

"BAD SANTA"

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FADE IN:

Snow flakes falling against a black sky.

CAMERA FOLLOWS THEM DOWNWARD TO REVEAL

EXT. MILWAUKEE BAR - NIGHT

It looks like a warm cozy place out of "It's A Wonderful Life". The window is flocked with fake snow, and hung with colorful Christmas lights, wreaths and ornaments.

CAMERA PUSHES SLOWLY IN

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MILWAUKEE BAR - NIGHT

CAMERA CONTINUES MOVEMENT IN SAME DIRECTION

TITLES BEGIN

The barman, wiping down the counter, gives an occasional semi-furtive glance toward the far end of the bar.

Other patrons chat near the bartender and also give occasional glances toward the far end of the bar. It is early evening -- happy hour -- and the clientele is well-heeled and sociable.

A customer says something interrogative to the bartender, who looks down the bar and shrugs.

REVERSE - CAMERA CONTINUES MOVEMENT (Notes the combination of the HIGH ANGLE and the tilt of Santa's head keep his face from being clearly revealed in this scene).

Sitting alone at the far end of the bar, given a wide berth

by the other customers, a man (WILLIE) stares morosely into his drink. The drink is clearly not his first.

He wears a red velvet suit and red velvet hat with a white pom-pom. He has shiny black boots with red velvet trim. His long white beard is not real and is in fact pulled down below his chin to facilitate drinking. It exposes heavy black stubble.

Swaying slightly, he raises the drink to the vicinity of his lips. Once it gets close he must navigate it in with some effortful coordination. He takes a sip and sets the drink carefully back down.

After another long, staring, morose beat, he starts weeping.

It is loud, dolorous, and unself-conscious.

EXT. ALLEYWAY BEHIND THE MILWAUKEE BAR - NIGHT

Santa staggers out the back door...

CAMERA FOLLOWS BEHIND HIM still hiding his face.

Santa gets about ten feet, then pauses and leans with one hand against the alley wall, uses the other to hold his pom-pom out of the way, and vomits.

Having vomited, and spit, he staggers off toward the street.

SUPERED TITLE OF THE MOVIE:

BAD SANTA

INT. SANTA ORIENTATION ROOM - DAY

An upbeat woman TRAINER presides over a half-dozen SANTAS sitting at school desks. On the blackboard the Trainer is writing out the sixth "Santa Commandment".

SANTA'S TEN COMMANDMENTS

- 1) No alcoholic beverages before or during your shift.
- 2) Know the names of your reindeer.
- 3) Do not smoke in your costume.
- 4) No swearing.
- 5) Absolutely no flirting.
- 6) Coax a smile from the child.
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)

TRAINER

(as she writes)

Coax... a... smile... from... the child.

(turning to face them)

Remember, parents don't want photos where their child isn't smiling. Some children may not want to smile. It is your job to coax a smile out of them. A good line to remember is: "Santa thinks everybody should be happy. Can you smile for Santa?" A camera can only copy a child's smile -- it will take you to put it there.

As she talks we

CUT TO:

ANGLE FROM BEHIND

one of the Santas (WILLIE). His HAND reaches into a boot and pulls out a pint of Smirnoff. We FOLLOW UP IN C.U. to see this hand pour a few ounces into a can of Coke he holds behind his desk.

TRAINER

If the child will not smile, the Photo Elf will go ahead and take the picture anyway. Now, it is a good Santa's job to smile as well -- I know with the big white beard your smile will be partially hidden, so you must learn to smile with your eyes. They show warmth and can be very expressive.

CUT TO:

WILLIE'S FACE

as he finishes off the can of Coke to REVEAL: his eyes colder than those of a dead fish.

TRAINER

Remember you have been chosen for the starring role of Santa Claus. Your portrayal of this beloved character will have a major impact on every child you meet. Keep in mind at all times that to them, you aren't a man dressed up like Santa, you are Santa.

CUT BACK TO:

WILLIE'S FACE. His expression reads: "Please kill me".

EXT. DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE SHOPPING DISTRICT - NIGHT

Wintry night. Ray Coniff's "Jolly Ole Saint Nicholas" scores views of the downtown blanketed in snow and decorated for

the holiday. It is Christmas Eve, and the sidewalks throng with people rushing to do their last-minute shopping.

A MOTHER and her two absurdly bundled CHILDREN emerge from the crowd.

MOTHER

Hurry boys, we're gonna miss Santa!
She drags them across the street
toward the looming art-deco monolith
that is the big-city department store.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - TOP FLOOR - NIGHT

Mother and children crest the escalator to emerge on the top floor.

OLDER CHILD

There!

The older child is pointing at a prop gate with a candy-cane letter sign: TO SANTA'S WORKSHOP.

He runs and Mom shoos her younger child to join him.

The boys cross the threshold of the gate and their eyes filled with wonder.

A winding path cuts through a flocked and candy-striped forest, past a workshop filled with mannequin-elves busily cobbling Christmas toys, and finally arriving at...

Santa, seated on his throne like a scarlet Messiah. The younger child staggers forward to join the line of a hundred other leaky-nosed worshippers awaiting an audience.

At the head of the line the next waiting child is escorted to Santa's chair by a smiling tiny man (MARCUS) dressed as an elf.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

An imitation BACK STREET BOYS quintet sings Christmas Carols.

Grown-ups busy themselves draining their wallets as a VOICE comes over the intercom:

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Attention shoppers: the store will
be closing in five minutes. We hope
tomorrow is a pleasant Christmas and
thank you for shopping with us, your
friends.

Purposeful haste eddies the crowd.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

C.U. PHOTO PRINTING OUT

The Photo Elf takes the digital photo and presents it to a **MOM**.

PHOTO ELF

(dutifully reciting
his spiel)

My, what a darling picture! Are you certain you only want the single? Additional photos come in handy as gifts for grandma and grandpa or a wonderful remembrance for friends.

MOM

That's all right, I'll just take the single.

He takes her credit card as CAMERA MOVES OVER TO SANTA. On his knee is a YOUNG BOY who whispers excitedly in his ear.

SANTA

(disinterested)
Uh-huh... yeah... done.

Young Boy climbs off and runs away, A BRATTY KID jumps up on Santa's lap.

BRATTY KID

I saw you in another mall.

SANTA

(not even looking at
him)
Right... Good for you.

BRATTY KID

You're not really Santa. If you were Santa you could do magic.

SANTA

(looks at him)
You want magic?

Santa pushes him off his lap and shoves him on his way.

SANTA

There, I just made you disappear.

Santa turns to his Elf,

SANTA

...That it?

The Elf nods as he peels off a pointed prosthetic ear. Santa pulls a fifth of Old Granddad from the cushions of his throne.

SANTA

...Thank fuckin' Christ.

He takes a swig.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT - LATER

With the sound of closing circuits, banks of lights systematically shut down in the various departments of the now empty store.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - EXIT AREA - NIGHT

Downstairs the last of the store employees file out the door past an old SECURITY GUARD. Eventually Santa emerges.

SECURITY GUARD

Merry Christmas, Willie.

SANTA

Up your ass.

The guard chuckles.

SECURITY GUARD

Have it your way, Willie.

SANTA

Don't tell me which way to have it.

The Security Guard heads for a panel near the doorway and punches a key labeled ARM. An L.E.D. readout labeled "ARMING" counts down from 30 seconds.

The guard exits the store, locks the door and heads home.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

A large Teddy bear sits under a Christmas tree.

Suddenly -- it moves, bolting upright and sprinting from the room.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

The alarm continues to count down -- 15... 14...

The Teddy bear slides down the space between the railing of the escalators. Landing on its feet, it barrels toward the door.

10... 9...

The Teddy bear scrambles for the door, crashing into everything in its path.

7... 6...

Running past a clothing display, it rips the arm off a mannequin without breaking stride.

5... 4...

It skids to a stop at the base of the alarm box, too short to reach the controls.

2...

It raises the mannequin arm, using the pointed finger on its hand to press the "CANCEL" key on the keypad.

Mission accomplished, the teddy bear rips off its head to reveal his true identity: Santa's Elf -- in civilian life known as MARCUS SKIDMORE. He is covered in sweat and panting like an asthmatic.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - SHIPPING AREA - NIGHT

A hasp flips open and Marcus swings the door wide to reveal a beer-guzzling Santa-in-the-off-season known as WILLIE T. SOKE. He finishes the beer, crushes the can and drops it to his feet next to eight more empties.

WILLIE

Ready.

Marcus sneers at him as he lumbers past:

MARCUS

Jesus.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - SANTA'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Marcus and Willie tear open the prop presents on the workshop set and remove several tools.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

Marcus reaches into jewelry cases and removes a few particular items. He drops them into a stock cart then checks a typed list before moving on.

Marcus pushes the cart through the store, gathering an odd array of items that range from furs to gowns to shoes to makeup.

INT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - BACK OFFICES - NIGHT

Marcus arrives outside a doorway and looks in to see Willie manning a large water drill and putting it to work on the store's vault.

MARCUS

How's it goin'?

WILLIE

I'm finished when I'm finished.

MARCUS

I'm goin' downstairs...

(referring to list)

I need a melon-bailer and a loofah.

The drill suddenly revs higher, getting Willie's attention.

WILLIE

Got it.

Marcus moves closer as Willie pulls back the drill on the track. He places a screwdriver into the exposed lock assembly and hits it with a sledgehammer.

Suddenly, the door swings open and bundled cash spills to the floor. Both men are impressed.

MARCUS

Fuck the loofah, let's go.

EXT. MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT STORE - SHIPPING DOCK - NIGHT

Marcus and Willie wheel out two carts and roll them through the open doors of a waiting van. As they slam the doors --

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Willie settles on the rear bench as Marcus gets into the passenger seat next to his Phillipina Mail-order wife of several years, LOIS, who is dressed in expensively ugly clothes, and whose mouth is ever down-turned in pruney distaste.

LOIS

Marcus, did you get the loofah?

MARCUS

Drive.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE STREET - NIGHT

The van speeds away through the Christmas Eve night and disappears into the distance, like the down of a thistle.

FADE OUT:

CAMERA ROCKETS INTO C.U. of An alarm clock ringing with a jolt.

INT. RATBAG APARTMENT - DAY

Willie, in bed, blearily wakes to the insistent alarm. He

tries to turn it off, but his fingers are still clotted with sleep.

In a series of frustrated grunts and groans he becomes more and more aggravated until, finally --

WILLIE
FUCK YOU, YOU FUCKING PIECE OF SHIT!

He bolts out of bed and throws the clock into the wall.

He stoops for some beer bottle empties and hurls them at the clock debris.

WILLIE
Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you!

One final scream and it's out of his system. He finds one last bottle in his hand, half-full with a cigarette butt floating in it.

He downs the beer and steps into the adjoining bathroom to brush his teeth.

EXT. KEY BISCAVNE STREET - DAY

Willie, sipping a cup of coffee, meanders down the street scratching his ass.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Willie's walk brings him to a fancy eatery at lunchtime. As he passes, he casually snatches a handful of car keys from the parking valet key-box and moves on.

As he rounds the corner into the lot he pushes on the various key fobs, identifying various cars when their alarms chirp.

He seems dissatisfied until a brand new Cadillac chirps.

Willie gets in and drives off.

INT. CADILLAC - MOVING - DAY

Willie drives. He reaches over into the glove compartment and pulls out the registration. He focuses on the car owner's address.

INT. UPPER-CLASS HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Willie, eating a corn dog, saunters down an opulent hallway, a beer swinging in one hand.

INT. UPPER-CLASS HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

In long shot, through the open door of an extravagant marble bathroom, we see Willie sitting on the toilet, leafing through

a magazine, beer bottle on the counter next to him. Pants around his ankles.

INT. UPPER-CLASS HOME - BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Willie, standing by the toilet, finishes buckling his belt and flips the flush lever.

Nothing happens; no whoosh of rushing water.

Willie, looking down into the toilet, gives the lever a couple more clanking tries, and then grabs his beer and ambles off.

INT. UPPER-CLASS HOME - STUDY - DAY

Sucking on his beer, Willie paces the periphery of the room, methodically knocking painting after painting off the walls.

INT. UPPER-CLASS HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Willie arrives in the bedroom still knocking down paintings until, finally, he exposes a wall safe.

A smile, and he pulls out a stethoscope.

CUT TO:

The safe door swings open to reveal stacks of cash.

INT. STRIP BAR - NIGHT

Willie scratches a lottery ticket. He's now wearing a Rolex and some gaudy ring.

WILLIE

Goddamn it!

He reaches for another one and we see that on the bartop in front of him are neat stacks of lottery tickets as yet unscratched, and an untidy jumble of scratched ones.

On the other side of the bar a MIDDLE-AGED STRIPPER vies for his attention. Willie's ticket hits for \$5.00.

WILLIE

Yeah baby!

He tucks it into the Stripper's G-string, swigs a drink, and resumes scratching.

INT. RATBAG APARTMENT - NIGHT

Willie and the Stripper stagger into his apartment, drunk.

As he passes his blinking answering machine:

WILLIE

I got messages. Go wash yourself.

STRIPPER

I'm a dancer, I sweat.

WILLIE

Well you smell like a bum's nutsack.

STRIPPER

Fuck you.

WILLIE

Yeah, yeah.

As she exits, he activates the machine.

VOICE (V.O.)

Mr. Soke, this is Andrew Kaplan again
from the collection agency -- BOOP!

Willie skips to the next message.

ANOTHER VOICE (V.O.)

Willie, I don't care man, I'm not
looking to blame anyone, but that
diamond isn't a real stone, man. I
took it to -- BOOP!

Willie skips to the next message.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Uh, hello, this is Helen Axelrod --
you ran into my car last week? Well
I called State Farm but they have no
record of any insurance policy for
you and -- BOOP!

Willie skips to the next message.

MARCUS' VOICE (V.O.)

Willie, it's Marcus. It's that time
of year again. Pack your shit.
Phoenix.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOENIX, ARIZONA - DAY

To the chimey chords of "Sleigh Ride," we see Phoenix, Arizona
in MONTAGE / dressed for Christmas but sweltering under its
oppressive winter heat.

EXT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Through the heat ripples rising off the pavement two mirage-
like figures cross the infinite asphalt of the Saguaro Square
Mall parking lot -- Willie and Marcus in Santa and Elf

regalia, sweating and panting in the heat. Willie polishes off a pint of Smirnoff's and flips it towards a nearby trash can. It misses and breaks loudly on the pavement.

MARCUS

Jesus Christ! Can you maybe keep it together for just ten minutes?!

He pulls some Tic Tacs out of his pocket.

MARCUS

For crying out loud, chew a few of these... you drunken, fuckin' imbecile!

Anchoring the huge mall complex is the large and upscale Chamberlain's Department Store.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Amid the bustle of holiday shopping, an angry heavy-set man with a Grizzly Adams beard stomps away from the pursuing store manager, Bob Chipeska.

CHIPESKA

Harrison, please I Just let me explain. Financially, the --

HARRISON

You get what you pay for, Chipeska! Five Christmases I've given my heart -- my soul -- my love to these kids, and now what? Now you flip me for some stranger who'll do it for peanuts and happens to work with a real midget! Lemme tell you something: nobody cares! Nobody comes here for the elf, Santa's the attraction! I do Burl Ives songs; does this schmoe even play guitar?

CHIPESKA

Harrison, it's not the money or the midget. Believe me, if it was, I -- I don't think they like "midget". I think you're supposed to call them --

HARRISON

Aw, forget it!

Harrison stomps away and right toward Marcus and Willie as they enter the store.

HARRISON

...Hacks!

Willie and Marcus stop in their tracks and watch the burly

man storm out. Bob Chipeska watches with them.

CHIPESKA

Hi. Bob Chipeska. I, please, I, uh --
please don't listen to him. Great
resume and photo by the way.

MARCUS

Thanks... you know, we been at this
a long time an' all, so we like to
think we do a good job...

A Beautiful Girl wearing skin-tight pants walks by, catching
Willie's eye. He stares wantonly at her ass, off in his own
little world.

CHIPESKA

You two are the best men for the
job. Truly. So do not let his...
unpleasantness affect your performance
in any way.

MARCUS

Oh no, we're fine, w --

WILLIE

(irked, snapping out
of his daydream)
Performance?

Willie's reaction worries Marcus.

CHIPESKA

Yea. Your performance... you know,
the...

WILLIE

Performance. Like sexual?

CHIPESKA

Excuse me?

MARCUS

Willie no, he --

WILLIE

You saying there's something wrong
with my gear?

MARCUS

Willie...

CHIPESKA

I'm sorry. Your gear?

WILLIE

You know... fuck stick.

MARCUS

OKAY! We're gonna head upstairs now.

Marcus shoves Willie, who stalks off. Marcus lingers to smooth things over. He forces a grin and shakes his head.

MARCUS

Such a card.

CHIPESKA

He's not gonna say "fuck stick" in front of the children, is he?

MARCUS

No, no, no. Joke. Adult joke. For us. Adults.

A long, long, long silence.

MARCUS

...Joke.

Another beat. Marcus pantomimes helpless laughter, noiselessly throwing his head back and holding his gut as it heaves with mirth.

He is instantly composed.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - DAY

On an upper floor of Chamberlain's the theme is "The Desert as Winter Wonderland." Cacti and tumbleweeds are wrapped with lights and flocked with snow, and a team of nine stuffed burros are hitched to a sleigh. Rudolfo the Red Nosed Burro is tended by several Santa's elf mannequins. One in cowboy wear and another in a poncho and sombrero.

Again there is a line of waiting children. Marcus makes his way through the line as kids gasp and cheer. He plays to the crowd.

MARCUS

Merry Christmas! Santa's coming!

Yayyyyyy! Marcus gets to the head of the line, ducks under the velvet rope and goes behind the flimsy cardboard set.

Willie sits there morosely, head slumped, forearms on knees, red velvet hanging limply from one hand.

MARCUS

What the fuck you doing, "fuck stick" in front of the boss?

WILLIE

I don't like that guy.

He takes a bottle from the floor by his feet and swigs off it. Marcus stares at him.

MARCUS

You don't like any guy. You think I can't find another portly motherfuck can run a water drill?

Willie just slumps there apologetically.

MARCUS

Don't tempt my hand. You blow this and we're broke for the year. So stop acting like you know something because, pal of mine, you don't know squat. You're gum on my shoe.

WILLIE

Yeah, yeah.

MARCUS

Now put on your fuckin' hat and get out there.

He grabs the hat, slams it into Willie's chest and, as Willie rises, kicks him in the ass. Willie just takes it, shambling off.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

...And try to act professional. For Chrissake!

EXT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

On the outskirts of the Saguaro Square Mall's parking lot a city bus stops with a hiss. The doors swing open to reveal a pathetic EIGHT-YEAR-OLD KID, overweight, snot-nosed, badly dressed and probably smelling of pee.

As the kid nears the mall entrance he passes a group of older children doing skateboard stunts. They notice him.

KID

Loser!

One of them throws an empty can that hits him in the head.

The kid walks on, it seems without noticing.

The bullies, disheartened by the lack of reaction, go back to their skateboarding.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - DAY

Marcus leads a LARGE HEAVYSET BOY over to the throne. The boy eats a chocolate ice cream cone which is smeared all

over his mouth and T-shirt. Marcus lifts him with effort and a groan onto Willie's lap.

WILLIE

All right, wuddya want?

HEAVYSET BOY

Nintendo Deer Hunter 3.

WILLIE

Fine. Next.

The HEAVYSET BOY hops off onto Willie's foot by mistake.

WILLIE

YOWWWCH! Watch the toenails willya?

Marcus puts a young girl on his lap. She looks up at him in awe.

WILLIE

...Wuddya want?

LITTLE GIRL

...Santa?

WILLIE

Yeah, c'mon, c'mon, wuddya want?

LITTLE GIRL

Um... Barbie?

WILLIE

Fine. Next.

Marcus puts another young boy on his lap.

WILLIE

...What do you want?

BOY

Fraggle-stick car.

WILLIE

(to himself)

Fuck is that?

(back to the kid)

Fine, whatever, next.

No one is next.

WILLIE

...Next. Next!

Still nothing.

WILLIE

...Next, goddamnit! Let's move it
along -- this is not the DMV!

Marcus walks over to the rope. The snot-nosed Kid is next in
line, frozen by fear. Marcus pulls on his hand.

MARCUS

It's okay. C'mon.

The Kid stays put.

MARCUS

What's your name?

The Kid shakes his head meekly.

MARCUS

...You can tell me...

No response.

MARCUS

...How about Santa? If you don't
tell him, you won't get a present.

This penetrates the Kid's fear. He moves.

MARCUS

...That's right. Let's tell Santa.

Marcus leads the Kid up to the throne and places him on
Willie's lap.

WILLIE

What do you want? C'mon, wuddya want?
A snot rag?

The Kid just stares, motionless except for the flowing rivulet
of snot. Willie can't help but stare at it.

WILLIE

(to himself)
...Another fuckin' mongoloid.
(shouts)
Marcus I get him outta here before
he pisses on me.

Suddenly the Kid is moved to yank Willie's beard. He holds
it stretched below Willie's chin.

WILLIE

(whispered to the kid)
...Let it go, you little bastard.

KID

It's not real.

WILLIE

It was real. The hair fell out when
I got sick.

KID

How'd you get sick?

WILLIE

I loved a woman who wasn't clean.

KID

Mrs. Santa?

WILLIE

No, her sister.
(whispers through
clenched teeth)
Let the fucking thing go.

KID

What's it like at the North Pole?

WILLIE

Like the suburbs.

KID

Which one?

WILLIE

Apache Junction. What the fuck do
you care?

Willie shoves the Kid:

WILLIE

Get the hell off my lap.

The Kid backs away, looking at him.

KID

You are really Santa, right?

WILLIE

No. No, I'm an accountant. I wear
this as a fucking fashion thing.

KID

Okay.

The Kid backs away in awe, never breaking his reverent stare.

As Marcus helps the next child onto Santa's lap Willie hisses
at him:

WILLIE

Get that kid out of here, he's
freaking me out.

EXT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - NIGHT

The Kid sits on a bench watching the entrance to Chamberlain's. After a beat Willie and Marcus walk out in costume and cross toward the parking lot.

The Kid follows from a safe distance.

EXT. SAGUARO MALL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Willie and Marcus walk across the huge empty parking lot, followed at a great distance by the Kid.

They arrive at their cars -- Marcus' van and a beat-up old Chrysler that is Willie's -- parked next to each other.

As the Kid creeps closer, he is able to hear their conversation.

Willie motions to the Black Angus in the parking lot.

WILLIE

I gotta get a drink on. See ya tomorrow.

MARCUS

Just don't come in to work stinkin' of booze again.

WILLIE

Don't worry about me. Get going, you'll be late for your Wizard of Oz Candy Bar Guild thing.

MARCUS

Lollipop Guild, asshole. Jesus, two year olds flip me shit better'n you.

WILLIE

You tryin' to say something to me?

MARCUS

(pauses, then deliberately)
Yeah. I'm gonna stick my whole fist up your ass.

INT. BLACK ANGUS BAR - NIGHT

A large faux rustic bar filled to capacity with loosened-tie middle-management.

Crammed at the far end of the bar, Willie stands out like a sore thumb in this thirty-ish crowd.

We follow his gaze all around the perimeter of the room until

it connects with the drunken, glowering face of a HINDUSTANI TROUBLEMAKER, sitting right across from him, startling Willie for a moment.

Willie regains his composure, then gives the guy a puzzled look back, and amused by the guy's unflinching anger, raises his glass in a toast to him as if to say, "whatever... cheers, you nutcase", and turns back to his drink.

The man stands up and, never releasing his stare, moves right up to Willie, two inches from his face. Willie looks up.

TROUBLEMAKER

(Hindi accent)

Listen here buddy, let me make yourself perfectly clear. We don't like your kind coming around here in your red silk and satin clothes with your hunger for same-sex relationships. Consider yourself warned.

WILLIE

Well fu-uck you!

TROUBLEMAKER

I know that's what you'd like to do!

Willie gears up for a swing.

WILLIE

Up yours, yufff --

A hand grabs his arm.

VOICE (O.S.)

Don't.

Willie follows the hand to find a mature but attractive BARMAID (SUE), an outdoorsy western beauty. Her eyes and Willie's lock -- a source of sardonic amusement for the troublemaker.

TROUBLEMAKER

Oh saved by a woman, mister No-Pussy-Please man!

He stalks off.

SUE

He ain't worth it, sugar. He got hit on last week. Didn't sit too well.

TROUBLEMAKER

WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT!?

By the bathroom, the troublemaker is in another man's face:

TROUBLEMAKER

...This is not Flagstaff!

SUE

Another Granddad, Santa?

WILLIE

Yep.

She pours him another and slams it on the bar.

SUE

Got a name?

WILLIE

Oh yeah.

He pounds the drink.

She waits. Nothing else is forthcoming.

SUE

What do you do? I mean, after the holidays?

WILLIE

Nothing 'til March. Then I'm the Easter Bunny.

SUE

...Another?

WILLIE

Why not. Buy you one?

SUE

Why not.

She pours two. They both pound them back.

Her statement is a question:

SUE

...Not a big talker.

WILLIE

Nah.

SUE

Buy you one?

WILLIE

Why not.

As she pours:

SUE

You're pretty regular, for a Santa.

He shrugs:

WILLIE

It's my job, no big deal. I'm an eating, drinking, shitting, fucking Santa Claus.

SUE

Prove it.

Willie stares at her.

WILLIE

Which?

INT. WILLIE'S CAR - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Willie is on top of the barmaid, humping her, still in his Santa suit. His pom-pom bobs in rhythm with his thrusts.

WILLIE

Yes! Yes! Yes!

SUE

Fuck me, Santa! Fuck me, Santa!

The hat is slipping askew. He reaches for it.

WILLIE

At least lemme take off the hat!

SUE

NO!

EXT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

In the parking lot the barmaid finishes straightening her clothes and touching up her lipstick in the rearview mirror.

Willie, leaning against his car, still in his Santa suit, fires up a post-coital cigarette.

SUE

I got a thing for Santa Claus, I don't know, I guess it's from early childhood.

WILLIE

(taking a swig)
Yeah, so's my thing for tits.

SUE

Maybe because my parents were Jewish and never celebrated Christmas. Santa

was sort of forbidden, you know?

She gets out of the car.

SUE

I like you. Most of the people around here are pretty uptight. My name is Sue. Here's my number.

She hands him the slip of paper and ambles off, calling back over her shoulder:

SUE

...Don't mothball that suit!

Willie, nodding understanding, turns to reach for his car door and --

TROUBLEMAKER

I AM NOT GAY!!

-- the accompanying PAN OVER brings in the screaming homophobe.

WILLIE

Whoa-Jesus! All right buddy, that's it...

TROUBLEMAKER

Buddy? I said, I am not gay!

WILLIE

Look, what's the problem pal, you go off your meds?

The man stares at him for a beat.

TROUBLEMAKER

...Yes, but this isn't about that! You are queer as a ten dollar bill.

WILLIE

Now you listen. My brother lost an arm fighting you people in Vietnam, so I want you to take a good hard look at this face...

Willie pulls back a fist.

WILLIE

...'cause it's the last fuckin' thing you're gonna see before I knock your head off and sh --

WHACK-WHACK-WHACK-WHACK-WHACK! The man surprises Willie with a flurry of effective punches. In moments, Willie is on the losing end of homosexual panic.

TROUBLEMAKER

Who is the bitch now, fat man?!

PIPING VOICE (O.S.)

Leave Santa alone!

The Troublemaker stops and looks down to find the Kid beating on his legs.

TROUBLEMAKER

Please little boy, I am doing this for all of us!

Willie gets a chance to regain composure. He wipes the blood from his mouth, raises his fists and... promptly collapses.

TROUBLEMAKER

I think he has finished his cruising for tonight, hm?

The Hindustani hothead wanders off. The Kid shuffles over to the prone Willie.

WILLIE

You.

INT. WILLIE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

The Kid sits in the front seat next to Willie who drives, stewing.

WILLIE

This one time I take you home.

KID

Uh-huh.

WILLIE

I'm not your fuckin' dada.

KID

Uh-huh.

WILLIE

It's not as if you helped out with that nut-job.

KID

Uh-huh.

WILLIE

And you're right there to grab his fuckin' balls.

KID

Uh-huh.

WILLIE

Right height.

KID

Yeah.

Willie demonstrates with a sharp turn of his hand:

WILLIE

Twist 'em.

KID

Why do you need a car?

WILLIE

...Fuck you talkin' about?

KID

This car.

WILLIE

Whuh. Which turn is it?

KID

Sage Terrace. Where's your sleigh?

Willie answers absently, his head slightly ducked and his eyes darting side to side, checking for road signs:

WILLIE

Repairs. In the shop.

KID

Where're the reindeer?

WILLIE

I stable 'em. Is it gonna be left or right?

KID

(pointing left)

That way. Where's the stable?

WILLIE

Next to the shop.

KID

How do they sleep?

WILLIE

Who -- the reindeer? Standing up.

KID

But the noise, how do they sleep?

WILLIE

What noise?

KID

From the shop.

WILLIE

They, uh, they only work during the day.

KID

I thought it was always night at the North Pole.

WILLIE

Not now. Now it's always day.

KID

Then how do they sleep?

WILLIE

Well, they -- WILL YOU PUH-LEEEZ
SHUT THE FUCK UP! HOW THE FUCK DO
KNOW?! I'M GONNA -- Whoa! Sage
Terrace!

He makes a hard left.

WILLIE

...What is it with you? Somebody
drop you on your fucking head?

KID

On my head?

WILLIE

What, are they gonna drop you on
somebody else's head?

KID

How can they drop me onto my own
head?

WILLIE

Not onto your own h -- ARE YOU FUCKING
WITH ME?

EXT. THE KID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Willie escorts the Kid along a long walkway that leads to the front door of a large, opulent, new-money Southwestern home.

Willie admires the surroundings.

WILLIE

Nice digs. Daddy home?

KID

He's on a adventure 'sploring mountains. He been gone a long time.

WILLIE

Exploring mountains? When's he coming back?

KID

Next year.

WILLIE

What about Mommy?

KID

She lives in God's house with Jesus and Mary and the Ghost and the long-eared donkey and Joseph and the talking walnut.

WILLIE

Who the fuck takes care of you then?

KID

Granma.

WILLIE

(hatching an idea)
Really... What's her name?

KID

Granma.

As the Kid lets himself in Willie pulls out a black ski mask and puts it on his head like a stocking cap.

WILLIE

Uh-huh. Is Granny spry?

He unrolls the mask to cover his face and takes out a blackjack.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Willie enters the foyer as the Kid walks into the adjoining room. He approaches a figure in a La-Z-Boy watching TV.

KID

Granma, Santa's here. Are you spry?

Grandma rises from her chair with the assistance of her walker and begins to move toward Willie. She wears a bathrobe and thick glasses and has another pair of glasses on a chain around her neck.

GRANDMA

Roger! You're home. Let me fix you

some sandwiches.

He watches as the senile old woman innocently putters away.

He yanks off his mask and turns to the Kid.

WILLIE

So you're tellin' me no one else is here?

The Kid shakes his head.

WILLIE

...No aunts, no uncles, no cousins?

The Kid shakes his head.

WILLIE

...Butler, security guard? Nothin'?

KID

Nuh-uh.

This sinks in. Willie looks to the Kid.

WILLIE

Daddy got a safe?

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

The sound of a tumbler tripping and, suddenly, light sweeps in as the safe door opens to reveal a smiling Willie with his stethoscope in his ears.

In the foreground a few stacks of cash and a folio. Willie reaches in.

Willie grabs the folio and flips through it. Insurance forms, deeds, Social Security cards, birth certificates, etc., all bear the name of the Kid's father, Roger Merman.

Nothing of value.

He puts the folio back, grabs the cash.

KID

You need money to fix your sleigh?

WILLIE

Huh? Yeah, whateverthefuck...

KID

You want milk and cookies?

Willie bends down and faces the Kid with a smile.

WILLIE

Daddy got a car?

EXT. THE KID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

At the cut a new Mercedes screeches through the frame and, as we hear it recede, we are left looking at the kid, who stands at the curb, waving happily.

KID

Bye Santa!

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP: the glowing ash of a cigarette burning down. The inhale lasts as long as comic timing will allow -- about six or seven seconds.

ANGLE ON:

A wiry, hard-bitten, sun-baked saddlebag of a man, GIN SLAGEL sits behind his cluttered desk sucking on a filterless Pall Mall. We can hear his in-taken breath rattling over and around the phlegm, growths, and polyps that line his embattled trachea. His words come out on an exhaled cloud chamber's worth of smoke:

GIN

"Fuck stick"?

Bob Chipeska sits opposite.

CHIPESKA

Yes, I thought it was strange too, but you know, I, I, I, I, uh, I, his little friend promised he wouldn't say it in front of the children. Which is fine because, you know, urn, there's an adult world and a child's world and that's okay. I'm not a censor.

GIN

Little friend?

CHIPESKA

Yes, a, a, a dwarf. Or midget... a, a, I don't know what he's called exactly but... a little guy. Little. Billy Barty. God rest. But thin fingers. Not the fat sausage fingers.

GIN

"Little people," that's what they like.

CHIPESKA

Ah, yes, right.

GIN

So "fuck stick," that's all?

CHIPESKA

Well, no, there was something else...

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WOMEN'S BIG AND TALL - (EARLIER)

Chipeska walks by a cashier station carrying some paperwork he's absorbed in, but hears some FAINT GROANS that make him pause. Curious, he heads in the direction of the sounds.

They're coming from the dressing room area.

Chipeska curiously makes his way towards a corridor of dressing rooms.

CHIPESKA (V.O.)

...A couple of days ago I was in
Women's Big & Tall? --

A sign reads: "Three Times A Lady".

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - DRESSING ROOM AREA - (EARLIER)

He goes down a corridor of dressing rooms.

CHIPESKA (V.O.)

and I heard these, urn, you know,
these... noises.

The sound of throttling lust builds in volume. He follows his ears until he arrives at a dressing room door. A Big or Tall woman within screams with pleasure:

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh yeah! Oh yeah!

WILLIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Yeah! Yeah! You ain't gonna shit
right for a week!

He looks underneath and spots black Santa boots with red velvet pants around the ankles.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Bob Chipeska holds up one hand.

CHIPESKA

Now don't get me wrong. I was against
the Clinton impeachment. What a man
does with his penis -- Oval Office,
Women's Big & Tall -- it's not for
the American people to say.

GIN

Right.

CHIPESKA

But when you're dealing with children, a tender sensibility, a position of trust -- then perhaps, someone who has screaming orgasms with large women --

GIN

Mm.

CHIPESKA

Though I can't fire him for that.

GIN

No.

CHIPESKA

Sizisra. They'd say.

GIN

Sure.

CHIPESKA

Not true. I am no siziat. But I can see the picket line now.

GIN

Yeah, a big fuckin' fat one.

CHIPESKA

They'd all say, If it had been a supermodel or, uh...

GIN

Heeyeah. Unfair practices. A lot of special pleading. Bitch, bitch, bitch. Fuckin' broads.

CHIPESKA

But -- I can't help it -- the guy makes me uneasy.

GIN

Well sure. Santa fuckin' someone in the ass.

CHIPESKA

So maybe there's something I could fire him for.

GIN

Yeah. Yeah. I getcha.

CHIPESKA

Do you? Do you think you could find something?

GIN

Oh shit yeah. There's always something.

INT. SAGAURO SQUARE MALL - VIDEO ARCADE - NIGHT

POV through the arcade's window shows Willie talking in pantomime to a young girl -- a very young girl -- at one of the pinball machines. Willie has his hands out to either side and is either demonstrating the kind of body English to apply to the machine, or else is describing an elaborate sexual encounter -- either recalled or prospective. The girl, giggles.

A REVERSE shows Marcus halted at the arcade window staring in with disbelief that gives way to jaw-grinding anger:

MARCUS

...Motherfucker... Oh, you lousy fucking motherfuck...

EXT. SAGOARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Willie and Marcus walk to their cars.

MARCUS

That's just the kinda shit that's gonna get us pinched!

WILLIE

(apologetic)
She said she was eighteen.

MARCUS

You promised no arcades! You said you'd only hustle Big & Tall!

WILLIE

Ah, it's like shooting fish in a barrel -- there's no sport,

MARCUS

How many times, you fuck? "The bigger the store, the bigger the take." Well, we can't work the big stores with your big fucking train wrecks!

WILLIE

(pulling out his keys)
You got some nerve you little shit ya! You my mom now?! You shat me out your womb, is that it? You gotta take care of me!? Well I can take care of myself and I don't need no

lectures! I know how to keep a low profile!

BOOP-BOOP! Willie uses his key fob to deactivate the car alarm to the Mercedes.

MARCUS

What the fuck is this?!

WILLIE

Mind your own fucking business.

Willie opens the door and an avalanche of beer bottle empties tumbles out, rolling everywhere.

MARCUS

You cocksucker!

Willie starts the engine and pulls out, and Marcus yells to the receding car:

MARCUS

...EVER HEAR OF THE OPEN-BOTTLE LAW?!

(then, to himself)

-- You dumb Dipshit Motherfucker!

EXT. RESIDENCE MOTEL - NIGHT

Willie parks the Mercedes in the front of a rundown motel complex. He walks past hookers and junkies until he gets to his unit.

He pulls out his key and just as he's about to insert it in the lock he sees a flashlight beam shining inside the window.

Surprised, he backs off cautiously and presses up against the wall.

Someone inside is rifling the room.

Willie hisses at a nearby hooker:

WILLIE

Opal, come here.

Opal looks at him with disdain.

OPAL

Screw you, Willie -- last time I didn't shit right for a week.

WILLIE

No, not that -- come here!

Reluctantly, she sidles over.

WILLIE

Who the fuck's in my room, did you see someone go into my fuckin' room?

OPAL

Yeah some guy askin' 'boutcha -- looked like a cop.

WILLIE

Ah fuck.

INT. MARCUS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marcus is on the phone with Willie.

MARCUS

What guy?! You get a look at him?

INTERCUT:

EXT. RESIDENCE MOTEL - NIGHT

Willie is at a pay phone.

WILLIE

No, I think it's a cop though. You think someone's onto us?

MARCUS

Is there anything in the room? Anything professional?

WILLIE

No. Clothes.

MARCUS

Just ditch. You got anywhere to sack out for a while?

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The Kid swings the door open to Willie, who stands on the stoop holding a small grip.

KID

Santa!

WILLIE

Yeah.

KID

You're bringing my present early?

WILLIE

NO.

KID

But I never told you what I wanted.

WILLIE

I said I didn't bring it, dipshit.

KID

Okay. Good. I want a stuffed elephant.
A pink one.

WILLIE

Yeah, well...

He brushes past the kid into the house, eyes darting this way and that.

WILLIE

...wish in one hand and shit in the
other, see which fills up faster.

KID

Okay.

The Kid follows Willie like a puppy dog as Willie checks out the house, bumping open doors, looking around.

WILLIE

I'm gonna be staying here a while.
Things are all fucked up at the North
Pole. Mrs. Santa, she... she walked
in on me fuckin' her sister. So I'm
out on my fuckin' ass. She's taking
half of everything... This'll do.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Willie has discovered the master bedroom, by appearances long unused. He tosses his grip onto the double bed.

WILLIE

...I'm gonna crash here. You and me,
like, you know, bachelors.

KID

Do you and Mrs. Santa have kids?

WILLIE

No. Thank the fuck Christ.

KID

What about the elves?

WILLIE

Yeah, well, them. They stay with
Mrs. Santa. I get 'em on weekends.
Run me a bath, will ya?

KID

What about the reindeer?

WILLIE

(pleading)

Don't start with the fucking reindeer.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

The Kid sits on a stool, hands on his knees, staring, motionless.

Finally:

KID

...What're their names?

Willie lies in the tub, also motionless, a wet washcloth over his face, fingers of one hand resting against a tumbler filled with ice and amber liquid that sits on the edge of the tub.

From under his washcloth:

WILLIE

...Who?

KID

The elves.

WILLIE

(to himself)

Oh, fuck...

(then, to the Kid)

I -- I can't remember... Sneezy, and Dopey --

KID

That's the Seven Dwarves.

WILLIE

Shit, is that not...? I just -- fuck, I don't know, I'll just say, Hey, Bub -- Look, I...

He drags the washcloth off his face and looks at the kid.

WILLIE

...FUCK ME! I DON'T KNOW THIS FUCKING SHIT! WHY IS EVERYTHING A FUCKING TEST WITH YOU?!

The Kid looks at him, unperturbed.

KID

-- How old are they?

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Willie staggers in, a towel around his waist, the empty rock glass in one hand, a bottle tucked under the other arm, the Kid trotting after.

KID

You want cookies?

WILLIE

No.

KID

Warm milk?

WILLIE

No.

Willie carefully, carefully puts glass and bottle down on the nightstand and slowly raises both hands in a "Don't... Move" gesture to keep them from flying off.

KID

Should I fix you some sandwiches?

WILLIE

What is with the fixing sandwiches?

No.

Satisfied that the bottle and glass are not going anywhere, Willie climbs unsteadily onto the bed and stares at the ceiling.

KID

Okay. You want anything else?

WILLIE

No. As soon as the bed stops moving
I'm going to sleep...

KID

Okay.

WILLIE

...Wake me up... when the little
hand is on the...

A long beat.

The ragged breath of drunken sleep.

KID

Okay.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - MAIN FLOOR - SCARF AREA - DAY

Marcus's wife Lois stands in front of a mirror, trying on a cashmere scarf. Her look of pruney disapproval is in place, as ever. She takes off the scarf and writes something in a

small spiral notebook...

SALESWOMAN

Can I help you, ma'am?

LOIS

Just looking.

Across the store, she spies the jewelry counter.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - MAIN FLOOR - JEWELRY AREA - DAY

Lois stands looking intently down through the glass case in pruney disapproval.

SALESMAN

Help you with anything, ma'am?

Without bothering to look up:

LOIS

Just looking.

As he drifts away she takes out her spiral notebook and makes more notes.

INT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - FOOD COURT - NIGHT

Willie and Marcus nosh on food-court Gyros.

WILLIE

Fuck me? Fuck you!

MARCUS

You can't just take up with some kid! You don't know who's around, what they do!

WILLIE

You got some nerve you little shit ya. You my mom now?! You shat me out your --

MARCUS

You said that last night you stupid fuck!

WILLIE

Ah, shit! Fuck you!

Lois appears with a salad on a tray and a look of pruney disapproval. She sits next to Marcus and, in the way of old couples comfortable with each other, he rests a hand on her knee and continues to talk, ignoring her, while she picks through her salad, ignoring him.

MARCUS

You are by far the dumbest most pathetic piece of maggot-eaten shit that has ever slid from God's gilded ass! What if the kid has one of those fucking play-dates they have now?

WILLIE

You shittin' me?! He doesn't have fucking friends! Not even an imaginary one! Unless he got ditched by him! He's just a fuckin' misfit! Lives with his grandma who sits drooling in front of the TV! Every once in a while she gets up to play soccer with her tits! What, she's gon' rat me out? She don't know her ass from last Tuesday!

Marcus thinks a moment.

MARCUS

You fuck her?

WILLIE

Jesus! Why is everything sex with you?

MARCUS

With me? I fuck one person, I ain't out there serial fornicating, trying to float my liver! Drinkin' myself silly 'cause I can't stand what a piece of shit I am!

Lois, chewing on her salad, notices someone walking by with a Chamberlain's bag. She glances in as the person passes and, still chewing, gets out her notebook and jots something down.

WILLIE

What're you, fuckin' Sigmund Sawed-Off Freud? The shrunken fuckin' shrink?

MARCUS

Yeah, that's right, shit-for-brains, talk about my height. Make it about something safe. 'Cause you're an emotional fucking cripple. Your soul is dog shit. Every single fuckin' thing about you is ugly.

WILLIE

Yeah? Well... fuck you.

Marcus and Lois get up to leave.

MARCUS

I've seen anal warts more attractive
than you.

They walk off. Willie sits there for a moment. Goes back to
eating his hamburger. A WOMAN comes up with her TODDLER in
tow.

WOMAN

Oh, look who's here Jimmy! It's Santa!
Let's tell him what you want for
Christmas.

WILLIE

(shouting, food flying
out of his mouth)

I'M ON MY FUCKING LUNCH BREAK HERE!

WOMAN

(putting her hands
over the Toddler's
ears)

Are you insane?! How dare you talk
like that in front of a child! The
management is going to hear about
this... I'm going to have you fired!

WILLIE

That's a threat? You think you can
make my life any worse, you go ahead,
be my fucking guest!

He throws his hamburger back down on his tray and storms
off, leaving the woman shocked.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Willie and the Kid sit opposite each other over a game of
checkers. Willie scowls as the Kid thinks for an eternity
about his next move.

The silence is deafening. Endless.

Then... CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

KID

King me.

Willie stares at the board for a long beat.

He leaps up screaming and flings the board across the room.

WILLIE

FUCK YOU! YOU FUCKING CHEATER!

Willie throws checkers one by one against the wall,
punctuating each throw with an insult.

WILLIE

Son of a BITCH! ...you LOUSY...
**STINKEN... ROTTEN... CHEATING... NO
GOOD...**

ANGLE ON Kid's face, unfazed, still smiling.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - KID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later. The kid lies in bed, sleeping peacefully.

Distant sounds of the slosh of water.

EXT. THE KID'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Churning water.

The sloshing of water is now accompanied by a rhythmic slapping sound.

Willie bangs Sue in the Jacuzzi. He is wearing his Santa hat.

SUE

YES! YES! YES SANTA YES!

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Two tall water glasses are set down on a sideboard.

WILLIE (O.S.)

Refill?

SUE (O.S.)

Mm.

A splash of orange juice is dolloped into each of the glasses, and then both are filled to the top with vodka.

WIDER on the living room reveals Sue looking around. Her speech -- and Willie's -- is somewhat impaired:

SUE

Nice place you got. Needs a bit of a woman's touch, but it's really nice.

WILLIE

It's okay. Just renting.

Sue accepts her refilled glass and sits on the sofa.

SUE

Thanks... So how long will you --
urn...

She reaches down to fish under her ass in the sofa cushion,

and pulls out a red checker. She dully inspects it.

SUE

...How long you gonna be here?

WILLIE

Through the holidays.

Sue flips the checker away.

SUE

So what's the thing, you like kids?

WILLIE

Fuck no! Whaddya think I'm some kind of pervert?

SUE

Wha? I'm talking about you being Santa.

He sways, looking at her.

WILLIE

Oh. No, see, the thing is... I'm not really Santa.

Blearily she gazes back. After a moment:

SUE

Oh.

(pause)

...Well -- still -- I gotta thing for you anyway -- c'mere...

He leans down to kiss her.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The door opens to reveal Sue on her way out. Willie sways in the foyer, a three-quarters-empty bottle of Old Grandad in hand.

SUE

So I'll see you soon I guess, right?

WILLIE

Yeah, I'm gonna send you some flowers. Real good expensive ones.

He closes the door. He then tips back the bottle and polishes it off with a series of quick gulps.

Ever so daintily, he puts the bottle down. A beat later --

WHAM! He faints dead away, hitting the floor like a felled tree.

FADE OUT:

Faintly, distantly, a blood-curdling scream.

FADE IN:

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - FOYER/HALLWAY - MORNING

Willie wakes on the floor to the sound of the scream.

WILLIE

Whuh...

He looks blearily up and immediately grabs his head, feeling his hangover.

Following his ears he heads toward the hall. He passes Grandma.

GRANDMA

Roger! You're home! Let me fix you some sandwiches.

A bedroom door crashes open and the Kid emerges screaming and runs right into Willie. He immediately caroms off and goes screaming down the hall.

WILLIE

What the...

He looks down at his T-shirt. There is a bloody palm-print on his stomach.

He turns the corner to the hall, There is a row of fresh, bloody palm-prints down one side of the hall. The Kid, screaming, is just disappearing at the far end.

Willie follows.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Willie enters.

The Kid is screaming, jumping up and down and clutching one hand -- the bloody one -- with the other.

WILLIE

What the fuck did you do?

He goes up and tries to yank the hand, which the hysterical Kid yanks away.

WILLIE

...Lemme look at it. What the fuck happened?

As Willie drags him to the sink and runs water over the cut, the Kid takes great gulping breaths and finally manages to say:

KID

...I cut myself by mistake.

Willie grabs a vodka bottle standing open on the counter and liberally pours some on the hand. The Kid shrieks.

WILLIE

I forgot to tell ya, that'll sting.
Okay now!

The Kid yanks his hand away and runs off screaming. Willie is left alone in the middle of the kitchen.

WILLIE

...Well fuck.

He calls after the boy, sincerely trying to help:

WILLIE

...Don' t you want me to wrap it in
a T-shirt or something?

EXT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - MORNING

It is early morning and the parking lot is empty except for Marcus' van. The Mercedes eventually pulls in, parking beside him. Windows roll down. In the driver's seat, Marcus looks up from his watch with a scowl.

MARCUS

You're late.

VAN DOORS

Marcus throws open the back of the van, revealing the components of the water drill in various prop gift boxes.

Willie wears a forbearing smile:

WILLIE

Kids, lemme tell ya...

He shakes his head and chuckles as Marcus tosses him an empty red Santa sack.

WILLIE

...They'll run ya ragged.

Marcus stares.

EXT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - ENTRANCE - MORNING

Jesse, the security guard unlocks the door and opens up for

Willie and Marcus. They enter in costume. Willie lugs the filled sack and seems to be straining.

JESSE

Morning boys.

MARCUS

Morning Jesse.

JESSE

(to Willie)

Ho! Ho! Ho!

Willie pants under the weight of his bag:

WILLIE

Up your ass.

EXT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - MORNING

As Willie and Marcus enter the store Gin Slagel drives by their cars, carefully noting their tags.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - DAY

Willie drops the bag with a loud thud.

WILLIE

GOD dammit!

MARCUS

You tear your ball again?

WILLIE

No, it's okay.

Together they unload the extremely heavy gifts.

MARCUS

Let's do the other thing.

Willie follows Marcus behind the Wonderland backdrop. Marcus points to an air duct in the ceiling.

MARCUS

There.

Willie crouches and Marcus climbs on his shoulders.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - AIR DUCT - DAY

The duct pops open and Marcus climbs in, shimmying down to a junction and continuing on.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - CUSTOMER SERVICE OFFICES - DAY

A long row of cubicles, each one occupied with Customer

Service Operators. As they work, the loud squeaks and popping metal sounds of a dwarf crawling through a duct are heard above them.

Each operator in succession notes the racket, looking up curiously as the sounds pass overhead.

Suddenly, the sounds stop. Everyone returns to work.

Then...

SQUEAK! POP! SQUEAK! The sounds resume. The operators look up again as the noises fade away.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAY

The sounds continue until Marcus' face appears at the ceiling duct of an unmanned surveillance room.

He focuses on the wall of a hundred identical VCRs and squints to see the brand name: SONY HVR-3200.

EXT. ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Lois exits an electronics store with a box slung under her arm, her mouth turned down in pruned disapproval. She places the box on the hood of her car and we see its printings SONY HVR-3200.

She opens the box, fishes out the remote, then tosses the box and VCR into a nearby trash can.

EXT. ARIZONA STATE PRISON - DAY

Gin Slagel walks through the main gate of the heavily fortified penitentiary, leaving a huge trail of cigarette smoke.

INT. PRISON - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Gin Slagel sits, smoking and waiting with family members and lawyers. A guard enters and motions.

GUARD

Alright Gin, come on.

INT. PRISON - VISITORS' ROOM - DAY

Gin sits down in one of the booths across from a middle-aged prisoner.

PRISONER

Who are you?

GIN

Your name Roger Merman?

PRISONER

Yes, but --

GIN

Doing three-to-six for embezzlement?

PRISONER

...Many accounting questions are not cut-and-dried --

GIN

You live at 41 Sage Terrace?

PRISONER

(suddenly tense)

Is it Granma? Is my son alright?

GIN

They're fine. Do you have any house guests?

The man is bewildered:

PRISONER

...House guests?

GIN

Thanks much for your time. God bless.

He gets up and walks away.

PRISONER

...Who are you? WHO ARE YOU?

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Gin sits at his desk sucking in a Pall Mall filterless. Bob Chipeska sits opposite. Finally Gin exhales like a crematorium.

GIN

Well, it's fucked.

CHIPESKA

(hopeful)

...Yeah?

GIN

Yeah. Fucked. Frankly.

CHIPESKA

He's...

GIN

Clean.

CHIPESKA

(disappointed)
Oh.

GIN
As a fuckin' whistle.

CHIPESKA
Nothing?

GIN
No. Nothing. I mean, shit, he curses,
yeah. But never around children.

CHIPESKA
Oh.

GIN
No criminal record, no parking tickets
f'Christ's sake, no bad habits, even.
Sex, yeah. But man is a sexual being.

CHIPESKA
Yeah.

GIN
Fuckin' Darwinian. Can't do shit
about that, Jack.

CHIPESKA
NO.

GIN
Wouldn't want to.

CHIPESKA
Yeah. No. Of course not. I'm not
advocating celibacy.

GIN
Hope not. End of the human fuckin'
race.

CHIPESKA
Yes.

Gin turns one palm up.

GIN
Fucks large women. What can I say.

EXT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

A bus clears frame, revealing the kid as he walks toward the
mall.

VOICES
Loser! Dipshit!

CLANG! The kid is hit in the head with a can again. Again, no reaction.

Someone in the group of frustrated bullies has a fresh idea:

VOICE

Wedgie!

Cheering, the six bullies engulf the kid.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - DAY

Marcus and Willie go about the business of being a Santa-Elf team. Willie sees off another child,

CHILD

Pokemon.

WILLIE

Done.

MARCUS

Next!

Marcus heads to the velvet rope to find the Kid, mussed up and dirty, the band of his underwear around his chest.

KID

Santa here?

MARCUS

Oh jeez.

Marcus unclips the rope and the Kid approaches Willie.

WILLIE

Is that your underwear?

KID

Part of it.

WILLIE

Where's the rest? Never mind. What do you want?

KID

I was thinking I wanted a purple stuffed elephant, not pink, but now I changed my mind.

WILLIE

What.

KID

Now I don't want an elephant at all. I want a gorilla named Davy for

beating up the skateboard kids who pull on my underwear and he could take his orders from the talking walnut so it wouldn't be my bad thing.

Willie stares at him.

WILLIE

...You know when I was your age, I didn't need no fuckin' gorilla, and I wasn't any bigger than you. One day I came crying home to Dad because four kids had beat me up, and you know what he did?'

KID

He make it all better?

WILLIE

No. He kicked my ass. You know why?

KID

You went bathroom on Mommy's dishes?

WILLIE

What the fuck? No.

KID

He try to teach you not to cry and be a man.

WILLIE

Nope, it was because he was a mean, drunk son of a bitch. When he wasn't busy busting my ass, he was puttin' out cigarettes on my neck.

KID

Uh-huh...

WILLIE

The world's fuckin' unfair -- it don't give ya nothing. You can wish all you want but you gotta take what you need. Stand up for yourself... stop being such a pussy and kick those kids in the balls or something.

(pause)

Or don't, I don't give a shit. Just leave me the hell out of it.

KID

'Kay. Thanks, Santa.

WILLIE

Okay, go ahead...

He slaps the Kid paternally on the ass.

WILLIE

...Get the fuck outta here...

KID

'Kay...

As the Kid putters away:

MARCUS

(happy again)

Time for the next lucky boy or girl
to --

Marcus returns to the velvet rope to find Gin Slagel waiting
stone-faced.

MARCUS

What gives? Where's the grandson?

GIN

Open the rope there, Marcus.

Marcus, wary, hesitates but then lets him through. As they
walk toward Willie:

MARCUS

I know you?

GIN

Not yet.

Willie is irked by the arrival of an adult:

WILLIE

Santa don't do grab-ass, cowboy.

GIN

Act natural.

WILLIE

Huh? What?

Gin sits on Willie's knee.

WILLIE

...What the fuck?!

GIN

You are Willie Tugboat Soke and you
are Marcus "The Prince" Skidmore. On
Christmas Eve, you're gonna rob this
store blind. What say we go somewhere
private?

INT. BLACK ANGUS BAR - NIGHT

Willie, Marcus and Gin sit in a booth.

GIN

Research, that's how. I'm a department store detective Sherlock, that's what I do. Seven cities in seven years. Pretty impressive. The stores change, your names change. You always get away clean. Yeah, pretty darn impressive. But let's face facts -- you all are a couple of half-bucket small-timers. Because of your physical attributes you've found a niche. I respect that. But you've also been caught. By me. So this is the way how we gonna do things. I don't want to take over, I don't even want to change your scam. Whatever you guys do, it works. All I want is a taste. When the deed is done, we part ways. I buy a ranch in Havasu, you take your little medicine show back on the road.

MARCUS

(sighs)
How much?

GIN

Half.

Willie bolts out of his chair and grabs Gin by the neck.

WILLIE

Now you listen here, you --

Marcus pulls him off.

MARCUS

Easy! Easy! Just back off, Willie. I can handle this.

After a hard stare Willie settles back into his seat. Marcus turns his attention to Gin:

MARCUS

Okay. Thirty percent. There's three of us. Thirty percent. That's fair.

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

I meant thirty-three.

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

And a third.

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

Thirty-five.

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

Forty.

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

Forty-two?

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

Forty-two five.

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

Fooooooooorty... eight.

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

Forty-nine?

GIN

Half.

MARCUS

Well...

Marcus sighs.

MARCUS

...what's one point.

GIN

Down the middle on the dough, and
any merchandise you take I look over
and cherry-pick.

MARCUS

No! Money's one thing, but ---

GIN

It ain't Chinese menu, jagoff. I
tell yea how the way it's gonna be.
This is pricks ficks.

Gin leaves. Marcus and Willie stare at his retreating back
as they talk:

WILLIE

...Pricks ficks?

MARCUS

Ah, he's a fuckin' moron.

WILLIE

Yeah, well I guess that's how you
got the upper hand.

MARCUS

Fuck you.

WILLIE

Negotiating.

MARCUS

Fuck you -- you don't like it, next
year, fuck off. I can always get
another box jockey.

WILLIE

Yeah, and I can get another midget.

Marcus turns to Willie:

MARCUS

Yeah? Where? You see us hangin' off
of fuckin' trees? Like fuckin' crab
apples? And even if we did, you'd
never front your own racket. 'Cause
you got no discipline and zero fuckin'
initiative. You'd fall apart without
me. You're just too fuckin' pathetic --

WILLIE

Yeah, yeah.

MARCUS

-- too fuckin' pathetic for words,
you fuckin' loser. And you fuckin'
know it.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Willie drags his ass through the front door, dejected.

GRANDMA

Roger! You're home. Let me fix you
some sandwiches.

He stares at her. His gaze is far away. Finally, he seems to
rouse himself:

WILLIE

Ah, fuck it.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

IN C.U. CAMERA MOVES ALONG

a hose snaking from an exhaust pipe to the driver's window
which is open just far enough to admit it.

In his Santa suit, Willie sits in the driver's seat of the
idling car, staring through the windshield.

After a long beat, we hear a door opening.

The kid stands in the doorway from the house. He looks at
Willie, motionless in the car.

KID

...Santa?

Willie's eyes do not leave the spot in space:

WILLIE

Yeah.

KID

What're you doing?

WILLIE

Ah, nothin'.

KID

You goin' to work today?

WILLIE

Not really.

KID

You just gonna sit there?

WILLIE

Yeah. Lemme alone.

The Kid turns to go. Willie bestirs himself:

WILLIE

-- Kid.

KID

Yeah.

Willie beckons him.

WILLIE

Later today, when the paramedics
come and bag up Santa...

He displays an envelope.

WILLIE

...make sure the cops get this letter.
It tells about all the bad things
that -- that -- what the fuck happened
to your eye?

The Kid's eye is indeed black and blue. He reaches self-
consciously up to it.

KID

Umm...

WILLIE

Well goddamnit...

EXT. HILL NEAR SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - DAY

We are pulling an eight-year-old child who rides his bicycle
along the sidewalk, looking off, struck by what he sees.

He slows and then comes to a stop having pulled even with a
group of other children gathered on the sidewalk also looking
off at the same spot. They stare for a good long beat,
expressions rather neutral. But the sight, whatever it is,
holds their attention.

Finally one in the foreground remarks:

KID

I didn't know he did that.

Their POV: rather distant, on a grassy hill a man in a Santa
suit is pounding the shit out of the bullies. One of the
bullies throws a punch, but Santa grabs his fist and pushes
him down. Santa puts his foot on another bully's butt and
sends him flying. After more wrestling and flinging about,
the bullies wind up in a heap on the ground.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - LOCKER ROOM -DAY

Willie, a faraway look in his eye, sits on a bench near
Marcus, who is finishing putting on his elf outfit.

WILLIE

I think I've turned a corner.

MARCUS

(absent)

Yeah? You fucking Petites now?

Willie, dreamy, refuses to take the bait:

WILLIE

No no. No; I beat the crap out of some kids today -- but, you know, for a purpose. It really made me feel pretty good about myself -- like I did something constructive for a change. Accomplished somethin'.

Marcus stares at him.

MARCUS

...You need many years of therapy. Many, many, many, many... many fucking years of therapy.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - MAIN FLOOR - FURS - DAY

Lois, her face set in pruney disapproval, flips slowly through a rack of furs.

A salesman approaches from behind her. She somehow senses his presence; without bothering to look around she murmurs:

LOIS

Just looking...

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Willie and Sue come in, carrying a few bottles of liquor.

Willie closes the door, and freezes, realizing that something is wrong.

WILLIE

...Hello?

Nothing.

WILLIE

...Granma?

He hears the TV and heads for the living room. Sue follows a few steps behind.

Willie finds Grandma in her chair, not moving.

WILLIE

Granma...

He strains through the dim light for any evidence of life.

WILLIE

...Oh jeez.

He lets out a sigh and leans in close to listen to her heart.

SUE

Oh my God...

GRANDMA

Roger!

Willie jumps and screams like a girl.

GRANDMA

...You're home. Let me fix you some sandwiches.

She gets up and heads for the kitchen as Willie tries to compose himself.

WILLIE

(holding his chest)

No thanks.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - KID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Kid sleeps. He is awakened by the sounds of stumbling and CLANKING BOTTLES. He hears GIGGLING, more STUMBLING. He gets up.

INT. THE 'KID'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Kid discovers some clothes. Then some more. He follows the trail of clothes towards the sounds coming from the Master Bedroom.

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Facing the CAMERA, Willie's in his underpants and Santa hat lying on the floor on top of Sue. He's gripping her panties with his teeth -- stretching the elastic while he starts pulling them down. Sue's giggling.

The bedroom door opens behind them and the Kid walks in. He comes up and stands over them, a few steps behind Willie.

Willie freezes, panty elastic waistband still stretched out in his teeth. He senses something, and his eyes look up from under his Santa hat, his wolfish smile fades.

The Kid stands there, hands behind his back.

SUE

(lifting her head up)

Hello little boy.

KID

Hello. Santa?

WILLIE

(frozen; teeth still
gripping panties)
...yes?

KID

I know that Christmas Eve is in a
couple days and you have to fly around
and give presents to the world and
after that you won't be around no
more.

WILLIE

...Yes?

KID

So I thought I'd give you your present
now.

The Kid takes his hands from behind his back and extends a
small present in crudely taped-up wrapping paper.

This forces Willie to let go of the panties. They SNAP back.

He sits up. He takes the gift and opens it. Inside is a
roughly whittled crescent of brown wood.

WILLIE

(mumble)
What the fuck is it?

KID

A wooden pickle.

Willie stares at it.

WILLIE

Why'd you paint it brown?

KID

Not paint. It's blood from when I
cut my hand when I was making it for
you.

Willie stares at it.

WILLIE

...Thanks.

KID

You're welcome. Good night Santa.
Good night Mrs. Santa's sister.

He leaves.

Willie still stares at the gift. Sue is looking where the Kid exited.

SUE

That was very nice. He's really a nice kid, isn't he?

She goes back to grabbing him passionately.

Willie has trouble speaking.

WILLIE

Hold on a minute.

SUE

What?

WILLIE

Nothin'... it's just... I'm... well... I'm sorta... fucking... touched.

He looks from the wooden pickle up to Sue, his eyes brim, and he starts weeping.

WILLIE

...I don't know if I can fuck...

Sue hugs him and strokes his hair.

SUE

That's okay. That's okay.

Willie abjectly bawls:

WILLIE

BABY, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN FUCK!

SUE

There, there... There, there...

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Willie, hungover, half-dressed in his Santa outfit for work.

He fumbles in the refrigerator for some orange juice.

The Kid comes up behind him clutching a document.

KID

SANTA!

Willie jumps with a start.

KID

You wanna see my report card?

Willie takes the report card as he tries to compose himself.

He looks at it. All C's and one B.

KID

Think I did good?

Willie's eyes drift back to the card and settle on COMMENTS.

They read, "Thurman has an active, inquiring mind. And no friends."

WILLIE

Who the fuck is Thurman? This is you? Your name's Thurman?

KID

Yeah.

WILLIE

(incredulous)
Thurman Merman?!

KID

Yeah.

WILLIE

Jesus.

KID

(back to the report
card)
You think I did good?

Willie does not want to engage.

WILLIE

Whaddya you care what I think, anyway?
(pause, relenting a
bit)

What do I fuckin' know? Better than I ever did. I never got any B's,

KID

I thought maybe since at least I did good in school, you'll bring me a present this year. 'Cause last Christmas and the one before that you didn't bring no presents...

This is a lot for Willie to hear.

WILLIE

Oh...

KID

...Even though I'm a dipshit loser.

WILLIE

(a beat, then explodes)
Jesus Fucking Christ, Kid! Why do
talk about yourself like that? What
the fuck is that about?! What's with
you anyway? I ain't Fucking Santa
Claus! Look at me, I am living fucking
proof that there ain't no Santa Claus!

Pause.

KID

I know there's no Santa. I just
thought maybe you'd wanna give me a
present 'cause we're friends.

WILLIE

Oh...

An uncomfortable silence. Willie is most uncomfortable.

WILLIE

(pause, then sincerely
to the kid)
Look, kicking the shit out of those
kids, that's as generous as I can
get.

The Kid just nods and doesn't say anything. Willie can't
take it.

WILLIE

**JESUS FUCKING CHRIST, I GOTTA GO TO
WORK!**

Willie runs out of the room very upset,

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - FOYER - MORNING

Willie grabs a bottle of whiskey off the counter and hurries
out, slamming the door.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - DAY

Marcus checks his watch impatiently as the endless line of
excited children and their parents impatiently murmurs.

The tension is suffocating Marcus. Finally, a gasp goes up
from the crowd.

Marcus looks up to see Willie, totally shit-faced. His costume
is half on, his undergarments are showing, and his hand
clutches the neck of a broken bottle.

MARCUS

No.

Willie stumbles over a burro and falls into a pile of fake snow. He rises to his feet and begins to pummel the statue.

WILLIE

You fuckin' spic!

Children scream in horror as mothers cover their eyes.

Gin enters the Wonderland and takes in the spectacle.

GIN

Sweet Jews for Jesus...

Willie finishes dispatching the burro and stumbles to his Santa chair. Marcus stomps up to him.

MARCUS

Holy motherfuck. What do you think you're doing?

WILLIE

(sobbing)

I pissed my pants!

Marcus pounces on him.

MARCUS

You son of a bitch!

Gin pulls Marcus off.

GIN

Alright, let's get him out of here.
I'll go smooth this over with
Chipeska. Food poisoning, something.

The two men face each other, their voices rising. Beyond them we see the line of children staring at them.

MARCUS

What do you mean, get him out of here?

GIN

Take him to his car.

MARCUS

In case you hadn't noticed, I'm a motherfuckin' dwarf. So unless you got a forklift handy, maybe you should lend a hand.

GIN

That figures, you wantin' all kinds of set-asides and special treatment 'cause of your handicap. You're all the same.

MARCUS

Special treatment? I'm three fucking feet tall, asshole -- it's a matter of physics! Draw me a sketch how I get him to the car!

Gin notices the line of kids staring. He puts up a sign that reads: "Santa Has Gone To Feed His Reindeer. He'll be back soon".

GIN

Bitch, bitch.

MARCUS

Sketch it up, fuckin' moron. Fuckin' Leonardo da Vinci.

GIN

What did you call me, thigh-high?

MARCUS

I called you a fuckin' guinea Homo. From the fifteenth fuckin' century.

GIN

I could stick you up my ass, smallfry.

MARCUS

Yeah? You sure it ain't too sore from last night?

GIN

You got some lip on you, midget.

MARCUS

Well it was on your wife's pussy last night. Why don't you dust that thing once in a while. Asshole.

INT. MARCUS' VAN - PARKING LOT - DUSK

Marcus sits with Lois in the van staking out the door to Chamberlain's, waiting for Gin to leave.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - DUSK

WILLIE sleeps it off behind a flimsy cardboard set.

INT. MARCUS' VAN - PARKING LOT - DUSK

Marcus and Lois continue their stake-out.

We see Gin exit the store and head for his car.

MARCUS

There he is... that lousy,

leatherfaced, dago motherfucker...

EXT. QUIET ROAD - NIGHT

Marcus stands by the side of his van. It's parked on the shoulder with the hood up, jumper cables attached and hanging. Lois is in the driver's seat.

Gin's Ford 4 X 4 speeds around the corner and Marcus flags him down.

SCREEEEEECH! Gin slams on the brakes, then backs up and pulls over. He emerges from the 4 X 4 with road rage on full brew, and strides over to the van.

GIN

Jesus, Mother Mary and Joseph! What in the name of the holy lord Fuck is the problem now?

MARCUS

Sorry, the van stalled. Give us a jump will ya?

GIN

Well, I'll be dipped in dogshit!...
What am I, your auto mechanic now?

He shakes his head in disgust. Grumbling, he goes back to the 4 X 4 and drives it into position. He gets out and raises the hood.

The two vehicles face each other nose-to-nose, several feet apart as Gin opens the hood.

GIN

(motions to his battery)
Help yourself, small fry.

Marcus seems to have a little difficulty reaching the battery terminals.

MARCUS

It's hard for me to reach...

Gin grabs the cables from him. Marcus takes a few steps back.

GIN

Jesus Christ, give me those!

MARCUS

Thanks.

Gin attaches the cables.

GIN

(then, to Lois)

Alright, TRY IT!

Lois turns the key and the van starts right up. Gin takes the cables off the van and closes the hood. He lights up a Pall Mall.

Marcus signals to Lois. She puts the car into gear and stomps her foot on the accelerator, squashing Gin between the two vehicles.

ANGLE PROM INSIDE VAN (SLOW MOTION):

Gin's face as it's squooshed up against the van's windshield.

A cloud of cigarette smoke escapes his lips.

Lois continues to step on the gas, trying to crush him.

ANGLE ON: the tires spinning in the gravel.

Finally, she takes her foot off the gas. The van eases back.

Gin falls to the ground with a groan. Marcus steps up and leans over him.

MARCUS

Oh my, what a terrible accident!

LOIS

Is he dead?

MARCUS

No, but it looks like you broke most of his ribs.

Then, leaning down to Gin.

MARCUS

(for Gin's benefit)

I'd say maybe... fifty percent of them? Or do you think thirty percent?

LOIS

I needed more of a running start --
I couldn't build up any speed.

Marcus paces around trying to figure out what to do next.

MARCUS

(shaking his head in
dismay)

Motherfuck!

He grabs the jumper cables still connected to Gin's 4 X 4 and clamps the other ends on Gin's ears. A small jolt and a spark or two. Only a minor shock.

MARCUS

Shit!

He grabs Gin's arm and with great effort drags him over a few feet so that his head is positioned behind the front tire of the van. Gin tries to crawl out of the way.

ANGLE ON: Gin's feet slipping on the gravel.

MARCUS

Put it in reverse.

ANGLE ON: shift level moving into REVERSE.

ANGLE ON: Lois' foot stepping on the gas pedal.

WIDER: Lois drives backwards. There's a bump and the sound of a dull POP.

CUT TO:

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - NEXT DAY

CLOSE-UP: A large bubble gum bubble pops.

Willie, in a self-medicated stupor, barely managing to hold a wailing toddler on his lap. Bubble gum is all over the Kid's face.

WILLIE

'Tendo it is.

He passes the child off to Marcus, who holds it as Willie gazes off and murmurs;

WILLIE

...Everything I touch turns to shit and dies.

Marcus, still holding the child, quickly glances around, and then hisses into Willie's ear:

MARCUS

What are you, drinking Sterno now?
'Cause you're sounding like my Aunt Tilly right before she smeared her own shit on the bedroom walls and we had to lock her up and she spent the rest of her life with a shaved head and eating lunch through a tube up her nose...

Willie continues to stare, head swaying.

MARCUS

...You better be in shape by this evening, fat man. After tonight, I

don't give a shit. But this is the time to reach deep down and suck it up.

Marcus hands the kid to his Mother. He smiles warmly.

MARCUS

...Lovely boy.

INT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - NIGHT

"Jolly Old Saint Nicholas" plays as a buzzing throng of people crams the mall.

One current in this sea of humanity flows into the bedecked entrance of Chamberlain's Department Store.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Jesse the security guard is at his post near the doors to the parking lot. He smiles and waves farewell to departing shoppers.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Attention shoppers, the store will be closing in five minutes. We wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah and a joyous Kwanza.

Behind Jesse, in Men's Wear, is Lois, wearing a frown of pruney disapproval. Seeing that he's not looking, she inexplicably nudges a table of sweaters a few feet over.

SQUEEEEEEEAK! The table makes a loud noise, but it's too chaotic on the floor for anyone to notice. Satisfied with her placement of the table, Lois heads out the door.

INT. CHAMBERAIN'S - WINTER WONDERLAND - NIGHT

Bleary-eyed Willie puts down a little girl and she happily scampers off.

WILLIE

Barbie it is...

Willie turns to Marcus.

WILLIE

...That it?

Marcus moves the backdrop to reveal the air vent.

MARCUS

Let's go.

Willie cracks open an ampule of Amyl Nitrate and inhales deeply. Marcus grimaces:

MARCUS

...Oh Christ.

WILLIE

(red-faced, holding
breath)

Let's do it.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

With the sound of closing circuits, banks of light systematically shut down in the various departments of the now empty store.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Exhausted employees file out of the store past Jesse.

Eventually Willie emerges.

JESSE

Merry Christmas, Willie.

WILLIE

Up your ass.

Jesse heads for the alarm panel near the doorway and punches the key labeled ARM. An LED readout labeled ARMING counts down from 30 seconds.

Jesse exits the store, locking the door and heading home.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - CUSTOMER SERVICE OFFICES - NIGHT

The cubicles are now empty and the office is still, but we hear dwarf-shimmy in the ducts overhead.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S ENTRANCE - NIGHT

By the front door, the alarm continues to count down -- 25...
24...

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - AIR DUCT - NIGHT

Marcus arrives at the vent above the surveillance room. He reaches in his pocket, pulls out the remote control Lois bought, and aims it down into the room.

INT. CHAMBERLAN'S - SURVEILLANCE ROOM - NIGHT

The huge bank of VCRs powers down.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S ENTRANCE - NIGHT

ALARM BOX

19... 18...

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - AIR DUCT - NIGHT

Marcus arrives at the precipice of a descending duct. He snaps on a biking helmet and takes a deep breath.

MARCUS

All right...

He dives down the duct.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - AIR DUCTS - NIGHT

We PAN and WHIP-PIVOT along the outside of several lengths of ductwork, following the muffled SCREAM of a thousand girlies echoing inside.

The ductwork dimples out along the bottom with the WUBBA sound of flopping aluminum as Marcus's weight travels its length; at turns, Marcus's inertial force makes one side of the duct momentarily dent out.

We thus follow Marcus's progress as he slides, bumps, ricochets and barrels through the department store.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - MAIN FLOOR - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

As the alarm continues to count down, 12... 11... a distant scream grows louder until --

-- in nearby Men's Wear, the vent in the 30-foot ceiling bursts open and --

-- Marcus drops from the duct.

THUD! He lands on the table of sweaters placed by Lois.

In a split-second, he sits up and looks at the alarm box.

7... 6...

He hops off the table and pushes it toward the alarm box.

5... 4...

The far side of the table smashes into the wall beneath the alarm box.

Marcus kicks out the collapsible legs on the near side, making that edge of the table crash to the ground, creating a ramp.

He sprints away from the table spins, and runs back towards it...

3... 2...

He runs up the ramp and --

1...

-- leaps and slaps the CANCEL button -- just in time.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - OFFICES - NIGHT

DING! Elevator doors open to reveal Willie and Marcus holding sections of the disassembled water drill.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - ACCOUNTING OFFICE - NIGHT

The lights flicker on in the accounting office as Willie and Marcus wheel the water drill over to the safe. Once they get it there:

WILLIE

Oh shit...

MARCUS

What? What-What-WHAT-WHAT?

WILLIE

It's a Kitnerboy Redoubt.

MARCUS

So?

Willie stares at the safe.

WILLIE

...You know Andy Pitts?

MARCUS

Yeah, Andy Pizzarelli?

WILLIE

No, Andy Lapitski. Andy Pizzarelli is Andy Blue Balls.

MARCUS

Huh-uh, since he got married they call him An -- WHAT'S YOUR FUCKING POINT?

WILLIE

Andy Lapitski can get into anything. Anything. They say he's been in Margaret Thatcher's pussy.

MARCUS

Yeah? YEAH?

WILLIE

In the joint he told me that the

Kitnerboy...

He nods at the safe.

WILLIE

...cannot be cracked.

MARCUS

ARE YOU FUCKIN' SHITTIN' ME?! Are you tellin' me after I've propped you up and held you together and smiled for all those kids and danced for all those fucking housewives in a fucking lime-green fucking velvet elf costume YOU CANNOT GET IN THAT **FUCKING SAFE? ARE YOU FUCKING TELLING ME THAT?**

Willie continues to stare at the safe. He licks his lips.

WILLIE

No... I'm saying it's gonna take me a minute.

INT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - MONTAGE - NIGHT

Willie stares at the safe while rubbing sandpaper to his fingertips.

Meanwhile, Marcus emerges from a stockroom with a cart to begin his shopping spree.

Willie applies a stethoscope to the safe, tapping with one hand and listening intently.

Marcus starts in Ladies' Accessories, finding the cashmere scarf.

Willie applies the drill to the safe.

Marcus makes his way through Lingerie.

Willie pulls back the drill. The bit is trashed, the safe is completely unscathed.

Marcus is in Shoes picking out pumps for Lois.

Willie is in Home Improvement, flipping tools off the shelves into a cart of his own.

Marcus is in Evening Wear, jumping to try to pull a stole off a mannequin.

Willie batters a chisel into the seam of the safe door.

Marcus continues to leap at the mannequin.

Willie is atop the safe, swinging a sledgehammer at the lock.

Marcus swings at the mannequin's knees with a golf club.

Willie uses a plasma welder on the safe.

Marcus, having chopped down the mannequin, drags off its stole.

Willie is back over the safe, battering it with the sledgehammer, roaring with each swing.

Marcus is in Housewares pilfering crock pots.

Willie, sweating, drops the sledgehammer clanking to the floor. Wiping his forehead, he circles the safe. When he gets to the back of the safe he stops, thinks.

Marcus is in Home Entertainment grabbing a stereo.

Willie is hunched at the back of the safe, stethoscope to its surface, giving exploratory taps with two knuckles.

Sound perspective through the stethoscope: hollow THUNKS followed by an unnaturally loud and present CREEEEEEEEAK.

Willie reacts quizzically. After a considering moment he rises. We can see, on the far side of the safe, its door as it finishes creaking open.

Marcus enters the room. Willie looks at him.

WILLIE

Piece of cake.

Marcus starts removing stacks of cash and loading them into the Santa sack. Willie wipes sweat off his forehead.

WILLIE

...I'll be right back. I gotta grab one thing.

INT. CHAMBERLAN'S - TOY DEPT. - NIGHT

We are looking at a big, fuzzy, smiling, pink stuffed elephant.

Willie's hand hesitates between this elephant and the one behind, which is purple. We hear him muttering:

WILLIE

Shit... which did he say?

The hand finally leaves with the purple elephant.

We hold for a long beat.

The hand reenters to put back the purple and take the pink.

Willie turns around holding the stuffed elephant.

Marcus and Lois are standing there presenting a grotesque picture: Lois has a shopping cart filled with shoes, scarves, jewels, a salad spinner, purses, a block of Ginsu knives, an abdomen exerciser. She wears a pair of sunglasses from which a price tag dangles, and a long ermine stole.

Next to her Marcus holds the Santa bag bulging with -- indeed, sprouting -- cash.

WILLIE

Well, I don't think that store dick is gonna want this.

MARCUS

Store dick don't want shit.

Something in this picture makes Willie uneasy. He licks his lips.

WILLIE

Wuddya mean, fucking guy's greedier than...

He pauses, searching.

WILLIE

...greedier than fuck.

Marcus and Lois are statues, staring at him.

MARCUS

Store dick dead. Store dick don't want shit.

A long silence.

MARCUS

...Fuck the fuckin' store dick.

Willie's tone is wooden:

WILLIE

Dead, huh...

Again, he licks his lips.

WILLIE

...I didn't even know he was sick.

Marcus flicks his coat front away and pulls a .45 out of his waistband.

MARCUS

Willie. This has been a long time
comin'.

WILLIE

Uh-huh.

MARCUS

Every year you're worse. Every year,
less reliable. More booze. More
bullshit. More butt-fucking.

WILLIE

Sure. The three B'a.

MARCUS

You gotta be able to rely, Willie.

He primes the gun. Willie murmurs, more in sadness than in
fear:

WILLIE

You're monsters.

Marcus points the gun.

MARCUS

Believe me, Willie: there's no joy
in this for me.

WILLIE

Oh, I don't mean layin' me out. I
understand that. But just look at
ya. All the shit... grabbin' all
this shit -- do you really need all
this junk? ...This is Christmas?

Marcus sneers:

MARCUS

Oh please. Don't gimme that trite
"commercialism" crap. This is what
we do, Willie. We get the shit.
Christmas time, we get the shit.
Because we are men. And Lois. It is
Christmas, Willie, and we are men,
and Lois.

A silence.

LOIS

...Wuddya waitin' for, honey? Plug
him.

Marcus sighs.

MARCUS

Good-bye, Willie.

He aims. Willie squeezes his eyes shut.

From nowhere:

MEGAPHONE VOICE (O.S.)

Drop the gun, munchkin!

MARCUS

Huh? !

CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK -- the sound of many guns priming.

Police everywhere.

MEGAPHONE VOICE

And you, Santa! -- drop the elephant!

Willie stares. Marcus looks wildly around.

MARCUS

...Where did you come from?

CHIEF

Tipped off.

WILLIE

Shit!

CAMERA TRACKS IN ON HIS FACE

Willie slaps his forehead.

WILLIE

...Fuckin' kid!

CHIEF

All three of you are in so much shit
it's almost unbelievable.

LOIS

Gevalt.

MARCUS

Oh yeah? Well come'n get us, coppers!
Ha-ha-ha-ha!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

His .45 roars.

The cops return fire.

WILLIE

Fuck me...

He ducks, clutching the elephant to his chest, and scurries behind a counter.

WILLIE

...fuck me fuck me fuck me...

Gunfire fills the air.

Exploding merchandise chases along the counter behind Willie as the cops seek to put him down.

Under the gunfire we hear Marcus's maniacal laughter.

Willie reaches the end of the counter. A brief open space separates him from a stairwell; he dashes across as gunfire redoubles and plunges down the stairs.

EXT. CHAMBERLAIN'S - LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

Willie bursts out onto the loading dock still holding the elephant. He dives into his Mercedes and peels out.

EXT. SAGUARO SQUARE MALL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Rounding the corner of the loading dock, Willie comes upon a fleet of squad cars idling in the street. Cops yell, draw their guns and fire as Willie clips a couple cars, skids and slues, and finally is clear of the pack.

He roars up the road as policemen leap for their vehicles, crank up their sirens and pursue.

INT. MERCEDES - MOVING - NIGHT

Willie drives, his jaw set, a desperate man in a Santa suit.

He glances up at the rearview which shows many flashing light bars.

WILLIE

...It's Christmas... and the fucking kid is getting his present.

EXT. THE KID'S HOUSE - NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Willie's car corners onto Sage Terrace on two wheels, slams back down onto four, fishtails up to the kid's house and squeals braking into its driveway.

The police vehicles, in hot pursuit, squeal, skid, and slew around in a jumble at the foot of the lawn. Cops leap out of their cars just as Willie jumps from his.

MEGAPHONE VOICE

Halt, put your hands up!

Willie is sprinting up the walk toward the front door. His

voice echoes lone and weak after the boom of the megaphone:

WILLIE

Up your ass!

He bounds up the stoop.

POLICE VOICE

All right, boys -- nail him!

A ripple of gunfire.

At the top of the stoop, facing the door, Willie staggers, rolls his eyes, and -- drops.

NEARBY WINDOW

Drawn by the noise, an adorable six-year-old in a nearby house slides open his second-story bedroom window to look.

HIS HIGH POV:

Frozen in a semi-circle at the foot of the neighboring lawn, an army of cops has guns trained on the felled Santa Claus, who is sprawled on the neighbor's stoop, motionless. His hand stretches toward the front door holding a fluffy pink elephant un-delivered...

The six year old draws in his breath and SCREAMS.

He is joined by his equally adorable little brother and sister who look, and SCREAM, with him.

Somewhere, a neighborhood dog barks.

A Cop looks up at the window and the three shrieking children.

COP

Somebody put a zipper on those fuckin' kids!

FADE OUT:

INT. THE KID'S HOUSE - DAY

After a long beat, Willie's voice:

WILLIE (V.O.)

Dear kid. I hope that you got my present and that there wasn't too much blood on it, although there was blood on the present you gave me which didn't keep me from enjoying it, so maybe the blood doesn't matter so much I guess.

We are FADING IN on a shelf in the Kid's bedroom where the

stuffed elephant sits, in a place of honor, its fur indeed stiff and stained with dried blood. The Kid's bedroom is no longer in disarray, things are neat and comfy. We PAN OFF of it to find this letter, crudely handwritten, tacked up on a little bulletin board.

WILLIE (V.O.)

...Anyway, just in case they took it as evidence I am also sending you a T-shirt. I hope it's the right size. I am healing up good and they tell me that I will soon be one hundred percent even with eight bullets dug out of me because they didn't hit any vital organs, just my liver which is fucked anyway, ha-ha-ha. Anyways...

Our CONTINUING PAN brings us to the open door of the bedroom and we hear the sound of the TV in the living room. We TRACK toward it.

WILLIE (V.O.)

...Thank you for giving that letter to the cops. I forgot I asked you to do it but it's a good thing you did or Santa's little helper would've plugged his ass. And now the cops know I wrote it, which is gonna keep my ass out of jail. That, plus everyone agreeing that the Phoenix police department shooting an unarmed Santa was even more fucked-up than Rodney King. The cops are treating me like fucking royalty now which is new in my experience. They are gonna make me a sensitivity counselor so that tragedies like this will never again embarrass the whole fucking department. Whatever.

Grandma is in the living room watching TV. We TRACK past her towards the Jacuzzi area.

WILLIE

...As for my little helper, I am sorry to have to tell you that him and his prune-faced mail-order-wife are gonna be exploring mountains with your dad. I hope your dad doesn't go sucking shit from them like I did. Meanwhile, I told the cops you had no one to take the fuck care of you, so they set it up with Mrs. Santa's sister watching you till your Dad gets back in one year and three months. They made her a Guardian Pro-Temp or some such shit... anyway,

she makes better money than bartending
and seems to like you and your house
and Jacuzzi.

Sue is in a towel, holding a highball as she climbs out of
the Jacuzzi. The Kid walks by her carrying a bucket. She
tousles his hair affectionately as he goes by. He's never
looked better.

WE TRACK TOWARDS THE FOYER. It's empty but the front door is
open. We TRACK towards it.

We go out the front door...

WILLIE (V.O.)

...So I'll be staying in Phoenix
now, telling the police how screwed-
up they are which is not a bad job
as jobs go. They're supposed to let
me out of this hospital room soon so
I'll see you when I come over to
fuck Mrs. Santa's sister in the
Jacuzzi. Until then, don't take no
shit from nobody. Least of all
yourself. Anyways... see ya soon...

The Kid is dipping a toilet-bowl brush into a bucket of soapy
water on the front stoop.

WILLIE (V.O.)

...Santa.

As the Kid turns and hunkers down to scrub the dried blood
off the stoop, we see the back of his T-shirt. **SHIT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU PARTY NAKED.**

FADE OUT:

THE END