter! Move!

They run into the hanger.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

The sleigh glides through the night sky. Nick and Tweedle poke their heads up over the top of the sleigh.

NICK
So far, so good. They should be
right behind us.

TWEEDLE
That's not the greatest piece of
news I've had today.

NICK
Okay, Tweed, what do we do now?

TWEEDLE
What?

NICK
The sleigh. How's it work?

TWEEDLE
I don't know.

NICK
What do you mean you don't know? I
asked you if you knew how to drive
this thing and you said, "You must
be kidding," like I was a jerk to
ask you because you were born and
raised around reindeer and sleds.

TWEEDLE
No. I said "Are you kidding," like
I've never been near this sleigh in
my life.

NICK
Ohmigod.

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS -- NIGHT

O'Kiley watches the helicopter take off.

O'KILEY
Get them! Shoot them out of the
sky! Or you can kiss your profit-
sharing good-by!

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Nick and Tweedle look back and see the helicopter rising up behind them. Nick grabs the reins.

NICK
On Dasher, on Dancer, on Blitzen, on
Cupid---

TWEEDLE
No, it's Dasher and Dancer and Prancer
and Blitzen.

NICK
On Dasher, on Prancer, on Vixen, et
cetera, et cetera.

INT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

Tom is lining the sleigh up in his sights. Jake is flying.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

The sleigh hits an air pocket and dips.

INT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

TOM
Firing now!

He launches the rocket.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Rocket goes right over the sleigh. Tweedle screams. Nick pulls on the reins.

They veer to the left, make a long turn and fly pass the helicopter.

NICK
Does this thing have an automatic
pilot or anything at all that would
make this any easier? Huh? Does
it?

INT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

Jake swings the copter about. Tom begins to get the sleigh in his sights.

TOM
Bring it to the left.

EXT. NIGHT SKY -- NIGHT

The helicopter chases the sleigh across the sky.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

TWEEDLE
Yo, Nick, the term "evasive action" mean anything to you?

Nick pulls the reins to the right, then starts zigzagging.

EXT. MILITARY BASE -- NIGHT

High security installation. Radar dish is spinning.

INT. MILITARY RADAR TRACKING STATION -- NIGHT

A ROOKIE SOLDIER is watching a radar scope. He notices a blip on the screen.

ROOKIE
Captain, I have some unidentified aircraft on the scope.

A BEMUSED CAPTAIN leans in to look, drinking his coffee.

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
Truly? You know what night this is, son? That there is Santy Claus.

ROOKIE
Really?

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
Sure enough.

He sips his coffee. A second blip appears.

ROOKIE
Sir, I have a second craft on screen.

The Bemused Captain ceases to be bemused and does a spit take.

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
What?? Full alert!

The room leaps into action.

EXT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

They are closing in on the sleigh.

TOM

Fire!

He launches a rocket.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Tweedle is standing at the rear of the sleigh. He sees the rocket coming.

TWEEDLE

Nick, do something!

Nick pulls back hard on the reins. The sleigh makes a quick and steep climb. Tweedle flips over the back. The rocket passes under them. Nick turns to where Tweedle was.

NICK

How was that, Tweed? Pretty swift,
eh? Tweed? Tweedle?

Tweedle is hanging from the rear runner.

TWEEDLE

Nick! Oh, Nick! Get me up!

INT. MILITARY RADAR TRACKING STATION -- NIGHT

ROOKIE

No response, sir.

BEMUSED CAPTAIN

Continue hailing, all frequencies.
Send up a warning.

(to intercom)

Stand by alert. Ready ground-to-air
missiles to repel intruder.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Nick is trying to pull Tweedle up.

NICK

Stop fighting me, you stupid gremlin!

TWEEDLE

I'm an elf, you moron! Get me up!

Nick pulls Tweedle back into the sleigh. Suddenly, they are buzzed by the helicopter.

EXT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

TOM
I got them now!

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS -- NIGHT

O'Kiley is watching the distant action. It is approaching the compound.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

NICK
Which way is the North Pole?

TWEEDLE
North! Do I have to draw you a map?

NICK
Excuse me, what am I, a compass?

INT. MILITARY RADAR TRACKING STATION -- NIGHT

ROOKIE
I can't raise a thing, sir. No response on any frequency. Who are they?

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
I guess we'll have to wait for the dental charts to find out. Attention; target traveling point five-inner-six. Range, two-five. Heading, north.

INTERCOM
We have them sighted, sir.

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
Prepare to launch.

INTERCOM
Systems green.

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
Fire.

EXT. LAUNCHING SITE -- NIGHT

Cruiser ground-to-air missile is launched.

EXT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

TOM
I got them dead to rights now, Jake.

JAKE

Do it.

Jake turns and sees the approaching missile.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Now what?

Jake gives it a hard turn. The copter pulls out of the path of the missile.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Tweedle watches the helicopter veer off.

TWEEDLE

Oh, good...

He sees the missile coming.

TWEEDLE (CONT'D)

Oh, bad. Nick, you want to take a gander at this?

NICK

Ain't I got enough problems?

TWEEDLE

Apparently someone feels you haven't.

NICK

(turning to see)

What? Holy---

Nick whips on the reins and they zip off.

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

The missile continues for a distance, then changes direction. The helicopter and sleigh level off. The sleigh is now behind the copter.

INT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

TOM

Wait a second, they're chasing us!
That ain't right.

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

The missile zeros in on them and comes up behind the sleigh. And thusly they traverse the skies.

EXT. SLEIGH -- CONTINUOUS

Tweedle climbs up on Nick, pushing Nick's hat over his eyes.

TWEEDLE
Get out of the way, you hoodlums!

INT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

TOM
You gotta lose them!

JAKE
I'm headed back for the base.

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

The helicopter descends toward Glacier Alley. The sleigh stays on their tail. The missile remains on the sleigh's tail.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Nick's eyes are still covered as Tweedle clings on for life.

NICK
Tweedle, get off!

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

JAKE
It's no good. They're still tailin'
us.

The copter veers off one way. The sleigh goes in the opposite direction. The missile goes right down the middle and heads for the compound.

EXT. COMPOUND GROUNDS -- NIGHT

O'Kiley stands in the compound. Suddenly he realizes he's ground zero.

O'KILEY
Holy canolies!

He runs for the main gate. The missile hits the main house and explodes.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Nick and Tweedle look over the side to see. Suddenly, they get doused with a splash of water from below.

NICK
Club soda.

INT. MILITARY RADAR TRACKING STATION -- NIGHT

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
Well, soldier?

ROOKIE
We've repelled them, sir.

BEMUSED CAPTAIN
And stay out! Ha!

INT. HELICOPTER -- NIGHT

They look at the burning wreckage of the compound.

JAKE
Well, this don't look so good.

TOM
Whatta ya say we fly south for the
winter?

JAKE
How far south?

TOM
Let's try the South Pole this time.

The helicopter veers off and heads south.

EXT. GLACIER ALLEY -- NIGHT

There is a fire burning now. Several follow-up explosions
go off. There is a gusher of water shooting into the sky.

EXT. SLEIGH -- NIGHT

Nick and Tweedle clean themselves up as they watch the
fireworks.

TWEEDLE
Let's go home, Nick.

NICK
Home it is, kid.

EXT. GLACIER ALLEY -- NIGHT

There is a fire burning now. Several follow-up explosions
go off. The sleigh can be seen in the distance, leaving.
Sleigh bells are heard. We see the front gate. A snow bank.
It starts to move. O'Kiley pops out.

O'KILEY
Curse you, Claus and your stupid
holiday! Sure, try to be an
enthusiastic capitalist and see where
it gets you. I mean, what's the
point of having a competitor if you
can't ruthlessly destroy him? Huh?

Quite melodramatically, he sobs in the snow for a moment. Slowly, he begins humming. Soon, we realize it's "Here Comes Peter Cottontail." He raises his head, a sinister grin crosses his face. He's got a new goal in life. He gets up and runs off, singing.

EXT. VILLAGE GROUNDS -- EVENING

A beehive activity. Elves pulling sleds and sacks of presents. Sandra, Santa and Mrs. Claus stand watching the skies. Santa is fully dressed in his traveling clothes.

SANDRA

Where are they, father?

SANTA

I'm sure they'll be here any moment, Sandra. Nick seems like a good man.

SANDRA

He is father.

Trinket comes over.

TRINKET

Any sign yet?

MRS. CLAUS

No, dear.

TRINKET

He had better come back alive or I'll never speak to him again.

In the distance, the sound of sleigh bells is heard.

MRS. CLAUS

Listen.

Everyone stops. The sleigh is seen silhouetted against the full moon for a real Currier and Ives effect.

SANTA

This is a switch. Santa anxious to hear the sound of sleigh bells on Christmas Eve.

SANDRA

They're okay.

Tweedle and Nick are waving as they bring the sleigh in for a landing.

NICK

We made it! And in the St. Nick of time. We did it, Tweedle. High five!

Nick puts his hand up in the air. Tweedle jumps a couple of times to try and slap it. Needless to say, he can't reach. Finally, Nick lowers his hand. Everyone runs up to meet them.

TRINKET

Oh, Tweedle, are you all right?

TWEEDLE

You bet. What do you think of my choice of detectives now?

TRINKET

I hope you don't plan to do this regularly.

They hug. Sandra hugs Nick.

SANDRA

You made it!

NICK

Natch. I'm a pro.

SANTA

Okay, people. We have a job to do.

SANDRA

Oh, right. Come along, everyone.

Sandra goes off. The bustle starts again. Santa takes Nick aside.

SANTA

I wanted to thank you personally, Nick. That was a very brave thing you did. And a lot of children will be very happy for it. You have a good soul, Nick Flebber.

Santa hugs Nick, who at first looks embarrassed, but then loosens up. Chimes are heard. Nick pulls out the watch. It reads Christmas. He hands it to Santa

NICK

Here, I believe this is yours. Oh, yes, and here's something I feel I have to give you.

SANTA

What ever could it be?

Nick pulls out this two thousand dollars.

NICK

I feel funny about taking this now.
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

I'm sure you know people who can really use it.

SANTA

I am touched, Nick. I knew you would be one of the good ones.

NICK

Yeah, well, you better get moving. Time for your big Christmas number.

SANTA

Indeed.

NICK

Time and yule tide wait for no man.

SANTA

Very good. Ho-ho-ho.

Elves are loading sacks of toys into the sleigh.

SANDRA

All checkpoints give us green lights. We're A-O.K. to go.

Mrs. Claus helps Santa into the sleigh.

MRS. CLAUS

You be careful, now. God be with you.

SANTA

I'll be fine, mother. Thank you.

BARCLAY

Everyone stand back now, please. Go Johnson!

JOHNSON, an elf with lighted batons and wearing overalls signals the sleigh to come forward.

SANTA

Good-by, everyone! See you later!
On, team!

Sleigh begins its ascent, sleigh bells ringing. Can you hear them?

SANTA (CONT'D)

Ho-ho-ho, merry Christmas to all!

He disappears into the night.

NICK
 (to himself)
 You too, Santa.

SANDRA
 Go get 'em, pop!

MRS. CLAUS
 How does some butter cookies and hot
 cocoa sound?

Elves all cheer. They follow Mrs. Claus into the house.
 Nick and Sandra stand in the moonlight. Tweedle comes back
 out. He tugs on Nick's jacket.

TWEEDLE
 Nick?

NICK
 Yeah, Tweed?

TWEEDLE
 I'm sorry about the gun.

NICK
 Don't sweat it, kid. It comes with
 the territory.

TWEEDLE
 I wouldn't want anything to happen
 to you for all the world.

NICK
 Nothing will, guy. So long as someone
 like you believes in me. It's a two-
 way street.

TWEEDLE
 And, Nick, thanks.

NICK
 For what?

TWEEDLE
 For giving an ordinary elf like me a
 chance to do something special. I
 knew we got the right man.

Tweedle hugs him.

NICK
 Hurry up, your cocoa's getting cold.

TWEEDLE
 I'll see you inside.

He goes into the house.

SANDRA

I want to thank you, too.

NICK

For what?

SANDRA

For giving an ordinary daughter of Santa Claus like me the chance to experience some truly wonderful feelings. I'm so very proud of you.

NICK

Sandra, my work here is done. You know, you get pretty jaded in my line of work. Being cynical is the thing I knew. I was good at it, too. But it makes you forget what it was like. I never thought I could ever feel the feelings I'm feeling. But I am. And it's because of you. Will you come home with me?

SANDRA

What do you mean?

NICK

Come with me, back to the states.

SANDRA

Nick, I can't go. My life is here.

NICK

But I have to go.

SANDRA

Why can't you stay?

NICK

I have to go back. I've got a life there. My work. My insurance agent. My bills. My car payments---

SANDRA

But we can have a life here.

NICK

(second thoughts)
---All that crime. Graffiti. That guy who poisoned my cat---

SANDRA

I love you, Nick.

NICK

---My two room walk-up. My bookies---

SANDRA

Do you love me, Nick?

NICK

Of course I love you. I never loved anyone before. I didn't think it was possible. But now---

They embrace.

SANDRA

Come live with me. We'll make a life together.

NICK

Who'll bury my cat?

They kiss. The long, lingering type.

NARRATOR NICK (V.O.)

Sufficed to say, I hung around. It wasn't long before the sound of jingle bells was mixed with wedding bells. Trinket and Tweedle were married right after the new year. It turned into a double ring ceremony. Me and Sandra tied the knot. Tweedle was best elf. And I got a job. I'm on retainer by the Claus man himself. I guess that makes me a subordinate clause. My first case is to find my gun before some kid blows his brains out playing cops and robbers. After that, Santa has me do lots of background investigations. You see, Claus has this list. And he checks it. Twice. I have to keep tabs on who's naughty or nice. So you better watch out. You better not cry. You better not pout. I'm telling you why. 'Cause Nick Flebber's on the case.

The End