

Do You Fear What I Fear

Written by

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OVER BLACK:

BELLS RINGING. JINGLE BELLS.

EXT. HOUSE - ROOF - NIGHT

REINDEER HOOVES touch down on the snowy roof. Followed by:

TWO BOOT-COVERED FEET

Moving swiftly. Black boots with furry white material at the top. Then--

Above the boots, a glimpse of red pants.

SANTA (O.S.)
HO HO HO!

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A MAN, 40, dressed like the lead singer of a grunge band you've already forgotten, and a WOMAN, 35, wearing a *U Can't Touch This* shirt as a dress, are seated at the table.

They take turns inhaling from a veiny PENIS BONG. They are stoned to bejesus.

SUPER: A Christmas Past...

WOMAN
Oh, shit! We forgot to wrap the Christmas presents for the kid.

MAN
Where are they?

She glances around frantically, then makes a pained face.

WOMAN
Wait, did we forget to **buy** them?

MAN
Oops.

They stare at each other for a beat, eyes wide, then they laugh. And cough. And laugh. And cough.

THUMP! CLANK! Noise from the living room.

Then, the faint sound of JINGLE BELLS.

The Woman grabs a 1990's-style VIDEO CAMERA from the counter and RECORDS.

WOMAN

Shit on a shingle! It's Santa!

MAN

I thought for sure we were on the naughty list 'cause we're high as fuck every day.

WOMAN

We gotta film this!

They rush to the living room, or whatever the stoned version of "rush" happens to be.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Some Christmas décor. A shoddily-decorated tree, lights barely working. Three dirty, empty stockings hanging. One present under the tree.

The Man and Woman enter from the kitchen. She records:

SANTA'S BOOTS disappearing up the chimney.

WOMAN

I got his feet on video!

The Man rushes to the chimney and looks up.

MAN

Santa! Come back!

The Woman keeps recording.

MAN (CONT'D)

Damn. He's gone.

WOMAN

Climb up and get his ass back down here! We could make a fortune with a video of the **real** Santa! Like, Pam and Tommy sex tape money!

He seems unsure.

MAN

It's dark in there. What if there are spiders?

She shoves him.

WOMAN

Just get in there, doofus!

MAN

Okay, okay, geez.

He hesitantly climbs up the chimney. His legs soon disappear from sight. We hear him GRUNT. Some soot falls to the bottom of the chimney. She bends down and steps into the chimney.

INT. HOUSE - CHIMNEY - CONTINUOUS

He's nearly at the top, high above her, covered in soot. She's at the bottom, recording him.

WOMAN

You're doing great, honey!

MAN

Look at me! I'm goddamn Spider-Man!

Not quite.

His foot slips. His hands slide down. His fingernails BREAK. Panic fills his eyes. He falls. Very fucking quickly. Screaming all the way.

Looking up, her face contorts with terror as he LANDS right on top of her. CRACK! SNAP!

A wheeze. A moan. Then silence.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The video camera bounces out of the chimney.

At the bottom of the chimney, the Man and Woman are DEAD, bodies grotesquely twisted. Her neck broken. His back shattered.

Well, that sure didn't work out how they'd hoped.

INT. HOUSE - CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dirty. No toys. A YOUNG BOY, 5, messy brown hair, sleeps soundly in bed in superhero pajamas that don't fit anymore.

The hypnotic sound of BELLS.

His eyes pop open. He gets up and rushes to the window. His face brightens.

YOUNG BOY
Santa! You came!

INT. HOUSE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

The Young Boy excitedly runs down the stairs.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

He runs to the small tree and finds his present. He picks it up and smiles.

YOUNG BOY
Please be a Teddy Ruxpin!

He excitedly tears open the present, throwing wrapping paper onto the floor, and inside finds--

WRINKLES THE TALKING DOG, a terrible knock-off of Teddy Ruxpin.

YOUNG BOY (CONT'D)
What's this crap? You're not Teddy Ruxpin.

Disappointed, he looks at the chimney and sees his--

DEAD PARENTS. Looking like a bloody human jigsaw puzzle.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A POLICE OFFICER enters and glances around. He sees the Man and Woman in the chimney, flies buzzing around their corpses, and shakes his head - *Damn*.

He then sees the Young Boy sitting on the floor, still in his pajamas, in front of the tree, unmoving. He has a dirty Christmas Stocking completely over his head.

The Officer pulls off the stocking. The Young Boy SCREAMS. His face twists into a mask of pain, anger, and hate.

Merry Fucking Christmas.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. NORTH POLE - DAY

Snowy. Really damned snowy. Because of course it is. A small town is visible, surrounded by hills.

The town looks suspiciously like miniature doll houses, and the snow seems oddly cotton ball-y. (Or perhaps this is just a low-budget movie and we're going to fake Christmas as charmingly as possible.)

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - DAY

Just beyond the hills is a three-story, unremarkable building decorated with blinking lights and giant candy canes. A neon SANTA'S FACTORY sign shines brightly.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - WORKSHOP - DAY

The interior of the factory is in bad shape. Peeling paint. Rusty pipes. Probably wouldn't pass a health inspection.

Loud Christmas music in MUZAK form is piped in.

A giant decorated CHRISTMAS TREE is perched by the front wall. Just above the tree is a large window to a room that overlooks the workshop.

About two dozen ELVES make toys by hand. The old-fashioned way.

They are sewing. They're gluing. Sawing. Painting. Nailing. Laminating. Wrapping and taping. Dropping gifts onto a noisy conveyor belt.

They are Santa's Elves and they're... really fucking bored. Not motivated at all. Going through the motions.

SUPER: December 23rd. The North Pole. Christmas Present.

KAREN CLAUS, 24, is busy making toys. She stands a bit taller than the Elves in her big red boots. Her light hair is streaked with pink and green. She's wearing an oversized Christmas sweater as a dress. It's a look.

Karen - wearing a name tag that reads: *Karen C., Workshop Manager* - glances around, and does not like what she sees.

She marches to the work station of HOLLY SHIMMER, 23, purple hair in a bun, Elf costume unbuttoned a bit here, pulled up a bit there, showing some skin. She's filing her nails.

KAREN

Holly, why aren't you working? You know we're behind schedule.

HOLLY

Chipped a nail. You wouldn't want a sharp nail digging into my skin and getting infected, would you? I smell peppermint and a lawsuit.

KAREN

Working here is a privilege, you know. You get to bring joy to all the children of the world.

HOLLY

Oh, I'm sorry, **Karen**. We all can't be perfect like you, **Karen**. But I appreciate the feedback, **Karen**.

KAREN

Just because my name is Karen it doesn't mean I am a Karen.

HOLLY

Of course not. Now tell me again how privileged I am to make toys all day for low wages so your dad can get all the credit?

Karen puts out her hand.

KAREN

Give me the file.

Holly hands Karen the file. Karen smiles.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Thank you, Holly. I know you can do a great job.

Holly reaches into her hair and pulls out a beautiful sparkly silver forked French hair pin, letting her hair down. She uses the hair pin to pick her nails.

Karen's smile gets shaky, hard to hold.

She walks to the center of the room and dumps trash from a small can onto the floor.

She loudly slams the can down and stands on it.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Fuck Christmas!

The Elves gasp. They stop working and stare at Karen.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You heard me. F-U-C-K Christmas. That's what you're saying with your Grinchy attitudes. Your bad mojo will seep into these toys and when children touch them, they'll get infected. Do we really want to create an epidemic of snotty kids? I don't think so. Let's infect these kids with joy! Go Team Christmas!

She smiles wide, but her motivational speech is met with silence, except:

One Elf, LUCIE PLUM, 23, claps until she notices no one else is. She has short red hair, freckles, and wears a sweater over her Elf uniform, not comfortable with its tightness.

PERKINS, 50 (or maybe 35, hard to tell), the human janitor, looks annoyed cleaning up Karen's mess. He's wearing dirty overalls, greasy brown hair in his eyes.

Karen steps down and gets back to work.

She grabs an unassembled Big Wheel and a screwdriver, then assembles the entire thing in *seconds*. Her fake smile is holding, but barely.

ZED CLAUS, 26, merrily approaches Karen. He's wearing a dirty Batman T-shirt. Frizzy brown hair, like he had a bad perm. Out of shape. A few pimples he can't stop picking.

ZED

Yo, ho!

KAREN

You can't just say "ho." You have to add two more "ho's."

ZED

An orgy, sweet! But the incest would be a little weird. Or would it...?

KAREN

Zed, I'm really busy so--

ZED

Dad said you needed me. I stopped playing video games for this.

KAREN

Okay. Put this bike on the conveyer belt for me, then find a free work station and do some wrapping.

ZED

Zed Claus to the rescue!

He excitedly jumps on the bike, which he's much too big for, and rides toward the conveyer belt. The bike creaks and cracks.

Zed loses control and CRASHES into the wall. The Big Wheel breaks into pieces. Zed hits the ground, then jumps up and brushes himself off. His nose is bleeding.

ZED (CONT'D)

I think this bike's defective. Good thing I'm here for quality control.

Karen's smile nearly breaks, but still she holds it, as she walks to Zed.

KAREN

Actually, can you go back to the office and double-check Dad's lists on the computer? We're good here. Really. Go. Right now.

ZED

Uhh, yeah, I can do that.

Zed walks away, head down.

Karen maintains her forced smile. Lucie shyly approaches her.

LUCIE

I thought it was a nice speech.

KAREN

I don't get it, Lucie. Why am I having so much trouble motivating the Elves?

LUCIE

Well, it's just that the Elves sort of... don't like you. A lot.

Off Karen's reaction:

LUCIE (CONT'D)

Sorry I had to tell you that, boss.

KAREN

How can that be? I'm oozing
Christmas Spirit from my pores.

LUCIE

They think you're a nepo baby.

KAREN

I work harder than anyone here.

LUCIE

You also live in this cool factory
in a big apartment. Us Elves live
in tiny shacks and barely make a
living wage. All we'll ever be are
poor losers who make toys.

KAREN

Don't say that. Elves are just as
much Christmas as Santa is
Christmas.

LUCIE

That's sweet of you to say.

KAREN

It's true. And your uniforms are
adorbs!

LUCIE

They're humiliating.

KAREN

They're tradition.

LUCIE

Not every tradition is good.

KAREN

You're right about that. I'm hoping
to break jolly fat guy tradition.

Lucie's eyes widen.

LUCIE

You mean...?

KAREN

It's either me or Zed, and Zed's a
disaster. It **has** to be me, right?

Karen's smile widens, like her face is malfunctioning.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Right? Right? Right?

LUCIE
Umm... I guess so. Are you sure
you're okay?

KAREN
Never better!

Karen walks away, straight to a door marked "closet." She goes inside and closes the door.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Karen stands in the dark closet that's full of tape and wrapping paper and ribbons and flattened boxes. Her smile finally breaks.

She grabs a large roll of wrapping paper and wraps herself inside, rolling over and over, making herself a human gift, then collapses to the floor. She's completely covered in crinkly paper.

KAREN
(muffled, between SOBS)
You're okay... people do like
you... you're not worthless.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - WORKSHOP - DAY

Karen exits the closet. Big fake smile back in place. She walks to her station.

MARVIN BLOSSOMS approaches Lucie. He's 24, uniform is covered in flair - buttons with candy canes and Christmas trees and sayings like *Christmas is Rockin'!*

MARVIN
Hey, girl! You look flushed. You
must've been near Karen.

LUCIE
Yes, and she said the workshop
manager job might be opening up.

He gasps.

MARVIN
Gosh by golly, I want it! I want to
run this place and make it better
than ever!

LUCIE
I'm rooting for you.

MARVIN
If I become manager, I'd need an assistant manager. Lucie Plum makes number two and Marvin makes number one - together! Can you see it?

LUCIE
Marvin, can I be honest?

MARVIN
If you say you don't want to watch Hallmark Christmas Movies with me anymore, I'll literally explode.

She smiles sweetly and puts her arm around him.

LUCIE
I will always watch Hallmark Christmas Movies with you, unless I'm *in* a Hallmark Christmas Movie.

MARVIN
You? Come on. Be realistic. Name one Elf who's left this place and gone on to do anything important?

She deflates.

LUCIE
You're probably right.

MARVIN
See you later?

Lucie nods. Marvin walks away as a WHISTLE BLOWS. Lunch. The Elves stop working and eat lunch at their work stations.

Lucie walks over to Holly and JANE WONDERS, 22. Jane's work station is next to Holly's. She has long black hair that she shyly uses to cover her pale face. She's occasionally mistaken for a vengeful spirit from a Japanese horror film.

HOLLY
How's your weird friend Karen?

LUCIE
She's Santa's daughter. Of course she's weird.

HOLLY
You totally want to lick her stamp.

Jane giggles.

LUCIE
She's my friend, that's all.

HOLLY
Since she's your "friend," we need
a favor.

LUCIE
What kind?

HOLLY
Convince Karen to let us party in
the workshop while Santa's away
delivering presents tomorrow night.

LUCIE
Why?

HOLLY
It's a charity event for Jane's
virginity.

JANE
Holly says I should have sex, so I
should definitely have sex.

LUCIE
Do you always do what Holly says?

JANE
No!

Off Lucie's reaction:

JANE (CONT'D)
Yes.

LUCIE
I wish you'd stand up for yourself
sometimes, Jane.

Jane hides behind her hair.

HOLLY
Look, we need Karen's permission.
We're gonna invite cute boys and do
illegal, dangerous things to them.

LUCIE
I don't want Karen to think I'm
only her friend to get favors.

HOLLY
 Fine, I'll ask her. Can I at least
 tell Karen you want her to come?

LUCIE
 I do want her to come.

HOLLY
 (grins)
 I'm sure.

BIG TED, 28, not an Elf but dressed like the other Elves, a tall, gangly human man, brown hair in an Elvis pompadour, a confident strut, walks by and winks.

BIG TED
 Ladies.

HOLLY
 Hey, Big Ted. We're having an after-
 hours party in the workshop
 tomorrow night. You in?

BIG TED
 It's not an Elves-only thing?

HOLLY
 Definitely not. You're the hottest
 guy here. You have to come.

BIG TED
 I'll be there, but I must warn
 you... I'm quite the nifty dancer.

Big Ted grins and walks on. Holly stares at his ass.

HOLLY
 I'm gonna fuck that fake Elf.

LUCIE
 You actually like that douche guy?

JANE
 He's kinda creepy, no offense.

HOLLY
 Jealous bitches say what?

Bored of her friends, Lucie turns and watches--

KAREN, who's looking at her phone. Karen reads a text from Santa: "Arriving with contest winners. Need you now, K."

She walks to the back door.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Karen exits the factory. The door closes, then immediately opens again. Big Ted rushes outside.

BIG TED
Karen, wait!

She stops and turns, clearly not excited to see him.

KAREN
I'm in a hurry.

BIG TED
Please talk to me.

KAREN
Not now.

BIG TED
Can we start over? I learned my lesson, I swear. Your beauty put me in a... a sex trance!

KAREN
Sex trance? Really?

BIG TED
Yes, but I snapped out of it.

KAREN
You did, but only after my foot connected with you scrotum.

BIG TED
It still hurts, but I don't care. I like you so much.

KAREN
(smiles faintly)
We're not a good match, Ted. I'm like a steaming cup of hot chocolate with extra whipped cream, and you're like... awful.

He grabs her wrist.

BIG TED
Give me another chance. You'll see how perfect we are for each other.

She pulls away, still smiling, but with a fury in her eyes.

KAREN
Never. Do. That. Again.

Karen runs off.

SANTA'S SLEIGH is parked on a landing patch marked with cones. Karen rushes over.

SANTA, 50's, hops off the sleigh, looking quite Santa-like. Big white beard. Red costume. Fat and jolly. Apple-cheeked. All that shit we love.

He's followed by MAX KEERY, 32, JACKIE KEERY, 35, and ANGEL KEERY, 6.

Max is tall and strong, brown hair, attractive in a flannel hipster lumberjack kind of way.

Jackie has dark skin, stylish clothes, and gives off *Real Housewives of Somewhere* vibes.

Angel's cute and clearly looks to Dora the Explorer for fashion tips.

SANTA
Welcome to the North Pole!

ANGEL
This is sooooo cool!

JACKIE
It's like a movie.

MAX
Thanks for having us.

SANTA
Our pleasure.

KAREN
Hello, Keery family!

MAX
I'm Max. That's Jackie, and the adorable one is Angel.

Karen bends down and meets Angel at eye-level.

KAREN
You're gonna have so much fun in our magical winter wonderland!

Karen points to Santa's Factory.

KAREN (CONT'D)

The workshop is on the first floor.
Santa lives on the third floor. Me
and Zed live on the second floor,
which is also where you'll be
staying in the guest room.

ANGEL

I want to live here, too!

MAX

Sorry, honey. We're only visiting.

Angel pouts.

SANTA

We get that reaction often around
here. That's when I go...

(loudly)

Ho ho ho!

Angel smiles.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Works every time. Karen will show
you to your room. The real fun
starts tomorrow, so settle in.

Santa bows and walks away. Karen tries to grab all their bags
at once, stumbles, and falls into the snow. Max takes Karen's
hand and helps her up.

MAX

I can handle this.

Karen smiles shyly, wiping her face.

KAREN

Thanks, sometimes I don't know my
own lack of strength.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - GUEST ROOM - DAY

Not a great space, like a dumpy hotel room.

Angel hops on the bed as Jackie unpacks. Max jumps on the bed
and tackles Angel, who giggles. He growls.

ANGEL

Oh no, Daddy's a monster!

Jackie looks at Max.

JACKIE

You'll have to sleep on the floor.

Max walks to the window, looks out and sees--

Santa's workshop, twenty-five feet up, big tree right below.

MAX

Look at this view, Angel!

Angel rushes over.

ANGEL

Wow! This is better than TV. You can see the Elves working!

MAX

It's pretty cool.

JACKIE

I'd prefer a view of the mountains.

MAX

Nothing's good enough for you.

JACKIE

No, it's only **you** who's not good enough for me.

ANGEL

Stop fighting!

Jackie smiles sweetly and grabs Angel's hand.

JACKIE

Let's go look around. Maybe we can score some hot chocolate.

They walk to the door and exit. Max sits on the bed and sighs.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Jackie cries. Angel looks up at her.

ANGEL

Don't cry, Mommy.

JACKIE

Sorry. I want you to have a better childhood than I had. I want you to be happy.

Angel offers a sweet smile.

ANGEL

I'm happy if you're happy. You have my prescription to be happy.

JACKIE

You mean "permission," and my happy place wouldn't include your father.

ANGEL

It's okay. He can have a different happy.

They smile and walk on, holding hands.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - KAREN'S ROOM - DAY

It's like a Christmas museum, decorated with garland and candy canes and ornaments and posters from Christmas movies and television shows. Stuffed animals - snow men and narwals and polar bears and reindeer - cover the bed.

Karen enters and locks the door. She rushes to the closet, opens the door, and pulls out a traditional Santa Claus suit. She strips to her underwear.

She puts on the red and white suit, the hat, and tightens the belt, then looks at herself in the mirror. The suit fits *perfectly*. She grins, practically bursting with excitement.

She dances spastically around the room, until her phone CHIMES. She looks at it.

A text from Santa: "Come to my office, please."

Karen quickly strips off the suit, puts back on her regular clothes, and rushes out.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - SANTA'S OFFICE - DAY

Messy office. Boxes piled high, files spilling out.

A large computer from about 1989 sits in the corner. Zed's in front of it, typing with one finger.

Santa's behind his desk, sipping coffee from a World's Best Boss mug. A window behind him offers a view of the mountains (which looks unsurprisingly like a matte painting.)

On the wall is a framed copy of *The New York Times*, with a headline that reads: ***Santa Adopts Orphan Boy! Meet Zed Claus!***

A smiling Santa is seen in the picture below the headline, but the fold in the paper cuts off Zed almost entirely.

Karen sits on the other side of the desk, smiling nervously.

SANTA

Come here, Zed. Family meeting.

Zed jumps up, TRIPS over some boxes, then crawls to the desk and sits next to Karen.

SANTA (CONT'D)

How'd it go today, dear?

KAREN

Great! I gave a rousing speech and everyone loved it.

ZED

And I helped with a defective bike!
I saved a lot of lives today.

Santa offers Karen a smile.

SANTA

Honey, I've made some hard decisions. I'm retiring after this year to focus on finding a new wife. I'm not very jolly anymore. I'm lonely. Also, I'm putting Marvin in charge of the workshop. He's earned it. That means--

KAREN

I'm ready to be Santa!

Santa shakes his head, looking pained.

SANTA

Zed will be my replacement.

This news hits her like a smack in the face. She winces.

Zed's eyes widen in apparent shock.

ZED

Me? Really? Wow! Zed Santa Claus...
has a great ring to it.

SANTA

You would just be Santa Claus. You wouldn't need the "Zed" part.

Karen stands and anxiously paces around the room.

KAREN

But if Marvin's running the workshop and Zed's Santa, where does that leave me?

SANTA

Perhaps Vegas to live with your mother? Wouldn't that be fun? You could be part of her stage show. Ever thought about singing and dancing?

KAREN

No. Christmas is all I think about.

ZED

I'm sorry, sis. I never thought it would be me, but it's... fucking awesome! Whomp, there it is!

Zed gets up and does a weird dance that's truly embarrassing.

KAREN

So I'm fired, Dad?

SANTA

Leaving the North Pole is a chance for you to grow as a person and find your true calling.

Karen walks to the door, devastated, dazed.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Do me a favor and send Perkins in.

Head down, she exits.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Karen walks down the hall, trying to keep it together. She can't - she suddenly grunts and kicks a trash can, knocking it over. Trash spills out all over the floor.

She sits on the trash pile, head down, dazed.

A mop bucket sloshes along, spilling water. Perkins plops the mop down next to Karen. He looks at the mess.

PERKINS

What the hell are you doing?

Karen looks up.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

Oh. Didn't know it was you.

KAREN

Hi, Perkins. Do you have any drugs?
Like some Hellzapoppins or a few
Wackadoodles or some Brown Bunnies?

PERKINS

Why you asking me? Because I was in
prison?

KAREN

Bad day. I want my brain to melt
for a few hours.

PERKINS

I got some skunk weed we could
smoke at my place.

KAREN

I'd rather be alone.

He leans on the mop.

PERKINS

You don't trust me, that it? You
think I'm some creep?

KAREN

No! You're not just some creep.
You're **our** creep.

He glares at her.

PERKINS

Your dad treats me like crap.
That's okay. Karma's a bitch. I
didn't expect it from you.

KAREN

Sorry. My dad actually wants to see
you right now.

Perkins seems startled.

PERKINS

He never wants to see me.

KAREN

Maybe you're getting a bonus! Or...

Karen stops talking, realizing what's going on.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Perkins pushes the mop bucket away. He stops outside Santa's office. He takes a heavy breath, then knocks.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - NIGHT

The sun sets over the North Pole. Light is fading fast.

Marvin walks away from the factory and sits on a bench near a patch of trees. He smiles. This is the life.

A BIRD lands on the bench next to him and whistles.

MARVIN

Hello, Mr. Bird! Wonderful day,
isn't it?

CHIRP!

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Makes me want to break into song!
What the heck, why not?

Marvin stands and sings:

MARVIN (CONT'D)

"It's the Christmas life for me...
It's the Christmas life for me...
'Stead of working, I'm playin'...
'Stead of dreadin', I'm laughin'...
It's the Christmas life...
Ain't no strife..."

A GLOVED HAND appears from behind and covers his mouth.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

MMMMPPPHH!

A LONG KNIFE with an ornate candy cane handle is forced through the back of his neck and out the front.

The Bird flies away.

Blood drips from the tip of the blade. Marvin's eyes widen in terror. He chokes on his own blood. The knife is pulled out.

Marvin falls to the ground and tries to crawl away.

The Gloved Hands gather snow and PACK it around Marvin's head until it's covered completely and looks like a snowman's head. Marvin stops moving.

The Gloved Hands decorate the snow head with acorn eyes, a twig nose, and a bloody mouth.

The unseen CHRISTMAS KILLER LAUGHS.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - NIGHT

A WHISTLE BLOWS. Quittin' time.

The doors open and the Elves exit. Lucie, Jane, and Holly walk together through the snow. Lucie looks around.

LUCIE

Where's Marvin? He always walks with us.

HOLLY

Maybe he's working overtime. Christmas gives him a boner.

JANE

It poked me once.

Lucie looks back at the factory, at the surrounding trees. She seems concerned.

They walk over the hill and down to the nearby crappy little houses in the local town they call home.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - KAREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Karen's in bed, watching a CHRISTMAS MOVIE on a big television.

ON TELEVISION - a cheesy Hallmark-style Christmas Movie: Young pre-teen Karen Claus rushes into Santa's arms. The actors are... less than good.

TV KAREN

Daddy, did you deliver all the toys to the good children of the world?

TV SANTA

I sure did, Karen. Ho ho ho!

TV KAREN

Did any kids get coal this year?

TV SANTA

Yes, a few, but maybe they'll learn their lesson and next year they'll get on my Nice List again.

TV KAREN
Am I on the Nice List?

He takes off his hat and puts it crookedly on her head.

TV SANTA
You're at the top of the list!

They laugh.

KAREN turns off the TV, then tries to smile. It won't take.

She HYPERVENTILATES, struggling to catch her breath.

Then she suddenly TEARS THE ROOM APART, laying waste to her perfectly-decorated winter wonderland.

When she's finished, the room looks like vandals trashed the Macy's Christmas display. The only thing she didn't knock over was a small Christmas tree resting on the night stand.

Karen stands over the wreckage, GASPING. She begins to wrap herself in wrapping paper, but TRIPS and--

BANGS her head on the dresser. She falls to the floor, unconscious and bleeding.

INT. LUCIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

"House" might be a little generous. It's more of a hut. A trashy, crumbling hut.

Lucie's on the torn couch, curled up, watching *Night of the Living Dead* on TV (Public domain! Free!) and quoting words she knows by heart.

LUCIE
(in a man's voice)
"They're coming to get you,
Barbara!"
(in a woman's voice)
"Stop it! You're ignorant!"

Lucie's stepfather, GEORGE, 40, a tall, hairy, drunken human man, enters, holding a beer, wearing only boxers.

GEORGE
I'm hungry. Where's your mother?

LUCIE
She could be anywhere. A lot of
beds in the North Pole.

He stumbles over and looks down at Lucie in his sad sack way.

GEORGE
Why does Candy cheat on me?

LUCIE
I don't know. It's a huge mystery.

GEORGE
Did she cheat on your real father?

LUCIE
Yes, with **you**, George.

GEORGE
Oh, right.

George walks away. Lucie goes back to watching the movie, but wet sadness has crept into her eyes.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - ZED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Food wrappers and soda bottles everywhere. Posters of mostly-naked Anime girls cover the walls. A huge monitor shows a paused *Minecraft*-like game.

Zed's in bed with CANDY PLUM, 48, Elf, blonde wig, full-figured, lots of make-up. He's on top of her, sloppily kissing her face. She looks bored.

He stops, looks at her. Her make-up is smeared on his face, like he's about to audition for Joker in the next *Batman*.

ZED
Am I doing this right?

CANDY
You gotta put it in the hole.

ZED
Which one?

CANDY
Don't matter. Just find one already.

ZED
I wanna be good for when I finally do it with Jane and... uuuhhhnnn--

He spasms, eyes rolling back in his head, makes a weird face, like he's being electrocuted, and grunts like an animal.

CANDY
What's happening?

ZED
Aaaarrgghhhaabblrrrgghh!

CANDY
No refunds.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - PERKINS' ROOM - NIGHT

More like an oversized closet. Filled with stacks and stacks of canned goods. No oven, only an electric burner.

Perkins is giving himself a tattoo on the back of his hand. Looks painful. The tattoo is of a cartoony Santa Claus - but dead, X's where his eyes should be, tongue sticking out.

On the table next to his hand is a NOTICE OF TERMINATION signed by Santa Claus, effective date: DECEMBER 31st.

INT. HOUSE - BIG TED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Small room with a tiny bed. A framed picture of Big Ted with his ELF PARENTS, both 50's, rests on the dresser.

Big Ted's legs dangle off the Elf-sized bed. He's wearing tighty-whities, staring at the ceiling, mouth open, drooling.

Taped to the ceiling are dozens of pictures of KAREN.

One picture is of Karen and Big Ted eating lunch together, smiling for the camera. The rest of the pictures of Karen appear to have been taken when she wasn't looking, when she didn't know someone was taking her picture.

Big Ted smiles. His happy place.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Max is on floor, staring at the ceiling. Jackie and Angel are asleep, cuddling on the bed.

Max stands up and kisses Angel on the forehead. He slips on his shoes, grabs a coat, and exits.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - SANTA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Santa's in bed, wearing a white T-shirt and boxer shorts, smoking a cigar while also messily eating a burger and looking at his phone.

ON HIS PHONE - Santa scrolls through pictures of women on a DATING APP. Grease drops onto the phone.

Santa licks it off and keeps scrolling.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - NIGHT

Max exits from the front door, out through the lobby. He looks around, then lights a joint. He takes a hit.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS. Max turns and--

KAREN

BOO!

Karen scares the fucking shit out of him.

He cries out. She laughs.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Got'cha!

MAX

I thought you were the Snow Miser.

KAREN

No such luck. He retired in 2007.
Dementia.

Karen stands a few feet away. Her forehead is covered with a square bandage.

MAX

What are you doing out here?

KAREN

I like the cold. It relaxes me.

MAX

What happened to your head?

KAREN

Wrapping can be dangerous.

He realizes he's holding the joint. Karen looks at it.

MAX

I, uh...

KAREN

Is that a marijuana doobie stick?

MAX

It's pot, yes. Want a hit?

KAREN

No, I really shouldn't.

MAX

Try it. It's nice.

He hands it to her. She considers, then takes a big drag. She immediately COUGHS her guts out.

KAREN

Thuh... that's not nice! That's naughty!

She throws the joint into a pile of snow and then stomps it into oblivion. He laughs.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I hope your wife won't get jealous... us being out here.

MAX

We're separated. Divorce is almost final.

KAREN

That's sad.

MAX

We try to be nice to each other because of Angel. After we won the "Visit Santa" contest, we promised to call a truce until it's over. And here we are - trucing.

KAREN

You're lucky. I mean, what were the chances of winning the contest? Like one in twenty million?

MAX

Maybe a little better than that.

(beat)

How about you? Seeing anyone?

KAREN

No. I went on a few dates with a guy I thought was nice. It ended badly. Not bad enough for me to lock him inside the basement jail cell, but close.

MAX

What's the jail used for?

KAREN

Drunken Elves sleeping one off.

She wobbles. He holds her steady.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Is Planet Earth breakdancing?

MAX

I'm actually a big fan. I wanted to be Santa's kid. I wanted to be **you**. I wanted to live at the North Pole.

KAREN

I'm not wanted here. Santa... Dad... fired me.

She looks suddenly sleepy.

KAREN (CONT'D)

... Feel weird...

She passes out. He catches her.

MAX

Karen?

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - LOBBY - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD, 45, Ted Lasso mustache, sleeps at his desk. His keys rest atop an old *Playboy* magazine - the cover featuring MRS. CLAUS, 40's white hair, sexy in a Dolly Parton way, wearing a red bikini: "She's Single & Ready to Jingle!"

Max enters through the front door, carrying Karen. He eases her onto the couch, then stares at her for a beat and smiles.

MAX

Sleep well, Karen. The best is yet to come.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - WORKSHOP - NIGHT

The Security Guard enters, carrying his keys and the *Playboy* magazine. He shines a flashlight and walks to the tree.

He sits under it and moves some wrapped presents in front of him, so he's hidden from sight, his own secret place.

He gets comfortable and leafs through the *Playboy*.

He finds a page featuring a grinning Mrs. Claus wearing only a Santa hat and posing seductively below a caption that reads - *Look Who's Naughty Now?* He excitedly unzips his pants.

A RUSTLING SOUND.

He puts down the magazine.

SECURITY GUARD
Hey! Is someone there?

Silence.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
I'm coming out! I was... checking
for rats.

He zips his pants, then peeks his head through a few packages so he can see out. He looks up, mouth open, and--

A BARBIE DOLL (or a Barbie-ish Doll) is SHOVED in his mouth. GLOVED HANDS force the doll deep down his throat. The doll disappears completely as the Security Guard's face contorts from bewilderment to panic to terror to acceptance.

He DIES as the gloved hands pull on the doll, trying to yank it out but...

POP! Only the head comes out. Barbie's grinning, wet doll face.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - LOBBY - NIGHT

THE FAINT SOUND OF GIGGLING. Hard to tell if it's from an adult or a child. Near the security desk.

Karen wakes and sits up in the dark room.

KAREN
Hello?

She looks at the security guard desk - the chair is empty. The giggling continues. She walks slowly to the desk.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Whoever's back there, this isn't
funny.

She reaches the desk. The giggling is close. Really close.

Karen slowly looks behind the desk and sees:

THE SECURITY GUARD. On the floor. Not moving. Not breathing.

A GIGGLING ELF is hunched over the Security Guard's head.
Karen moves closer--

The Elf is SEWING A FLUFFY WHITE YARN BEARD onto the Security
Guard's face, using long needles, the yarn dripping blood.

The Elf turns suddenly and looks at Karen. But it's not an
Elf at all. It's a creepy little HUMAN BOY, about five years
old, dressed like an Elf. Grinning. Giggling.

Karen screams.

THE BAD DREAM ENDS.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - LOBBY - DAY

The morning sun shines through the window.

Karen wakes up screaming and out of breath.

SUPER: December 24th.

KAREN
Kringles!

She gathers herself. Calms down.

Karen sits up. Something falls from her lap to the floor. She
picks it up - A DOLL HEAD, covered in a sticky substance.

She drops the doll head into the trash and looks around
suspiciously, with an "Okay, who's fucking with me?" face.

From outside, in the distance - BELLOWING. Reindeer sounding
like they're in pain.

She rushes outside.

EXT. REINDEER PEN - DAY

Karen hustles over to the wooden enclosure.

Santa is already there, out of breath, in his Santa pajamas, looking down at something.

Karen reaches the pen, stops, eyes wide, turns, and vomits.

Inside the pen...

A DEAD REINDEER.

Surrounded by blood-stained snow. A deep gash in its side. Guts spilling out. Vacant eyes wide open. Tongue sticking out. The other reindeer stand nearby, grunting and snorting.

Karen composes herself, enters, and walks over to Santa.

KAREN

What happened?

SANTA

I don't know... a bear maybe? The gate was open when I got here. Maybe I left it open last night.

KAREN

Anything on the cameras?

SANTA

The cameras haven't worked in years. Your mother used to handle the technical stuff. I'm hopeless.

KAREN

What if it wasn't a bear?

SANTA

What are you saying?

KAREN

Maybe it's a Grinch situation.

SANTA

The Grinch is make-believe.

KAREN

Okay, **Santa Claus**.

She looks at the dead reindeer, her eyes glistening.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Poor Dasher the 15th. What are we gonna do?

SANTA

It's Christmas Eve. We say a few prayers, bury Dasher, and get on with our duty.

He glances at her bandaged head.

SANTA (CONT'D)

I hope my Santa decision didn't cause you to do anything... stupid.

KAREN

What? No! I fell in the shower. It's nothing.

SANTA

If you say so.

KAREN

You sure you want me to leave after all this? I've seen every episode of *Murder, She Wrote*. I can help.

SANTA

This doesn't change anything.

A fury quickly rises in Karen, bubbles over.

KAREN

But Zed's adopted! I'm your **blood!**

He gives her a stern look.

SANTA

Do not go there.

Santa walks away. She shouts at him.

KAREN

You suck! Naming me Karen and expecting people not to laugh at me. Really forward-thinking, Dad!

Karen looks at the sad reindeer surrounding her.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I guess none of you can tell me what happened, huh?

The reindeer have no relevant information to offer. She leans in close to the dead reindeer and kisses its head.

LUCIE (O.S.)

MARVIN!!!

Karen turns and sees Lucie in the distance. She exits the pen and rushes to Lucie's side.

KAREN

Lucie!

LUCIE

Hey, have you seen Marvin? He always walks home with me, but not last night. And he still hasn't turned up. I'm worried.

Lucie notices Karen's bandage.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Karen ignores the question.

KAREN

Dasher was killed last night. Dad thinks it was a bear. I don't. If Marvin's missing...

LUCIE

You think it's connected?

KAREN

Yes. But it's not my problem anymore.

Karen walks away.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - KAREN'S ROOM - DAY

Karen sits cross-legged in bed. The room still looks like a disaster area.

She's watching a home video on her computer.

ON THE COMPUTER - Santa and Karen are in the WORKSHOP. She's 10 years old. He's demonstrating how to properly wrap presents.

He quickly and skillfully wraps a small box in colorful paper and a pretty bow.

Karen looks on, in wide-eyed wonder.

The camera is shaky, being held by Mrs. Claus.

It pans to the corner - where 12-year-old Zed, covered in horrible acne, plays a hand-held video game - then it pans back to Santa.

SANTA

And that's how it's done.

MRS. CLAUS (O.S.)

That's why I married you, Santa.

You're great with your hands.

Santa, slightly embarrassed, looks at the camera.

SANTA

Let's keep it PG, dear.

YOUNG KAREN

How'd you get to be Santa, Daddy?

SANTA

My father, Santa before me, had his choice from among five sons. I was a runt, the youngest. No one thought I'd be Santa. One day near Christmas, when Dad and my jerky brothers were out, I heard strange noises from outside. A large masked man was in the reindeer pen, **stealing** the reindeer, loading them into a big truck.

YOUNG KAREN

Oh, no! What did you do!

SANTA

I secretly slashed his tires so he couldn't get away.

YOUNG KAREN

You saved Christmas!

SANTA

I sure did. When it was time to pick his heir a few years later, Dad picked me because of my heroism.

KAREN closes the computer. She sits frozen. Deep thoughts. Then she grabs a stuffed Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and talks to it:

KAREN
(smiles)
That's it! All I have to do is save
Christmas!

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - WORKSHOP - DAY

Karen is leading a tour for Angel, Max, and Jackie.

Lucie drops a wrapped present onto the conveyer belt.
Everyone watches it speed down the belt then disappear behind
black rubber flaps.

KAREN
This is Lucie. She's a true
Christmas warrior.

Angel smiles at Lucie.

ANGEL
You're pretty.

LUCIE
Aww, thanks.

Angel grabs Lucie and gives her a tight hug.

JACKIE
Honey, don't touch the Elves.

LUCIE
It's okay. I like hugs.

Lucie smiles shyly at Karen and walks away.

LUCIE (CONT'D)
Have a fun tour!

Angel turns back to the conveyer belt.

ANGEL
Where do the presents go?

KAREN
The conveyer belt drops them inside
a tube, then they're sucked to the
roof up to Santa's Sleigh.

JACKIE
Anything ever get stuck in there?

KAREN
Only me once or twice. Not fun.

ANGEL

How does Santa deliver a billion-zillion presents in one night?

KAREN

Trade secret. I could tell you, but then I'd get coal in my stocking.

SANTA enters. Everyone stops what they're doing and stares. Santa waves as he walks over to Karen and the guests.

SANTA

How's the tour? Is Karen treating you right?

MAX

She's really something.

JACKIE

Yes, I'm sure you think so.

SANTA

Are you folks ready for the sleigh ride tonight?

JACKIE

Will there be enough room for us?

SANTA

There's **always** room. It might be a little tight, though.

JACKIE

Tight works for me.

ANGEL

I'm ready, I'm ready!

Max makes a pained face.

MAX

Could I stay here and meet you in the morning? Tummy trouble.

SANTA

Of course. Guess it'll just be the three of us.

JACKIE

It's better that way. Cozier.

She puts a hand on Santa's shoulder.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Say, Santa, could I... see your office? I'd love to know where the magic happens.

SANTA

The magic happens everywhere all at once when Santa is around.

JACKIE

I sure hope so.

SANTA

I... well... right this way.

JACKIE

(to MAX)

Keep an eye on Angel, okay?

MAX

Of course.

Jackie turns to Angel.

JACKIE

Be right back, hon.

Jackie and Santa walk away.

ANGEL

I have to pee, Daddy.

KAREN

Bathroom is down the hall.

MAX

We'll be back in a minute.

KAREN

I'll be waiting with bells on.

She shakes the small bells attached to her dress.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Literally.

Angel giggles as she and Max walk off. Holly and Jane rush over to Karen, looking sweet as can be.

HOLLY

Karen! I have a question... I've always wanted to be your friend.

KAREN

That's not a question, and you usually give me dirty looks.

HOLLY

What? No! That's crazy. I have resting bitch face, right Jane?

Jane nods.

JANE

We want to be your besties! We like you a lot. It's totally not a lie.

HOLLY

Lucie wanted me to ask you... can we have a party in the workshop after closing? A fun girls' night?

KAREN

My father wouldn't like that.

HOLLY

Do you always do what Santa wants?

Karen considers. Thinking about her dad... yeah, fuck that guy.

KAREN

I should keep an eye out for anything strange. Yes, let's do it!

HOLLY

Amazing! But we'll need some cute boys, obviously.

JANE

Like your sexy brother.

KAREN

Eww. You're kidding, right?

HOLLY

See you tonight!

Holly and Jane run off, leaving Karen a little dazed.

LUCIE (O.S.)

FIRE!!!

Karen turns and sees:

A pile of wrapping paper going up in FLAMES, a sparking, knocked-over lamp atop the paper. Lucie stands near the fire, panicked.

Karen springs into action! She runs and jumps over the conveyer belt, then bolts across the room. She BREAKS the glass encasing the fire extinguisher. Karen grabs the extinguisher, runs back across the room, over the conveyer belt, and PUTS OUT the fire.

LUCIE (CONT'D)
(crying)
I'm sorry! I bumped it and...

Karen drops the extinguisher and hugs Lucie.

KAREN
It's okay. Accidents happen.

Lucie squeezes Karen so hard it's like she's trying to morph their two bodies together into one human/Elf entity.

Karen looks at the Elves, who all stand around watching.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Back to work! Christmas isn't going to wrap itself.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - SANTA'S OFFICE - DAY

Santa enters with Jackie.

SANTA
This is--

She grabs him and kisses him passionately. Santa like. Santa like very much.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - DAY

A SNOWBALL

Hits Karen in the chest - SMACK!

She brushes it off. Pretends to be mad.

KAREN
Oh, you've done it now! You're in big trouble, little girl!

Angel giggles and hides behind a tree as Karen fires several snowballs right at her.

Max sits on the factory steps, happily watching.

Angel runs out from behind the tree and immediately--

GETS HIT IN THE FACE WITH A SNOWBALL.

She falls down. Goes still.

Karen rushes over.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Oh, no! Angel, are you okay?

Karen gently shakes Angel, whose eyes are closed.

Angel's eyes pop open and she SHOVES a handful of snow into Karen's face. Karen spits out snow as Angel runs to Max.

ANGEL

Daddy, help! She's gonna get me!

Angel jumps into Max's arms. He holds her tight as Karen approaches. Max smiles at Karen.

MAX

This is really fun.

She smiles back.

KAREN

I really needed some fun.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - NIGHT

The sun sets as Karen walks away from the factory. She's looking for clues, searching behind trees, on the ground... but unfortunately, falling snow has covered most footsteps.

She looks down as she walks over the snow. Reaching the bench, she sees:

A faint RED DOT. She kneels down, looks closer, then digs in the snow, revealing--

A BIG CLUMP OF BLOOD-STAINED SNOW.

KAREN

Whoa.

She scoops some red/black snow into her hands... tastes it... and immediately SPITS and COUGHS and GAGS.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Eww! Bad idea!

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - SANTA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Karen bounds into the room.

KAREN
Dad! I--

Zed and Santa are in the middle of the room. Zed's trying on the famous red suit. It's a little big for him, but not much.

KAREN (CONT'D)
What's going on?

Seeing Zed in the suit... heartbreaking.

SANTA
We're doing a fitting.

ZED
Don't I look cool, sis!

KAREN
Yeah, I guess.

SANTA
A few nips and tucks should do it.

KAREN
Something weird is happening!
Dasher was murdered and Marvin's
missing and I found bloody snow and
the security guard is gone and a
Barbie doll head was on my lap and--

SANTA
Stop this nonsense. I know you're
upset, but creating conspiracy
theories isn't helping you.

KAREN
But it's true. Someone is out to
ruin Christmas!

SANTA
Zed will handle it.

ZED
I'm Santa Claus Junior, and I
handle shit now!

SANTA

No, you're not Santa Claus Junior.
You're **just** Santa Claus.

KAREN

Why won't you listen to me?

Annoyed, Karen grabs a loose string on the red suit and pulls, and pulls, and keeps pulling, until:

A button falls off the suit. She kicks the button, then rushes out of the room.

Zed cries. Santa shrugs.

SANTA

She's working things out. It'll be fine.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Big Ted struts to the conveyer belt and drops a wrapped present on it. The present speeds down the belt and is gone.

BIG TED

That's all she wrote! Great work, everyone! And thanks for making me feel at home all these years. I may not be an Elf, but I feel like one.

The whistle BLOWS.

Lucie, Jane, and Holly exchange hugs.

HOLLY

Let's party our Christmas balls off!

Zed approaches Jane.

ZED

Hi. I can't wait to see you tonight. It's gonna be fun!

He grins and rushes away. Jane blushes.

LUCIE

That's appealing to you?

JANE

I would die for that man.

KAREN walks to the center of the room and stands on the trash can. She smiles.

KAREN

Thank you for a great year of toy-making. You, the Elves, are the true spirit of Christmas. It's been an honor to work with you.

Karen steps down, walks to the closet, and enters. Lucie follows.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - CLOSET - NIGHT

A faint KNOCK, then Lucie enters and turns on the light. She looks around but doesn't see Karen... only something on the floor that looks like someone wrapped a mannequin.

Lucie looks down, considers, then gently kicks the wrapped present on the floor. It MOVES!

KAREN

(muffled)

Ouch!

It's a wrapped Karen.

LUCIE

Karen?

Karen sits up. The wrapping paper crinkles and tears. Lucie pulls it down, exposing Karen's face.

Lucie sits next to her.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

Are you trying to kill yourself?
Because this would be the dumbest
suicide attempt ever.

KAREN

No, I... um, I was getting
something and I got tangled up. I'm
clumsy and emotional right now.

LUCIE

Santa chose Zed, huh?

KAREN

Yes. I'm fired. And Dad's kicking
me out of the North Pole.

LUCIE

Leaving the North Pole could be a blessing in disguise. Look at this as a chance to... experiment. You might like something, or someone, you never even considered before.

KAREN

If leaving the North Pole is so great, why are **you** still here?

Lucie changes the subject:

LUCIE

You're coming to our party in the workshop tonight, right? Please please please?

KAREN

I don't want to be around people right now.

LUCIE

I'm not people. I'm Lucie. Also... technically I'm not people because I'm an Elf.

Karen manages a faint smile.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

I'll be lonely if you're not there.

KAREN

I'm sure you'll find plenty of cute boys to distract you.

Lucie stares into Karen's eyes.

LUCIE

There isn't a boy on Earth who could distract me from you.

After an awkward beat, Karen turns away, then stands and rips the remaining wrapping paper off herself.

KAREN

I'll be there, looking for clues. I have to save Christmas.

LUCIE

From who?

KAREN

I think there's a Christmas Killer on the loose, and I'm going to stop him. I found bloody snow, Lucie.

LUCIE

You think Marvin's... stiff?

Karen nods grimly.

KAREN

I'm so sorry.

EXT. LANDING PATCH - NIGHT

Santa's sleigh is packed with presents on the landing patch. Jackie and Angel sit next to Santa on the sleigh and wave goodbye.

SANTA

Ho ho ho! Be good while I'm away.
Don't burn down the factory!

Santa winks.

KAREN waves as a WHOOSH OF WIND messes up her hair.

In a blink, the sleigh is gone. The sound of BELLS. Then nothing.

All the Elves, Big Ted, and Max wave goodbye. Zed lights firecrackers and tosses them. They POP POP POP!

Karen turns to Max.

KAREN

Wanna come to an overnight party at the workshop?

MAX

Sounds fun.

Max notices something.

MAX (CONT'D)

I don't want to alarm you, but there's a giant Elf staring at you.

Karen casually looks and sees Big Ted staring back.

MAX (CONT'D)

Is that Mr. Bad Ending?

KAREN

Yes. Did you ever see the movie *Elf*? Well, he's like Buddy if Buddy was a rapey frat bro.

MAX

Do you need my help with that? I'll kill him for you.

KAREN

Let's try to avoid murder, okay?

MAX

But it's so hard to resist.

LUCIE sees Karen and Max smiling at each other. She lowers her head and walks away.

Jane walks to Zed, nervous, mostly hiding behind her hair.

JANE

I heard the news. Congratulations.

ZED

Thanks. I thought for sure Dad was gonna pick Karen. He likes her better. I dunno... maybe she is better.

JANE

Stop doubting yourself. You're gonna be a great Santa. I know it!

Zed beams.

ZED

I'll stop doubting myself if you stop doubting yourself. Okay?

JANE

(shyly)
I'll try.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Lucie's seated on the steps, looking at her phone. She's booking a one-way plane ticket from the North Pole to Los Angeles.

Her finger nears the "confirm" button, then suddenly moves to the "delete" button. She deletes the ticket.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Karen and Max walk on a snowy path between the trees.

MAX

You and Zed seem so different.

KAREN

Part of me feels sorry for him, and another part of me wants to punch him so hard in his dumb face.

MAX

Being Santa isn't the right job for you, anyway.

KAREN

Because I'm a girl?

MAX

Because the North Pole is too small for someone like you.

She blushes. Or maybe her cheeks are pink because it's really fucking cold. Either way, his words make her smile.

MAX (CONT'D)

You make me feel all fuzzy inside, Karen. I've been depressed about the state of my life for a while. My first wife died. I came home and found her dead in the tub. She... I should've been there for her.

Karen grabs him and hugs him tight. He's surprised.

KAREN

It wasn't your fault. Don't blame yourself.

MAX

Thank you. I jumped into a relationship with Jackie because I was lonely. But it honestly never felt right. At least I have Angel.

KAREN

What are you looking for in a girl?

MAX

Someone who'll make me smile every single day.

KAREN

Can she be a little weird?

MAX

She can be a lot weird.

They stop walking and look into each other's eyes. He moves closer, like he wants to kiss her. She turns away.

KAREN

I should get ready for the party.

She runs off.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - WORKSHOP - NIGHT

It's dark and quiet. The lights come on. Lucie, Jane, and Holly enter. Holly goes to the center of the room and screams:

HOLLY

Party time, bitches!

Holly's dressed like she's starring in a Regency-era period drama - long dress with a high, empire waist, white gloves, hair in a bun and bedazzled.

Jane looks like she's an extra in Holly's period drama.

Lucie looks like a mod British girl from the 1960's in her short white dress, saddle shoes, and pixie haircut.

Big Ted enters, carrying a case of beer.

Zed enters, carrying an old-school boombox. He's blasting a hot Imagine Dragons track, because that's how he rolls.

Candy enters, wearing almost nothing. Lucie stomps over.

LUCIE

Do **not** have sex at this party, Mom!

CANDY

Oh sweetie, you know I can't promise you that.

Candy's phone CHIMES. A text from George: "Come home. Don't make me do something I'll regret." Candy shuts off the phone.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Perkins, pushing a supply cart, hears MUSIC and stops.

He opens a door and peeks into the workshop. He sees:
Jane, Zed, Holly, Candy, Lucie, and Big Ted partying.

PERKINS
Well, well... look at all you
little shitters.

KAREN (O.S.)
Excuse me?

Karen stands next to him. She's wearing a glittery short green dress, big shiny red boots, and silver tinsel in her hair.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Why are you spying on my friends?

PERKINS
Wasn't spying. Doin' my rounds. Why
are you spying on me?

KAREN
Not spying. I'm sleuthing.

PERKINS
Leave me out of your strange
business.

KAREN
I'm sorry my dad fired you.

Perkins looks at the floor and mumbles.

PERKINS
Biggest mistake he ever made. It's
okay. I already know what I'm gonna
do.

KAREN
About work?

PERKINS
About making my problems disappear.

She suddenly hugs him. He tenses up, like someone who's never been hugged in his entire life. After a beat, he eases her away.

PERKINS (CONT'D)
What was that about?

KAREN

In case you're the Christmas Killer. A hug might make you re-evaluate your life choices.

PERKINS

You think hugs stop murder?

KAREN

A good hug can work miracles.

PERKINS

Get lost.

She walks away, then stops by the trash can, considers, and dumps its contents onto the floor, making a huge mess. She sorts through the trash.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

Stop throwing trash on the floor!

KAREN

Sorry!

Karen scurries into the workshop.

WORKSHOP

Dance music PLAYS from the boombox. Zed dances with Jane, like he's in a mosh pit. She stares at him with love in her eyes as he clumsily bumps her and nearly knocks her over.

She grabs him, holds him still, and KISSES him. His eyes widen. He pulls away.

ZED

I, uh... gotta go do some guy stuff. I'll be back.

JANE

Oh, okay. Hurry.

He runs away. She looks disappointed.

HOLLY dances with Big Ted. She blows him a kiss as she dances seductively around him. He nods approvingly.

CANDY stands in the corner, chugging vodka.

LUCIE stands near a table with beer and food, looking glum and shoving chips into her mouth. She sees Karen staring into a trash can. Lucie grabs two beers and rushes over to her.

LUCIE
Hey, want a beer?

KAREN
I don't really drink.

LUCIE
It'll relax you.

Lucie hands Karen a beer. She pops it open and chugs, and... immediately spits it out onto Lucie's shoes.

KAREN
Kringles! Is that what beer tastes like? I thought it would be fruity and effervescent.

LUCIE
Nope, it's always tasted like bubbly pee.

Karen takes another sip, makes a pained face, gags, and swallows. Lucie pops open her beer and drinks.

KAREN
Still no Marvin?

LUCIE
No. You're right. I'm pretty sure he's dead. He'd never miss a party.

KAREN
I tried telling my dad, but he thinks I'm making stuff up.

Karen takes deep breath and shakes her head.

KAREN (CONT'D)
I've spent my entire life at the North Pole and only have one good friend. How sad is that?

LUCIE
At least I'm really cool.

KAREN
Oh, not you. I was talking about your mom. She's so great.

Karen grins.

LUCIE
Not funny.

KAREN
Let's dance!

And they do. Lucie is a good dancer. Karen is terrible, so very bad. They shout at each other while they dance.

KAREN (CONT'D)
You're really good! You could be a professional dancer!

LUCIE
I actually want to be an actress!
It's all I've ever wanted!

KAREN
Then go be an actress!

LUCIE
I couldn't! I'm not good enough!

KAREN
How do you know?

Lucie has no answer.

WORKSHOP - LATER

Holly's on Big Ted's lap, drinking a beer. She burps loudly, then turns and kisses him. Jane rushes over.

JANE
Holly! Have you seen Zed? I'm gonna do the deed with him tonight.

HOLLY
Honey, get a tetanus shot first. I heard he's been doing the nasty with Lucie's slutty mom.

Jane fights off tears.

JANE
You're a liar!

HOLLY
And you're about to bone a sloth.

JANE
Why are you so mean to me?

HOLLY
Because you let me.

JANE

Can't you be decent for once in your life? Me and Lucie are so nice to you, but you don't care about us at all, do you?

HOLLY

Of course I don't care about you. I care about me, myself, and I.

Jane's bottled-up rage finally bubbles over.

JANE

We're not friends anymore, Holly Shimmer! I'm done! I'm never doing anything you tell me ever again!

HOLLY

Go away.

JANE

Okay!

Jane stomps away.

BIG TED

A little harsh, don't you think?

Holly smiles, but there's sadness behind the smile.

BIG TED (CONT'D)

You really don't care about Jane and Lucie?

HOLLY

I used to care about people, but it's not worth it. Hurts too much when they ditch you. Can we just talk about us, please?

Big Ted wraps his arms around her.

BIG TED

Better?

HOLLY

Much.

MAX enters and looks around.

Karen sees Max and immediately goes to him, leaving Lucie dancing awkwardly by herself.

KAREN

Max!

MAX

You look great. Sexy Christmas works for you.

KAREN

Tis' the season.

MAX

You wanna get out of here? So we can be alone and, you know, talk?

KAREN

Sure. We both have mouths... lips.

Her phone RINGS. She checks it. Video call from Santa.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I gotta take this. It's Dad. But I'll be right back, okay?

She kisses his cheek and runs off, answering the call.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Hey, Dad.

She exits through the back door.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Santa's alone in his parked sleigh, eating a messy sandwich.

SANTA

How are you doing?

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - NIGHT

Karen's outside the backdoor, looking at her phone.

A normal girl would be shivering, but Karen seems immune to the cold.

KAREN

Pretty good, considering you're taking away everything I love and ruining my life.

INTERCUT - KAREN/SANTA

SANTA

I wish things could be different,
but it has to be Zed.

KAREN

I'm not a normal kid, Dad. I'm
Santa Claus' daughter. I can't go
work at Starbucks.

SANTA

Zed can't do anything else. If I
don't make him Santa, he'll end up
dead or homeless. He's simply...
not you. I hope this promotion will
spark something in him, a change.

KAREN

I'm **too good** to be Santa? Wow.

SANTA

I know you'll succeed at whatever
you do. You're smart and dedicated.
But Zed will fail anywhere else.

KAREN

He gets rewarded for being lazy and
dumb and bad at everything? Great.

She looks closely at her phone. Something's not quite right.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Where are Jackie and Angel?

SANTA

That's another reason I called.
Jackie and Angel are packing.

KAREN

Packing for what?

SANTA

Our future. Jackie and I are getting
married once her divorce is final.
Isn't that wonderful?

Karen SCREAMS loudly and throws the phone as hard as she can.
And immediately regrets it.

KAREN

Aww, crap.

It lands far away, in the woods. That girl has an arm.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - ZED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Zed's on the floor, sitting crossed-legged, playing a video game where he shoots a lot of fake people with a big gun.

He puts down the controller. Takes a deep breath.

ZED

Don't be a pussy, Zed. Do what you gotta do. Be a real man!

He gets up and looks into the full-length mirror. He SCREAMS at himself, like a sports person on a sports team sports-ing himself up.

SUPPLY ROOM

Large space. Stocked to the brim. Scissors. Glue. Tape. Hammers. Nails. Glitter. Wrapping paper. Staples. Stickers. Buttons. Confetti.

Holly enters with Big Ted. She stands on her tippy-toes and kisses him.

HOLLY

I don't think we ever had a real conversation.

BIG TED

You intimidate me.

They sit on a small, crowded table, holding hands.

HOLLY

How'd you end up at the North Pole?

BIG TED

Orphan. A couple of Elves couldn't have kids, so Santa pulled some strings. They delivered me and Zed together. Santa chose Zed, and gave me to the Elves.

HOLLY

Is it weird being the only tall guy in the workshop?

BIG TED

It's fine. Except my big sausage fingers don't fit in the scissors.

HOLLY

The Elf life sucks.

BIG TED
It's not all bad. I'm here with
you, and you're beautiful.

She smiles.

BIG TED (CONT'D)
What's your deal?

HOLLY
I have myself, and that's all I've
had since my shitty parents decided
they didn't want to be parents
anymore. I've basically been on my
own since I was twelve.

BIG TED
You don't have to be on your own
anymore. Big Ted's here.

She pushes all the supplies off the table, then leans back.

He climbs on top of her, slowly kisses her from stomach to
lips. Holly moans. She reaches down and rubs his... Little
Ted. He closes his eyes.

BIG TED (CONT'D)
Oh, yeah... Karen.

HOLLY
Get off of me, you pig!

She knees him in the balls. He cries out in pain, rolls off
the table, and HITS the floor hard.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Fuck you! Karen? Really? You're
obsessed with her, you freak!

She rushes out of the room and slams the door. He moans.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Karen's digging through the snow in search of her phone as a
light snow falls.

Nearby, behind a tree - SOMEONE IS WATCHING HER. Someone
unseen. But that someone is definitely there because suddenly
it's the--

CREEPY POTENTIAL KILLER'S POV!

BACK ON Karen as she hears... the faint sound of CRUNCHING SNOW. Startled, she turns, looks around.

KAREN
Hell? Anyone there?

Beat. Nothing. She shrugs and gets back to work.

FIRST FLOOR BATHROOM

Holly's in front of the mirror, fixing her makeup, eyes damp.

HOLLY
(softly, to herself.)
You will not cry over some jerky
guy, Holly. Stop it!

The door creaks open. Holly keeps looking at her reflection.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Better not be you, Ted, or I will
scratch your eyes out. Why don't
you go find your jolly girlfriend?

A MAN IN A MASK enters.

The mask looks like an ugly Christmas sweater with eye and mouth holes cut out. He's wearing red coveralls and dark boots. He walks slowly to her, then stops.

She finally looks at him, then shakes her head dismissively.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
I'm not laughing, asshole. How dare
you ask about my life... get me to
open up, to trust you and then...
doesn't matter. Jane and Lucie were
right about you. I wish they were
here instead of you. I wish I
wasn't such a bitch.

He steps closer.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Get the fuck out!

He shakes his head. Steps ever closer.

A faint gasp escapes her mouth as she realizes:

HOLLY (CONT'D)
You're not Big Ted, are you?

He shakes his head again. She grabs his mask. Yanks it off.
CLOSE ON her shocked face.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You...

He grabs the mask and puts it back on. Then he reaches into his pocket and pulls something out - Mistletoe!

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You want to kiss me? Oh Kringles,
is that it? Let me guess, this
stays between us, right?

He nods.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Typical. Go for it, naughty boy.

He holds the Mistletoe up above their heads. She closes her eyes. He leans in and kisses her.

SLURPING is heard, then TEARING. Her eyes pop open. She releases a MUFFLED SCREAM and tries to pull away, but he holds her tight.

The Mistletoe is crushed between his fingers, then--

He pulls away. Blood drips from her mouth. He's BITTEN OFF HER LIPS. Her face is all teeth and blood.

He chews her lips and swallows them in one GULP.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(hard to understand - no
lips and all)

Don't hurt my friends! I'll do
whatever you want. Okay?

Holly pulls the sparkly silver hair pin from her hair and tries to stab him.

He grabs her wrist, then SLAMS her head down against the sink. Again and again. Until her head SPLITS OPEN.

Holly goes limp. The hair pin hits the floor.

A sound from the hallway. FOOTSTEPS.

The Christmas Killer puts the hair pin in his pocket, then drags Holly's body into a stall. He closes the door while still inside.

Jane enters. She looks at herself in the mirror for a beat, then cautiously moves the hair from her face and ties it into a ponytail with a rubber band.

It's the first time her face has been fully seen. Maybe the first time she's really looked at herself. She smiles wide.

JANE
(softly, to herself)
Hello, Jane Wonders. Nice to finally meet you. The **real** you. You're worth something. You're worth a lot.

Jane suddenly slips, but catches herself by grabbing onto the sink. She looks down--

Drops of blood on the sink. More blood on the floor.

The stall door CREAKS open.

IN THE MIRROR, Jane see the Christmas Killer step over Holly's dead body and exit the stall.

The Christmas Killer walks slowly to Jane. She tries to catch her breath as he gets closer, seen only in the mirror.

Jane turns to face him and tries to scream, but all that comes out is a whisper:

JANE (CONT'D)
Leave... me alone...

He doesn't. He keeps coming. And pulls out the knife with the candy cane handle.

She turns. Tries to run. But he grabs her leg. Trips her.

Jane fights, kicking him in the face. She gets up and hurries out of the bathroom.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Jane bolts down the hall, heading in the direction of the workshop.

The Christmas Killer appears behind her and throws the knife.

She turns back and--

The knife HITS her. Sticking in her chest. She cries out and tumbles to the ground. Her eyes close. She goes still.

The Christmas Killer stands over her, looking down curiously, then bends down.

She opens her eyes, rips the knife from her chest, and STABS him in the stomach. He stumbles backward. Jane stands up, excited.

JANE

I did it! I got you! Ha!

She runs, leaving him in the dust as he crawls slowly forward. He stands and pulls out the knife.

Jane keeps running. Not looking back.

Up ahead, she sees pretty SILVER GARLAND hanging low, too low, sparkling in the light. It's about (Elf) neck-high.

She doesn't slow down, runs right through the garland like a marathon runner crossing the finish line. The garland wraps around her neck like a snake. SNAP!

Jane GAGS and stumbles to the ground. She tries to rip the garland off her neck.

JANE (CONT'D)

Owww!

She looks at her fingers. Red with blood.

She's finally able to pull the garland off her neck. Except it's not just garland. It's garland wrapped around BARBED WIRE.

Her neck is GASHED deeply. Her carotid artery is severed. BLOOD GUSHES OUT.

JANE (CONT'D)

No fair...

Jane falls forward onto her face. She BLEEDS. She DIES.

BASEMENT HOLDING ROOM

Inside the large room is a desk and a ten-by-ten jail cell.

Candy's on the floor, back against the wall, legs spread apart, sipping on vodka. She's a sloppy mess.

Big Ted enters and looks down at her.

BIG TED

I'm lonely.

CANDY

Then you came to the right place.

She raises her arms. He helps her up.

CANDY (CONT'D)

But let's go someplace else. I'm getting flashbacks. Santa used to lock me in jail when I was younger.

BIG TED

Why?

CANDY

Just normal prostitution stuff.

ROOM OF MISFIT TOYS

Candy and Big Ted enter a spacious room stacked six-feet high with old, broken toys. Years and years of discarded toys, a hoarder's paradise. Not much room to walk, only a small path.

CANDY

This is more like it.

Candy pushes a bunch of toys off a long table and climbs on top, then poses in a manner which she thinks is seductive but is really quite the opposite.

CANDY (CONT'D)

Come and get it, Big Fred.

BIG TED

It's Big Ted.

She finishes off the vodka, tosses it into the pile of toys.

He climbs on top of her. Kisses her. She sobs. He pulls back.

BIG TED (CONT'D)

Stop crying! You're ruining it!

CANDY

I miss my husband. Being with you made me realize how much I love George.

BIG TED

Are you fucking serious?

Candy vomits a little on herself and passes out.

Ted stares at her, a blank expression on his face.

CUT TO BLACK.

ROOM OF MISFIT TOYS - LATER

Candy wakes on the table and sits up. She's confused for a beat, then looks around. She's alone and still fully dressed, her make-up smeared.

CANDY

Hello? You still here, Ed?

She gets off the table, then makes a pained face and grabs her head.

CANDY (CONT'D)

Ohhh. Never drinking again.

She looks around. Sees only piles of broken toys. Then--

A pile of toys MOVES. A single toy falls to the floor.

Then all the toys TUMBLE over as... **something** rises from beneath the pile.

THE CHRISTMAS KILLER. Grinning beneath his mask. He's holding a big red Merry Christmas balloon, like a holiday Pennywise the Clown. He steps closer.

CANDY (CONT'D)

Big Jed? Sorry I passed out. Is that for me?

He nods, extends the balloon toward her. She reaches for it.

The Christmas Killer unties the balloon, letting air out, then STRETCHES the bottom wide and PULLS IT DOWN OVER HER HEAD, over her eyes, her nose, her mouth, to her neck.

CANDY (CONT'D)

Nuh...mmmmffff!

She can't breath. Fighting for air, the balloon expands and contracts. And then stops.

The Christmas Killer grabs her wrists and places them inside a pair of pink children's handcuffs. CLICK. Panicked, she can't break free of the cuffs... can't get the balloon off her face.

She passes out and FALLS onto a pile, like a discarded toy.

BIG TED (PRE-LAP)
Ohhh... yes, Karen. Just like that!

KAREN'S ROOM

The room is dark. Big Ted MOANS.

The doorknob turns. The door creaks open.

Someone enters. The silhouette of a man. Holding a knife. For a beat, the silhouette stops and stares.

BIG TED (O.S.)
Who's there, Karen? Look, I'm
sorry, okay? If you let me have
some of your used panties, I
promise I'll leave, okay?

The light is turned on by a GLOVED HAND.

Big Ted is on Karen's bed, in his tighty-whities, rolling around in a pile of Karen's frilly, lacey unmentionables.

BIG TED (CONT'D)
Who are you? Get out!

It's the masked Christmas Killer. He walks briskly to Big Ted.

BIG TED (CONT'D)
No, stop! Don't!

He STABS Big Ted in the stomach and leaves the candy cane knife there, buried deep. Big Ted screams and weakly tries to pull out the knife.

The Christmas Killer, using both hands, DIGS into Big Ted's eye sockets.

BIG TED (CONT'D)
HELLLLPPPP!!!

...And POPS OUT both eyes, bloody muscle and tissue dangling.

As Big Ted dies, the Christmas Killer casually pierces both eyeballs with ornament hooks and hangs them on Karen's small Christmas tree.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Karen, on her hands and knees, finally finds her phone under the snow. She kisses it.

KAREN

I missed you.

A HAND grabs her shoulder. She JOLTS, startled. Looks up and sees--

Zed standing over her, grinning.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You scared the crap out of me.

ZED

What are you doing out here?

KAREN

I accidentally threw my phone a great distance.

He helps her up.

ZED

Me being Santa must be really hard for you. Sometimes the underdog pulls through. That's life.

KAREN

You're not the underdog. Underdogs work hard and people root for them, and they're likable, and we're happy when they win.

ZED

Well, Dad picked me, so that means I'm better.

KAREN

I deserve to be Santa. I've worked so hard, and all you've done is break shit and play video games.

ZED

Dad saw something special in me.

KAREN

Yeah, we all saw something "special" in you.

She does finger quotes.

ZED

Are you trying to say I'm the "R" word or something?

Karen looks immediately full of regret.

KAREN

I... I didn't mean it. I'm really upset and sometimes I lash out. I apologize.

ZED

I'm **smart!** And I'll make a great frickin' Santa Claus! The best ever! You'll see, you... you "bitch" word!

KAREN

It only works if don't actually say the real word.

Zed cries and runs off. He trips and falls face-first in the snow. He gets up, nose badly bleeding, and runs off, sobbing.

KAREN (CONT'D)

That went well.

Karen walks slowly back toward the factory. She spots Max near the door and heads to him.

MAX

I missed you.

KAREN

I've got some interesting news.

MAX

Okay.

KAREN

Your wife and my dad... Jackie's going to be my stepmom. It's weird.

He doesn't seem at all upset.

MAX

Wanna go fool around?

KAREN

Like with toys and games?

MAX

Sure, if that's what you call your genitals.

KAREN

Your ex hooking up with Santa Claus doesn't bother you?

MAX

I wish Jackie the best.

He looks into her eyes.

MAX (CONT'D)

Because I like **you**.

KAREN

I should stay at the party. I'm sleuthing right now, because a lot of strange stuff happened. Have you seen anything weird?

MAX

It's the North Pole. Everything is weird.

KAREN

Fair point.

He smiles and runs his fingers over her cheek.

MAX

Well, you certainly could stay at the party and play *Scooby-Doo*. Or you could come to my room and let me kiss you, starting at your lips, working my way down to your--

KAREN

Yes! Let's do that!

She grabs him and kisses his face so damn hard.

MAX

Whoa.

KAREN

I'll meet you in ten minutes.

MAX

Hurry.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - PERKINS' ROOM - NIGHT

Perkins sits on his small bed. He unfolds a cloth. Inside are several long, sharp knives. He grabs one and holds it tight, fingers against the blade. Blood drips onto his bed.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

He walks to the door and opens it slightly, chain still latched, and is greeted by:

Karen's smiling face.

PERKINS

No, you can't knock over my trash can. Go away.

KAREN

I wanna say goodbye, in case I don't ever see you again.

PERKINS

See ya, kid.

KAREN

Don't give up just because you're strange and creepy. I see kindness in you. I don't know if you're the Grinch or not, but please don't do anything you'll regret.

His eyes dampen.

PERKINS

Stop being nice to me. I don't deserve it.

KAREN

Of course you do. Take care.

He reaches through the door opening and grabs her by the wrist. She's startled.

PERKINS

I'm not your Grinch. Keep looking and don't trust anyone.

He lets her go.

KAREN

Okay, partner!

She rushes off.

Perkins closes the door. He goes back to the bed. He looks at his knives and his bloody hand. He folds the cloth with the knives inside, then throws the bundle into the trash.

GUEST ROOM

The room is lit only by a candle. Soft music PLAYS.

Max and Karen, still dressed, are on the bed kissing - it's a lot of lips and tongues and saliva. She pulls away.

KAREN
Wait. I've never...

MAX
Really?

KAREN
I came close a few times, but it never felt right.

MAX
Do you want me to stop?

She shakes her head.

MAX (CONT'D)
I'll be gentle.

KAREN
Be whatever you have to be to make me feel good.

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

BLACK BOOTS. Someone walking down the hall, stopping outside the door that reads: "Guest Room."

FAINT MOANING can be heard from inside. A GLOVED HAND reaches up and grabs the door handle. Turns it gently. Locked.

GUEST ROOM

Max climbs off Karen, post-sex. They're sweaty and breathing hard, and mostly under the covers.

MAX
I didn't hurt you, did I?

KAREN
No, it's... change scares me.
(smiles)
Thanks for making me feel special.

MAX
My pleasure. Literally.

Karen sits up and shyly turns away from him. She puts on her red bra and green panties.

KAREN
Maybe we should've used protection?
I got lost in the moment.

MAX
Damn it... me, too.

Karen suddenly looks sick.

KAREN
Oh, crap!

She covers her mouth and rushes to the bathroom.

GUEST ROOM - BATHROOM

Karen is on her knees over the toilet, head down. She's vomiting and groaning. She finishes and wipes her mouth.

KAREN
Real attractive, Karen.

She notices a small, overflowing trash can next to the toilet. She looks at the door, then back at the trash can, considering. Then her face silently says - *Fuck it*.

Karen grabs the can and digs through the trash. She pulls out several clumps of toilet paper with questionable substances on them, and then--

She finds Holly's silver forked French hair pin. She examines it closely. It has a tiny drop of what looks like blood on it. Her eyes widen.

GUEST ROOM

Karen enters from the bathroom, looking nervous.

Max stands across the room, in only boxer shorts. He has a small bandage on his stomach, some blood seeping through. She points to the bandage.

KAREN (CONT'D)
What happened?

He looks down.

MAX
Oh, that's just... I was playing in the snow with Angel and a sharp stick got me pretty good.

He steps closer.

MAX (CONT'D)

Are you okay? You look like you've seen a ghost.

She's trembling, eyes damp.

KAREN

It's **you**. You're the Grinch.

Karen pulls the hair pin from where she was hiding it, in the back of her panties, and holds it up.

MAX

No, wait! I didn't... yes, okay. I slept with Holly. She came onto me, I swear.

KAREN

How could you do this to... Christmas. You took something beautiful and made it ugly. You stole something I cherished and I'll never get back. The innocence is gone. You made Christmas feel... slutty and cheap!

He suddenly grabs her by the throat and squeezes.

MAX

I was going to kill you last. Why'd you have to be so nosey?

She screams and SLAMS the hair pin into the top of his head. It sticks.

MAX (CONT'D)

Fuuuuucckkkk!

Still holding onto her throat, he pulls out the hair pin and tosses it.

MAX (CONT'D)

Big mistake.

He throws her to the ground. She looks up pleadingly.

KAREN

Why?

MAX

Because I really fucking hate Christmas.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

A LIVING ROOM ON CHRISTMAS MORNING.

5-year-old Max, in tight superhero pajamas, runs to the Christmas Tree and finds his present. He picks it up and smiles.

YOUNG MAX
Please be a Teddy Ruxpin!

CLOSE ON the present. The tag reads: *To Max, From Santa.*

He tears open the present, throwing wrapping paper onto the floor, and inside finds--

Wrinkles the Talking fucking Dog.

YOUNG MAX (CONT'D)
What's this crap? You're not Teddy Ruxpin.

He looks up and sees the gruesome sight of his dead, broken PARENTS.

END FLASHBACK.**GUEST ROOM**

Max picks up Karen, who's fighting and screaming, and--

MAX
I wanted a Teddy Ruxpin, not some cheap rip-off!

THROWS HER THROUGH THE WINDOW.

Glass shatters. Karen falls.

Her SCREAM ECHOES.

WORKSHOP

Karen flies through the shattered window - more than 25 feet off the ground - her body cut all over, her face a picture of fear. She grabs the top of the big tree and holds on tight.

The tree TOPPLES OVER...

KAREN
HELP!!!

...And crashes down.

Karen slams against a work table, head hitting it with a THUD. She rolls over and off the table, falling limply to the floor.

She doesn't move.

CUT TO BLACK.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

The darkness turns to light as Karen exits a dark chimney, holding a sack of presents.

Karen IS Santa. And she is *thrilled*.

She's in someone's nice LIVING ROOM. A lovely Christmas tree blinks and shines.

Karen removes a wrapped present from the sack and places it under the tree. She then spots milk and cookies set out on the table. She takes a bite of the cookie, then grabs the glass of milk and drinks.

ANGRY KID (O.S.)

Naughty!

Startled, Karen spills milk all over herself and drops the glass. It SHATTERS at her feet.

AN ANGRY KID, 12, points at Karen and walks closer.

ANGRY KID (CONT'D)

Naughty! Naughty!

Then several more ANGRY KIDS walk into the room, all pointing at Karen.

ANGRY KIDS

(chanting)

NAUGHTY! NAUGHTY! NAUGHTY!

Karen runs back to the chimney and gets inside. She climbs. Out of breath, she looks down.

The Kids light the fire place. FLAMES rise up, almost touching her.

Karen SCREAMS.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

GUEST ROOM

Max puts on his red coveralls, shoes, gloves, and ugly Christmas sweater-style mask.

A BANG on the door. Then it's KICKED OPEN. Perkins charges in, holding a knife.

MAX

Oh look, it's the creepy janitor.

PERKINS

What'd you do? Where's Karen? If you hurt that sweet girl, I swear...

Max points to the broken window behind him.

MAX

We had a slight disagreement so I threw her out the fucking window.

PERKINS

You son of a bitch!

Perkins rushes Max. He swings the knife as Max raises his hand. The knife slices right through his hand.

Max trips Perkins, then gives him a shove in the back, pushing him right THROUGH THE BROKEN WINDOW.

Max looks down and sees:

Perkins fall and land on his head on the workshop floor. His head explodes like a smashed watermelon.

Max also sees Karen. Unmoving. Looking dead. In her underwear. On the floor next to the Christmas Tree.

Satisfied, Max turns from the broken window and walks to the door.

WORKSHOP

Darkness. Then light. So bright. Everything's blurry for a beat. A MAN comes into focus. A man in a mask. Max.

Coming to finish the job.

KAREN wakes and backs away from him, clearly in pain.

KAREN

No... leave me alone!

Max is holding the long knife with the candy cane style handle, wearing his mask, walking quickly toward Karen. A killer ready to kill. Until:

ZED casually walks into the room, eating a messy chocolate bar. He has bloody toilet paper stuffed up his nose.

ZED
Is the party over?

KAREN
Zed, help me!

Zed looks at Karen. His eyes widen.

ZED
What happened to you? And why are you in your under-panties?

He then looks at Max. His jaw drops. The face of a guy who fucked-up big time.

ZED (CONT'D)
Uh oh. I knew I forgot something.

MAX
Hello, Zed. Have you finally come to help me?

Zed drops his candy bar and mutters a curse word under his breath.

KAREN
What's going on?

ZED
It's all a big misunderstanding.

MAX
No, it's really not.

Karen glares at Zed.

KAREN
What did you do?

ZED
I met Max online. He paid me a lot of money to rig the contest. All I had to do was say, "Hey, can I pick the winner?" And Dad let me do it.

KAREN
But why?

ZED

Because I thought Dad was going to pick you to be Santa, and I got super mad at him. I wanted revenge.

KAREN

But he picked **you**.

ZED

I was as shocked as anyone.

KAREN

You can't do premature revenge!

ZED

Exactly! So you see how silly all this is, right? I'll fix it before it's too late.

Anger burns through Karen like the heat of a thousand suns.

KAREN

You fucking asshole!

Zed turns to Max.

ZED

Look, I forgot to call this off after Dad made me Santa. Totally slipped my mind. My bad. Please put the knife away and we'll pretend this never happened, coolio?

MAX

Zed, I've already killed people. We're way beyond pretending.

As Max and Zed talk, Karen pulls some clothes from a nearby lost & found box - a *Frankie Say Relax* T-shirt, pink sweatpants, sneakers - and quickly dresses.

ZED

Yikes. Guess we'll have to make it look like suicides. Karen, we can keep this between us, right?

KAREN

Are you fucking kidding me?

ZED

Max, give me the knife. I have to be the hero now... to make up for how I'm also sorta the villain.

Zed tries to grab the knife from Max's hand. Max STABS Zed in the stomach. TWISTS the knife, then pulls it out.

Zed cries out and stumbles to his knees.

ZED (CONT'D)

Oww! You can't do this! It was my plan! And I say it's over!

MAX

It was **my** plan. You were just dumb enough to go along with it.

Zed's blood DRIPS onto the floor. Karen watches, in shock.

Max reaches into a nearby box of random toys and pulls out a large wooden train.

Zed turns to Karen. Looks at her pleadingly.

ZED

Help me, sis! I'm hurt bad! Please?
We can be co-Santa Juniors! We can--

Max BASHES Zed's face in with the toy train.

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

KAREN

STOP!!!

Zed, face caved in and looking like a crushed pizza, dies.

Max, out of breath, walks toward Karen. Grinning.

MAX

Now where were we?

Max attacks Karen. She jumps to the side - avoiding the knife coming at her - and onto the conveyer belt. She speeds away from Max...

...And disappears behind the black flaps.

TOY TUBE

Karen is pulled upward with great force in the narrow tube, barely fitting.

WHOOOP! She's stuck.

She twists, pain shooting through her body. She crosses her arms like she's going down a waterpark slide.

Tilts her head back. Straightens her knees. Sucks in her chest. Holds her breath.

KAREN
Ahhhhhshhitttttt!

The suction HISSES, continuing to pull her, until she's free--
Shooting up to the roof like a rocket.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - ROOF - NIGHT

The tube SPITS HER OUT. Karen rolls over on the snowy rooftop and stops right at the feet of...

LUCIE, who's looking down at Karen with confusion. She helps Karen stand. Karen moans in pain.

LUCIE
You're hurt!

KAREN
We're in big trouble.

LUCIE
What happened?

KAREN
Max tried to kill me, and Zed's dead. He betrayed Dad.

LUCIE
We need to call the police!

KAREN
Call them, but they won't get here in time to save us. It's up to me. I'm going to turn my Christmas Spirit into bloody vengeance!

Lucie takes out her phone and calls the police.

Karen makes a video call to Santa.

EXT. HOUSE - ROOF - NIGHT

Santa's walking toward a chimney, carrying his sack. His phone rings. He answers the video call and sees Karen, bleeding, looking awful.

KAREN
(from phone)
Hi, Daddy.

SANTA
Karen! What's going on?

INTERCUT SANTA/KAREN

KAREN
Max tried to kill me.

SANTA
Is anyone else hurt?

KAREN
Zed's... gone. Dad, he rigged the
contest so Max would win, then Max
killed him.

SANTA
No, that can't be.

KAREN
Max is still after me.

Santa hurries back to his sleigh.

SANTA
I'm coming! Hide until I get there.

KAREN
How long?

SANTA
Maybe an hour.

KAREN
Don't worry, I got this.

SANTA
Please, don't do anything stu--

Karen ends the call and turns to Lucie.

LUCIE
Police are on the way, but it's
going to be a while.

KAREN
You should stay up here where it's
safe.

LUCIE
Don't leave me alone.

KAREN
What were you doing up here?

LUCIE
Looking out and wondering what the
world beyond the snow is like.

Karen considers, then walks to the door and exits. Lucie
hesitates, then rushes after Karen.

LUCIE (CONT'D)
Wait!

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lucie rushes to catch up with Karen.

KAREN
Go back!

LUCIE
No. You can't do this alone.

KAREN
Fine, but please don't die or I'll
be so pissed at you.

Karen and Lucie walk slowly, carefully, and sneak into the
stairwell.

STAIRWELL

Karen peeks down the steps. Looks all clear. They carefully
walk down.

KAREN
I'm such an idiot. I let him... I
feel so gross right now.

LUCIE
I'm sorry he hurt you.

KAREN
Have you ever... you know?

Lucie nods.

LUCIE
Never with someone I loved, so it
doesn't really count.

They exchange sweet smiles as they reach the bottom of the stairs. Karen opens the door a crack and peeks into the hallway. All clear.

WORKSHOP

Karen and Lucie enter and look around.

KAREN
(shouting)
Where are you, Max? Show yourself,
you coward!

Lucie sees something across the room and walks slowly in that direction.

LUCIE
Karen, look.

FIVE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

Each the size of a box that might hold a kitchen stove. Colorful bows on top. Lined in a neat row. Looking pretty. Except for the spots of fresh blood on the wrapping paper.

Karen walks to Lucie and stands next to her. Lucie trembles.

LUCIE (CONT'D)
Don't open them. I don't want to
know. Please? Let's get out of
here!

Karen shakes her head.

KAREN
We have to.

Karen opens the first present and finds--

Marvin. Dead and stuffed inside.

LUCIE
Marvin, no...

Lucie cries. Karen opens the next present.

It's Big Ted. Two colorful Christmas Ornaments where his eyes used to be.

And the next. Jane.

And the next. Holly.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

No... please stop! I can't take it!

And the last. Candy. Balloon still over her head. Hands still cuffed.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

Mom!

Lucie pulls Candy's corpse out of the box and holds her tight, SOBBING.

She stumbles and falls, unable to hold the weight. The corpse lands ON TOP OF HER.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

AAHHHHHH!!!

She frantically pushes the corpse away, then looks up at Karen.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

We're next! We're going to die!

KAREN

No, we're not. We've got the power of Christmas on our side.

LUCIE

After all this, you still think Christmas is magical? Christmas is dead, Karen. It's over!

KAREN

Not on my watch.

FOOTSTEPS.

Karen and Lucie look and see--

Max walking toward them. Mask on. Knife in hand.

MAX

Merry Christmas, ladies. I hope you liked my presents. I took extra good care of Mr. Bad Ending for you, Karen. You're welcome.

Karen grabs a large hammer off a nearby table. Lucie hides behind Karen.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Someone knocking on the backdoor.

GEORGE (O.S.)
(shouting through door)
Candy! I know you're in there!
Please, give me another chance!

Max considers.

MAX
(to LUCIE and KAREN)
Wait right here. I'll handle this.

Max walks to the back door. Lucie yells:

LUCIE
George, run!

Karen pulls a tearful Lucie the other way. They exit into the hallway.

Max reaches the back door and opens it.

George stands in front of the door, dressed nicely, all cleaned up. Eyes damp. A sad man.

GEORGE
Have you seen my wife? I want to
tell Candy I'm sorry. I love her,
and I'm going to spend the rest of
my life becoming a better man.

MAX
Why yes, I have. Come this way.

George enters and walks with Max toward the center of the room.

GEORGE
Why are you wearing a mask?

MAX
Helps me get into the holiday
spirit.

They walk up to Candy's corpse. At first, George can't make out who it is, then it hits him.

GEORGE
Candy...? Baby, no!

He falls to his knees and holds his wife's body close.

Max goes to the pile of gifts that used to be under the toppled tree, and grabs a GIANT CANDY CANE, the size of a baseball bat. He walks back over to George.

MAX

You might want to know, she spent her evening fucking every guy here.

George turns back to Max.

GEORGE

Candy was a saint!

Max swings the candy cane like he's hitting a baseball, and the ball is George's head.

George is knocked over. The candy cane breaks in half, leaving Max holding a half with a jagged edge.

MAX

And you're dead.

Max violently RAMS the jagged candy cane down on George's neck, and the head is CUT CLEAN OFF.

Max looks around. Sees that Karen and Lucie are gone. He licks the candy cane, then tosses it.

He walks across the room, toward the door to the hallway.

MAX (CONT'D)

You can run but you can't hide. My wish hasn't come true yet.

BASEMENT HALLWAY

Max walks down the hall, mask on, knife in hand.

The overhead lights blink. Boiler pipes KNOCK and PING. FOOTSTEPS are heard in the distance.

MAX

I hear you, ladies. And I'm coming to **gut** you.

BASEMENT HOLDING ROOM

The cell door is open. Lucie is inside, seated on the small bed, head in her hands.

Max enters. Lucie looks up, a mess of tears.

MAX
Where's Karen?

LUCIE
She's gone.

Lucie looks genuinely in despair.

LUCIE (CONT'D)
Karen said she'd get help, and that
I should lock myself in here to be
safe, but I couldn't find the key.
And now--

MAX
I'm going to kill you.

He walks to her and raises his knife. Lucie screams.

KAREN (O.S.)
Over here, psycho!

He turns and--

Gets hit in the face with a GLITTER BOMB.

It explodes with a LOUD POP. Colorful glitter rains down over
him. He's blinded for a moment and cries out.

Karen rushes from behind and pushes him inside the cell.

He stumbles and falls as Lucie rushes out.

SLAM! Karen closes the cell door. It locks automatically.

Lucie jumps up and down, excited.

LUCIE
We got you, jerk! I was acting!
We're never letting you out! You'll
die in there, pig! Oink, oink!

Karen gives Lucie a look.

LUCIE (CONT'D)
Too much?

Karen nods, then glares at Max. He stares back.

MAX
Nicely done. Good for you.

KAREN

You could've thrown me out the window **before** we had sex, asshole.

Max removes his mask. He's grinning, pleased with himself.

MAX

But I like you, Karen. I wanted to give you one amazing night of pleasure before I killed you.

KAREN

Don't flatter yourself. It wasn't that great.

MAX

The scratches on my back say otherwise. You trembled beneath me when I made you--

LUCIE

Leave her alone, bully!

Max steps to the bars, face touching metal, grin widening.

MAX

Jealous, Elf?

KAREN

Don't listen to him. He's sick.

Karen turns back to Max.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Tell me why you did this? Why come to the North Pole and murder people? Santa's not even here.

Max bangs on the bars, his rage bubbling over.

MAX

My parents died chasing Santa up the chimney. All they wanted was a video. All I wanted was a Teddy Ruxpin. Instead, I got dead parents and Wrinkles the Talking Dog.

Karen takes a few steps back.

KAREN

In my dad's defense, Teddy Ruxpin dolls were hard to get. People were fighting over them.

MAX

He's Santa Claus! He's supposed to work miracles!

Karen shrugs.

KAREN

I'm sorry. Santa's just a lonely guy with some flying reindeer.

MAX

I'm going to kill Santa, and you, and all the fucking elves!

KAREN

How are you going to do that when you're locked up?

Max reaches into his pocket and pulls out the Security Guard's keys. He puts his hand through the bars and quickly unlocks the door before Karen and Lucie have time to react.

He pushes open the door as Karen bolts forward. She tries to keep the cell door closed.

KAREN (CONT'D)

No!

Too late. He's out. He grabs Karen by the hair and throws her against the wall. She falls down, then looks up at Lucie.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Run! Go home and lock your doors!

LUCIE

I...

KAREN

GO!!!

Lucie turns and runs. Max kicks Karen in the stomach. Karen gasps for air. She's in pain, weeping. He kicks her head. She stops moving. He bends down and whispers in her ear:

MAX

I'm really turned on. Wanna go another round?

He kisses her cheek. Her eyes remain closed as...

HER HANDS slowly reach into her pocket. She pulls out a roll of green ribbon, and then--

Jumps up and frantically wraps the ribbon around his neck.

He tries to pull it off, but she keeps wrapping it around and around. Then she PULLS it tight, choking him.

He falls down onto his back.

She climbs on top of him and keeps pulling. He's gagging, fighting for air.

Max HEADBUTTS her. CRACK!

She falls off of him and lay unconscious. He stands over her, ripping the ribbon off his neck. He inhales deeply.

Max checks her pockets and finds her phone. He makes a video call to Santa.

Santa answers. He's in his sleigh.

SANTA

Karen, I'm almost there!

MAX

Hiya, Santa.

SANTA

If you hurt her I'll--

MAX

What? Ruin my Christmas? You've already done that.

Max turns the camera on Karen, so Santa can see her on the floor. Then Max turns the camera back on himself.

MAX (CONT'D)

It's over, Santa.

Max ends the call, then stomps Karen's phone until it breaks into little bits. He puts his mask back on, then picks up Karen and carries her out of the room.

BOILER ROOM

Loud boiler. Dark. Max places Karen down on the dirty floor, then walks to a valve marked "Sprinkler Shut Off."

A spider crawls over Karen's neck. She doesn't move.

Max turns the valve, shutting off the sprinkler system. He moves next to the fire alarm panel and shuts off the power.

Then he picks up Karen and exits. The spider falls off Karen and scurries away.

ROOM OF MISFIT TOYS

Max enters and lifts Karen above his head with a grunt. He stands on a small stool and throws Karen atop a large pile of broken toys.

She lands with a CRUNCH six feet off the ground.

He removes a small container of lighter fluid from his back pocket and squirts it into the air, all over the toys around Karen's unmoving body.

Once emptied, he throws the container of lighter fluid at Karen. It hits her head. She doesn't stir.

He takes out a pack of matches, lights the whole pack... WHOOSH... and tosses it in the air. It lands atop the pile, lighting the top layer of toys on fire.

Flames quickly surround Karen.

He admires his work for a beat, then exits.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - NIGHT

Lucie sprints away, panting, tears in her eyes. Suddenly, she stops. She looks back at the factory and sees:

What looks like a hint of orange flame showing through a small window.

She gasps.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - ROOM OF MISFIT TOYS - NIGHT

A CIRCLE OF FLAME--

Surrounds Karen. Growing. Closing in on her. Black smoke billows to the ceiling.

The smoke detector BLARES. BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Her eyes pop open.

KAREN
Oh, Kringle!

She looks around, assessing the situation. Not good.

Six feet off the ground, atop a pile of old toys, flames getting closer.

Karen digs through the toys as if tunneling into sand, down, in a pool of plastic, trying to go under, beneath the fiery surface.

Deeper and deeper. Down, down, down.

Past dolls missing their arms and legs. Severed doll heads with soulless black eyes or no eyes at all. Stuffed animals with their stuffing popping out like white fluffy guts.

Past toy trucks without wheels. Past board game pieces that hit her face like hail. Around a horde of smiling creepy clown puppets.

Karen swims in a sea of doll parts. An ocean of unwanted toys. Below the smoke and the flame. Through toy robots that no longer beep. Under a wave of marbles. Tangled in a web of marionette strings.

It's as if she's been sucked into an unseen world of sad, lonely toys, and those toys don't want her to leave. They're holding on--

But finally, she is FREE! She crawls out under the fire, along the floor. Sucking in desperately needed air.

Severed doll arms cling to her. *Don't leave us!* She swats them off.

Karen stands, considers, then rushes into the hallway.

A few seconds later, she returns holding a fire extinguisher.

She sprays the fire, shooting white powder into the air and over the flame. Powder rains down. The fire goes out.

Karen drops the extinguisher, bends over, and COUGHS. A hacking, spitting cough.

She gathers herself, then grabs a damaged hockey stick. She swings upwards and CRACKS the smoke detector.

It falls from the ceiling, smashes on the floor, and goes quiet.

Karen tosses the hockey stick and digs through the old, broken toys until she finds--

A BOX OF JAVELIN DARTS - JARTS. She opens it. Four darts. Two blue, two orange. Twelve inches long. With weighted silver metal tips. Banned by people with common sense everywhere.

She places the darts inside her waistband, then goes back to the pile of presents and again digs, looking for something.

CLOSE ON her face. She grins. *Bingo.*

SANTA'S OFFICE

Max is seated at Santa's desk, smoking a victory cigar. He grabs a framed picture of Santa and family, then puts the cigar out on it, covering Santa's image with ash.

MAX

I win.

But Max doesn't look all that happy. His sad face silently says - *I thought it would feel better than this.*

WORKSHOP

Max walks through the workshop, toward the door, when he stops suddenly and looks around, confused. He SNIFFS.

MAX

(softly, to himself)

No smoke?

He then spots something near the fallen tree. A WRAPPED PRESENT. On the floor. Long, like someone wrapped a big rug, badly. On the present, the tag reads: *To Max, From Karen.*

He considers. Smiles.

MAX (CONT'D)

What the hell? I like surprises.

Max tears open the present, and then--

KAREN POPS OUT from inside the wrapping paper.

KAREN

Merry Fucking Christmas!

She jumps on him and RAMS A DART into his face. It STICKS. Right below the eye. He screams. Karen steps away from him.

Then... Max's scream slowly morphs into a cackling laugh. He PULLS OUT the dart.

MAX

You can't hurt me. I've taken so many painkillers, I don't feel fucking shit!

He lunges at her, grabs her leg. He jerks and she falls to the ground. Max climbs on top of her. CHOKES her.

Her face darkens... pink... red... redder... purple. Her eyes roll back in her head, nothing but white. She's fading. Then--

CRACK! A HAMMER SLAMS against Max's head. He falls off Karen and onto the floor, hands on his head.

Lucie stands over him, holding the hammer.

Max looks at his hands. Covered in blood. He grabs Lucie's arm, jerking her to the ground. She pulls free of him and crawls away.

Karen turns on the conveyer belt.

KAREN

Hop on!

Lucie climbs on the fast-moving conveyer belt. So does Max.

Lucie kicks his face. He falls over onto his back. They speed toward the black flaps. She rolls off the belt at the last second and lands hard on the floor.

Max is sucked into the tube feet first.

MAX

NOOOOOO!!!

Karen places her three remaining darts on the belt. They get sucked into the tube.

TOY TUBE

Max is STUCK. Upside down. Like someone caught in a chimney. He looks down.

THREE DARTS shoot upward into his face. THWAP! THWAP! THWAP!

His scream echoes through the tube.

WORKSHOP

Karen hugs Lucie.

KAREN

Thanks for coming back.

LUCIE

That's what besties do.

KAREN

We make a pretty good team.

LUCIE

Like mistletoe and kisses.

They look warmly into each other's eyes. Lucie smiles shyly and tucks her short hair behind her ears.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

Maybe me and you... we could... I mean, I like you. I **like** like you.

KAREN

I'm sorry, Lucie, but I'm still trying to figure out who I am. I can't promise you... that.

LUCIE

I understand.

Karen softly touches Lucie's cheek.

KAREN

But maybe you could help me figure stuff out... in Los Angeles?

LUCIE

You really mean it?

KAREN

Yes! We have nothing left here. Let's go kick some ass in the real world.

LUCIE

No, you go. You don't need me. You're perfect.

KAREN

You're wrong. Whenever I feel worthless, unlovable, stupid... I... I'm a wrapper.

LUCIE

Like, rap music?

KAREN

No, like wrapping myself inside Christmas wrapping paper. All wrapped-up, I'm not me anymore. I'm a **gift**, and there's suddenly hope I'm somebody someone might want.

LUCIE

Wrapping. Wow. That's new.

KAREN

Mental health services are non-existent on the North Pole, so I tried to handle my problems on my own.

LUCIE

Me, too.

KAREN

You have to come. I'm fucked-up. You're fucked-up. Together, maybe we're less fucked-up.

LUCIE

I wouldn't make it there. I'm just an Elf.

KAREN

You're so much more than that. And I'm so much more than a Santa Claus wannabe.

Lucie nods. They both smile. A moment. Happiness. Quickly ruined by:

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Banging from inside the tube.

Karen and Lucie look surprised. *What the fuck?*

A BLOODY HAND reach out from behind the black flaps. Then another hand. They grab on and--

MAX pulls himself out of the tube - two darts stuck in his face, one in his ruined left eyeball. He maneuvers off the belt and jumps to the ground. He grins. Sick bastard.

MAX

Ho ho ho.

Karen and Lucie are stunned.

LUCIE

Oh, fudge...

(Except she didn't say fudge.)

He rips the darts out and tosses them. His face is bleeding and broken - the darts went through skin and bone.

MAX

Miss me, ladies?

THE BUILDING SUDDENLY SHAKES. BELLS are faintly heard.

MAX (CONT'D)

Sounds like Santa's back. Not how I planned it, but that's okay. He can watch me slit your throat.

He pulls out his candy cane handle knife and attacks.

Karen and Lucie turn and run. They don't get far. They trip over Zed's body and land in a puddle of his blood. Karen crawls toward her work station.

Max rushes behind her. He swings the knife just as she defensively raises her right hand and he--

SLICES OFF two of her fingers. Pinky and ring fingers. The fingers hit the floor. Karen cries out.

Max stands over her, pleased with himself. She's holding her damaged hand close, crying and bleeding. She looks like she's about to give up. Like she has no fight left in her.

MAX (CONT'D)

Don't blame me. Your life was over before I got here. Your life ended when Santa fired you... because without Christmas, you're nothing.

Karen stops crying. Has a strange moment of calm.

KAREN

Nothing? That's weird. Because **somebody** did this to you.

MAX

Did what?

Karen rears back and KICKS his knee with great force. CRACK! His leg buckles and bends the wrong way, knee ruined. He falls, dropping the knife.

MAX (CONT'D)

Fuuuuucckkkk!!!

Karen crawls away. She picks up a sheet of wrapping paper and rolls it around her bloody hand.

Max is on his hands and knees.

LUCIE (O.S.)

Hey!

He looks up and--

Lucie KICKS him in the face. He grabs her foot and yanks. She falls backward and BANGS her head on the floor.

Max picks up the knife, stands, then hops on one leg toward Karen. He closes in, right above her, and raises the knife.

KAREN

NOOO!!!

MAX

Die, you b--

ANGEL (O.S.)

Daddy!

Max turns and sees Angel standing in the doorway, next to Santa and Jackie. Santa's holding a baseball bat.

ANGEL (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Don't hurt Karen. She's nice.

JACKIE

Oh my god... you monster!

Max forces a bloody, crooked, broken-faced smile.

MAX

Angel, you can't be here. Daddy's working.

ANGEL

Please don't ruin Christmas. Don't be a real monster!

Karen turns to Santa, pointing at the bat he's holding.

KAREN

Hey, Dad!

Santa throws the bat in Karen's direction, but too high, over her head. She jumps up and makes a great catch, then immediately swings the bat.

WHACK! The bat connects with Max's head. The knife falls and clanks on the floor. Blood leaks from his broken skull as he lay still, dying.

Jackie holds Angel close and carries her from the room.

SANTA

Karen!

Santa rushes to Karen, past Zed's corpse, and embraces her.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Oh, honey... I thought I'd lost you. I was so scared. I love you.

KAREN

I love you too, dad.

LUCIE (O.S.)

Hey, look!

Lucie excitedly runs toward them, holding up two severed, bloody, gruesome fingers, grinning like a kid showing off her bounty from a summertime ice cream truck.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

I got the fingers!

POLICE SIRENS are heard in distance.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. SANTA'S FACTORY - SANTA'S OFFICE - DAY

Angel is on Jackie's lap, crying. Jackie strokes her hair.

JACKIE

It's okay, baby. Mommy's got you.

Santa enters and stands by the door, unsure what to do.

Angel sees Santa, wipes her eyes, then runs into his arms. She hugs him tight. Jackie and Santa exchange hopeful smiles.

INT. NORTH POLE HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Karen walks gingerly, body clearly hurting. She's wearing a hospital gown, right hand bandaged.

Lucie's seated. She sees Karen, brightens, and runs to her.

LUCIE

How are you?

KAREN

Fingers are reattached. Doctor said I should be able to use them again after some long rehab and healing. No wrapping for a while, though.

LUCIE

Or ever.

Off Karen's reaction:

LUCIE (CONT'D)

Your father's going to offer you
the Santa Claus job for sure now.

KAREN

You think?

Lucie nods.

LUCIE

What are you going to do?

Karen considers.

KAREN

I don't know.

Lucie's eyes dampen. Dreams fading away.

EXT. SANTA'S FACTORY - DAY

The reindeer and the sleigh sit on the landing patch. Santa lights a cigar as Karen and Lucie walk to him.

SANTA

The reindeer are ready, as you
requested. A joyride will
definitely clear your head.

KAREN

Shouldn't smoke. It'll kill you.

He tosses the cigar.

SANTA

Karen, I want **you** to be the new
Santa! Take over and make Christmas
your own. I should've done this
from the beginning. I'm sorry.

Karen hugs Santa and kisses his cheek, then walks past him to the sleigh and climbs aboard. She looks at the reindeer, at Santa, at the North Pole, at Lucie, and sighs.

KAREN

I don't **want** to be Santa anymore.

Karen seems surprised by her own words.

KAREN (CONT'D)

When Max was trying to kill me, I almost gave up. I thought, maybe he's right. Maybe I am nothing without Christmas. But I didn't give up. Turns out, I'm a fighter. I'm done wrapping, Dad.

Karen turns to Lucie.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You coming or what?

LUCIE

I sure am!

Lucie runs over and hops into the sleigh next to Karen.

Santa sighs as realization washes over him. Nothing is ever going to be the same. He offers Karen a warm smile.

SANTA

I will need my reindeer back, since I clearly won't be retiring now.

KAREN

I'll think about it.

Karen holds Lucie's hand.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Should I say it?

LUCIE

That would be so friggin' hot.

KAREN

Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas!

The sleigh jerks forward and then we...

FADE OUT.