

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S

CHRISTMAS VACATION

April 14, 1989

HOW VACATION III
THE GRISWOLD FAMILY CHRISTMAS

A MALE VOICE singing "Oh, Come All Ye Faithful" FADES UP.

1 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING 1

Currier and Ives Country. Rolling hills, firm stands of pine and hardwood, barns and bridges. Into this timeless beauty ROARS a new, aerodynamically-styled Road Queen family TAURUS with simulated wood panels hugging the sleek curves. The SONG CONTINUES. The voice belongs to CLARK W. GRISWOLD, JR.

CLARK (V.O.)

Joyful and tri-uuuuuuuum-phunt,
Oh, come ye...

2 INT. CAR 2

Clark's driving. His wife, ELLEN, is next to him. His fourteen-year-old daughter, AUDREY and twelve-year-old son, RUSTY, are in the backseat. Ellen's looking out the window. Rusty and Audrey are looking out their windows. Clark clears his throat and half-closes his eyes. He finishes with a deep, majestic voice.

CLARK

Oh, co-o-o-me ye to Be-e-ethlehem.

A moment of reverent silence.

RUSTY

(after a pause)

Dad? Can you explain again what we're doing?

CLARK

We're kicking off our fun, old-fashioned family Christmas by heading out into the country in the old front wheel drive sleigh to embrace the frosty majesty of the winter landscape and select that most important of Christmas symbols.

3 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD 3

The Taurus drives THROUGH FRAME. An old, battered pickup truck pulls out on the road.

4 INT. CAR 4

Audrey leans forward in her seat.

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED:

4

AUDREY

We're not driving all the way out here so you can get one of those stupid ties with Santa Clauses on it are we?

CLARK

Nope. I have one of those at home. What we're looking for today is the Griswold family Christmas tree.

Clark smiles proudly.

5

EXT. ROAD

5

The pickup truck pulls up behind the Taurus.

6

INT. CAR

6

ELLEN

Is it much further, Clark?

CLARK

Nah. Three maybe four more songs and we'll be there.

Audrey looks at Rusty and groans.

AUDREY

Oh, no.

Clark breaks into song once again.

CLARK

We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas...

*
*

7

EXT. ROAD - CLOSEUP - TAURUS

7

The bent and rust-pitted front bumper of the pickup truck pulls up within a few inches of the rear bumper of the Taurus.

8

INT. TAURUS

8

Clark continues singing.

CLARK

We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy new year...

*
*

He glances in the rearview mirror. He stops singing.

9 HIS POV 9
The pickup truck crowds the mirror.

10 INT. CAR - CLARK AND ELLEN 10
Clark speeds up.

ELLEN
What's the matter?

CLARK
Some jackass is riding my tail.

Ellen and the kids look around behind. The PICKUP HORN blows.

ELLEN
Slow down and let him pass.

11 EXT. HIGHWAY 11
Clark slows down and the pickup pulls around him.

12 INT. CAR 12
Clark BLASTS his HORN and sneers as the pickup pulls past him.

ELLEN
Clark? Don't provoke them.

Clark flashes his lights and BEEPS his HORN.

CLARK
Hey, kids! Look! A deer!

He points out the window. As the kids look, Clark flips the pickup a double bird.

CLOSEUP CLARK

He looks at Ellen and chuckles, proud of himself. He turns back from Ellen and gasps. He stomps on the brakes.

13 HIS POV 13
The pickup has jammed on its brakes. The Taurus rides up close.

14 INT. CAR 14
The kids jerk forward. Ellen is hurled forward. Clark grits his teeth and nearly bends the wheel over.

15 EXT. PICKUP - TRUCK 15

The farm boys look out the rear window, laughing. They pull away.

16 CLOSEUP - CLARK 16

He's angry and committed to escalating the conflict. He hits the gas.

17 EXT. HIGHWAY 17

The TAURUS SQUEALS out, hot after the truck.

18 INT. CAR 18

Ellen barks at Clark.

ELLEN

Slow down!

CLARK

You want to ride behind somebody who does something like that? I'm gonna get around him and leave him safely behind us.

(to Rusty)

I'm gonna burn some dust here.

(out the window)

Eat my rubber!

*
*
*
*

He floors it.

RUSTY

Dad? I believe the expression is 'burn rubber' and 'eat my dust.'

CLARK

Yup. And I hope they're hungry!

*
*

19 EXT. HIGHWAY 19

The Taurus pulls around the pickup and passes it.

20 INT. CAR 20

Clark smiles. He waves to the pickup.

CLARK

Eat my road grit, liver lips.

21 INT. PICKUP 21

A pair of in-bred, red-cheeked, young, sheep-bangers and a gnarled, old man at the wheel watch as the Taurus passes. They are dressed in flannel shirts and dirty, quilted nylon hunting jackets.

27 CONTINUED: 27
 INT. CAR
 Ellen, Rusty and Audrey scream.

28 EXT. TAURUS - CLARK 28
 He sees that he's pulling into the truck. His eyes pop and he shrieks!

29 INT. PICKUP TRUCK 29
 The old man looks in his rearview mirror and does a take. He whips around. His two boys whip around and look out the back window.

30 THEIR POV 30
 The semi returns to the proper lane. There's no Taurus.

31 EXT. PICKUP - CLOSEUP - BACK WINDOW 31
 The two boys exchange bewildered looks.

32 EXT. HIGHWAY - SEMI 32
 The Taurus is trapped between the front and back wheels of the high-clearance trailer running at high-speed. Mud and road salt from the front trailer wheels is peppering the car.

33 INT. TAURUS 33
 The family's silent with shock. Clark's in a full sweat as he struggles to maintain the exact speed of the truck to avoid being caught in the rear wheels.

CLARK

We're alright! Thank God, we're alright!

ELLEN

Clark? We're stuck under a truck.

CLARK

Do you honestly think I don't know that?

AUDREY

Come on, you guys, don't fight!

CLARK

Well, for Christ's sake, I didn't do this on purpose!

34 EXT. ROAD

34

The truck barrels along with the Taurus beneath it.

35 INT. TAURUS

35

Clark is maniacally focused on controlling the car. Ellen and the kids are praying.

ELLEN

Forgive us our sins...

AUDREY

Is lying about why you got home so late a sin?

*
*

ELLEN

Just keep praying!

*

AUDREY

Is it? I have to know!

*

CLARK

Yes!

*

AUDREY

Forgive me for saying I was at Cassandra Reed's when I was really with Sean Marley under the railroad bridge in town.

*
*
*
*

CLARK

Did you know about that, Ellen?

*

ELLEN

Obviously not!

CLARK

(to Audrey)

Isn't that the kid who got picked up for sacrificing June bugs in the cemetery?

*
*
*

AUDREY

This was before that.

*

RUSTY

What religion are we again?

*

CLARK

Our Lady of Jesus, we're about to get crushed by a truck!!

*
*

Clark takes a deep breath, clutches the wheel tightly and jerks it sharply to the right.

36 EXT. ROAD - AHEAD OF SEMI 36
 The Taurus pops out from beneath the semi onto the
 opposing lane. *

37 INT. TAURUS 37
 Clark breathes a sigh of relief and turns on his wipers.

38 OMITTED 38
 thru thru
 41 41

42 HIS POV 42
 Just ahead, a snow plough is pulled over on the shoulder,
 directly in line with the on-coming Taurus.

43 EXT. ROAD 43
 The Taurus hurtles off the road and disappears. It's
 silent.

44 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE 44
 Peace and tranquility. A virgin snowfield. a long beat
 and the Taurus bursts out of snowbank INTO CAMERA.

45 EXT. ROAD 45
 The Taurus returns to the road, crossing the left lane,
 then the right and off the road.

46 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM 46
 A large, permanent wood sign festooned with colored
 lights reads -- JOLLY JERRY'S SAW 'N' SAVE CHRISTMAS
 TREE RANCH. The Taurus blasts past the sign and into a
 make-shift parking lot, sliding sideways into a parking
 space.

47 INT. CAR 47
 The family is frozen in horror. Clark puts the Taurus in
 park and turns OFF the ENGINE. He looks at his watch.

CLARK

Hey! We made pretty good time. *

48 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM 48
 Families stumble across the frozen earth between the rows
 of fir trees, shivering, cursing, grouching. We FIND
 Clark, Ellen, Audrey and Rusty trudging through the snow.
 The family has a very hard go of the deep snow. Clark
 pays it no mind.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

Is this air fresh or what? Take a deep breath! Notice that smell?

RUSTY

It smells like Pinesol.

CLARK

And isn't that a Christmasy smell?

ELLEN

Clark, can we pick out a tree while we smell? It's awfully cold.

AUDREY

My toes are numb.

Ellen points out a tree.

ELLEN

There's a nice one over there.

Clark considers the tree briefly and rejects it.

CLARK

The bottom's all dead, hon. A deer probably lifted his leg on it.

They continue their march through the snow.

RUSTY

Dad? Didn't they invent Christmas tree lots so people wouldn't have to drive all the way out to nowhere and waste a whole Saturday?

*

CLARK

They invented them, Russ, because people forgot how to have a fun, old-fashioned family Christmas and are satisfied with scrawny, dead, over-priced trees that have no special meaning. You know, kids. This is what our forefathers did.

AUDREY

I can't feel my legs.

CLARK

They went out in the woods, picked out that special tree and cut it down with their bare hands.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (2)

48

AUDREY
Mom? I can't feel my hips.

ELLEN
Clark?

Clark stops to survey the landscape.

CLARK
Yeah, honey?

ELLEN
Audrey's frozen from the waist
down.

CLARK
(distracted)
That's all part of the experience.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He scans the forest. Something catches his eye. He's spotted the special tree. A CHORUS OF ANGELS FADES IN.

CLARK
There it is!

A49 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - FAMILY

A49

Clark points. The family turns to see what he's pointing at.

49 FAMILY'S POV

49

A perfectly shaped Norway pine. A long beat and Clark strolls INTO FRAME. We realize that the tree is twenty feet tall.

CLARK
(to the family)
The Griswold family Christmas
tree.

50 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - FROM ABOVE - CLARK

50

From the top of the tree down. Clark looks up, and admires the tree. The family gathers around him.

ELLEN
(tentatively)
Clark? Isn't it a little big?

CLARK
It's not that big. It's... just
... full.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

RUSTY

Dad? That wouldn't fit in our yard.

CLARK

It's not going in the yard, Russ.
It's going in the living room.

A51 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - FAMILY

A51

Clark puts his arm around Ellen and Audrey. Ellen pulls Rusty into the family embrace.

CLARK

Just look at it.

ELLEN

It really is beautiful, Clark.

CLARK

It's something else, huh, Russ?

RUSTY

Yeah, Dad.

CLARK

Audrey? Isn't it a beaut?

ELLEN

She'll see it later, honey, her eyes are frozen shut.

CLARK

(a deep breath,
after a satisfied
pause)

The most enduring traditions of
the season are best enjoyed in the
warm embrace of kith and kin.

(pause)

Thith tree ith a thymble of
thpirit of the Grithwold family
Christmuth.

RUSTY

(after a pause)

Dad? Did you bring a thaw?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He realizes he's made a mistake but doesn't care to admit it.

CLARK

Thyit...

51 EXT. TREE RANCH - HOUSE TRAILER

51

A rotting double wide serves as the office and residence of Jolly Jerry. The family stands at the door. It opens.

CLOSEUP - TRAILER DOOR

It opens on a sour-looking, middle-aged MAN smoking a cigarette and wearing a dirty Santa hat.

MAN

What?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He offers a friendly smile.

CLARK

I hate to trouble you, but I didn't bring a saw.

EXT. TRAILER

The Man puffs on his butt and blows the smoke out his nose.

MAN

Rules say buyer provides own damn saw.

He points to a painted sign on the trailer.

CLOSEUP - SIGN

A painted sign -- black letters on white. It reads -- BUYER PAYS IN ADVANCE -- BUYER DON'T USE THE RANCH AS A BATHROOM -- BUYER DON'T CUT DOWN MORE TREES THAN HE PAID FOR -- BUYER PROVIDES OWN DAMN SAW.

EXT. TRAILER

Clark sneaks a glance at Ellen. She gives Clark a look.

CLARK

I paid seventy-five dollars for the tree. I need some way to get it out of the ground.

ELLEN

You paid that much for a tree?

CLARK

Honey, it's huge.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

CLARK (CONT'D)

(to the Man)

It's cold, the holidays are here,
I'd really appreciate it if
you could help me out.

CLOSEUP - MAN

He scratches his nose and reaches around behind the door.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at the family.

CLARK

Sometimes you just have to ask
nice.

CLOSEUP - MAN

He holds up a shovel.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He stares with alarm.

52 EXT. HIGHWAY - TAURUS - CLARK - LATER

52

Clark's in the front passenger seat. He's frozen, blue, clutching the shovel. The SHOT WIDENS to reveal Ellen and the kids. They're also blue. We continue to WIDEN until we see the car and the enormous tree tied to the roof. The car pulls ahead and OVERTAKES CAMERA. We see the full length of the tree; branches bound with heavy twine and a huge root ball.

53 OMITTED

53

54 EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - NIGHT

54

A fine upper middle class dwelling. The lights are on. The Taurus's in the driveway. The giant tree is resting on its rootball in the front yard. Rusty and a couple of neighbor kids are standing in the driveway looking at the tree. Inside the garage, a CHAINSAW STARTS UP. OMINOUS DRONING HORROR MUSIC FADES IN.

EXT. HOUSE - GARAGE DOOR

The electric door goes up. Clark steps out of the dark wearing a hockey mask and brandishing a chainsaw.

*

55

EXT. HOUSE NEXT DOOR

55

A couple in their mid-thirties is getting out of a Saab parked in the driveway of the house next to the Griswolds.

They're handsome, successful, modern suburban professionals. MARGO and TODD CHESTER. They look to the Griswolds, wincing at the ROAR of the CHAINSAW. Margo crosses around to Todd to stand at his side.

TODD

Looks like the toad overestimated the height of his living room ceiling.

They have a chuckle -- a compressed, stiff laugh. They are clearly people devoid of humor.

THEIR POV

The giant tree is laying in the front yard, still bound with twine. Clark takes the chainsaw to it and cuts it in half.

A56

EXT. TODD AND MARGO'S DRIVEWAY

A56

Todd, wearing a cocky grin, yells:

TODD

(to Clark)

Hey, Griswold! Where do you think you're gonna put a tree that big?

*
*
*

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Obviously no love lost on the Chesters. He's in a bad enough mood as it is. He turns OFF the CHAINSAW and pushes the mask up on his forehead. He cups his hand to his mouth and yells.

CLARK

Bend over and I'll show you!

(CONTINUED)

A56 CONTINUED:

A56

CLOSEUP - TODD

His smile fades. He looks to Margo.

He looks back at Clark, angry at the rude suggestion offered in the presence of his wife.

TODD

You got your nerve talking to
me like that, Griswold!

HIS POV

Clark yells back.

CLARK

I wasn't talking to you!

CLOSEUP - MARGO

She gasps in horror. The CHAINSAW REVS UP.

56 INT. LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS TREE - LATER

56

The tree is up in the rear corner of the room. Clark's had to trim both the top and bottom to get it to fit. It's still wrapped with twine. The family is standing before the tree.

ELLEN

(looking up)

Clark? Is there enough room for
the star?

CLOSEUP - TOP OF TREE

It's flush to the ceiling.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's looking at top of the tree.

CLARK

Oh, sure, honey. I have a little
more trimming to do but it won't
be a problem.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FAMILY

Clark steps to the tree and takes up a length of twine.

CLARK

I give you the Griswold family
Christmas tree!

He yanks on the twine. The branches are released and unfold into the room. Unwrapped, the tree is enormous. Branches extend deep into the room.

57 EXT. HOUSE - SIDE 57

A BRANCH CRASHES through a side WINDOW.

58 EXT. HOUSE - BACK YARD 58

Another BRANCH CRASHES through a back WINDOW.

59 INT. LIVING ROOM 59

A third of the living room square footage is dominated by the unfurled tree. The Griswolds stand waist-deep in pine boughs. The tree is the same diameter at the top as at the bottom. It's a pine cylinder, eight feet in diameter. Clark looks at Ellen, Audrey and Rusty. He says nothing. They say nothing.

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*

60 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 60

The lights are on. We can see the glow of a fire in the living room fireplace.

61 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - FIREPLACE - LATER 61

A beautiful fire. CHRISTMAS MUSIC is playing on the STEREO.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's pleasant and calm. A nearly perfect holiday picture. Clark's wearing a cashmere V-neck. He's untangling a strand of lights. Audrey, Rusty and Ellen are sitting with bowls of popcorn and cranberries in their laps. Clark has trimmed the Christmas tree branches and denuded the top twelve inches to accommodate the star. He's fishing lights out of a cardboard box.

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*
*

RUSTY

I can't get my needle through the cranberries.

*
*

AUDREY

(frustrated)

The popcorn falls apart when I pull the string through it!

*
*
*

Clark walks to the tree with the light strands.

ELLEN

Clark? The old-fashioned ornaments aren't working out too well.

CLARK

That's all part of the fun, honey.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLARK (CONT'D)

You know, kids, years ago, people couldn't go out and buy their ornaments. They had to make them from things around the old prairie homestead. Colored balls of mud, wood shavings, bits of yarn and string, ox horns, donkey tails, prairie dog whiskers. I'll get the lights up and then I'll give you a hand.

*
*
*

Clark begins stringing the lights on the tree, starting at the bottom. Clark moves slowly around the tree, stringing the lights as he goes.

*
*
*

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

*

He reaches into a bowl of popcorn.

*

RUSTY

Dad? This tradition stuff is pretty cool so far but I think it might lose its charm if it extended to our gifts. I mean, you're not planning on making our presents are you?

*
*
*
*
*
*

He loads the popcorn into his mouth.

*

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Clark considers the question for a moment.

*

CLARK

Sounds like fun...
(pause)

But, no.

*
*
*

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

He pulls a string and then a row of strung pieces of popcorn out of his mouth.

*
*

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark disappears around behind the tree.

*

CLARK (O.S.)

Before we know it, you kids'll be all grown up and --

*
*

ELLEN

Clark? What are you doing behind the tree?

*
*

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: (2)

61

CLARK (O.S.)

Putting up the lights. *

RUSTY

Nobody looks behind the tree,
Dad. *

CLARK (O.S.)

If you just do the front, the
tree isn't balanced. Believe me,
if I didn't put lights back here,
you'd notice a difference. Ouch! *

AUDREY

Watch your eyes, Daddy. *

The tree shivers and shakes as Clark works his way
around behind it. *

ELLEN

I hope you're not getting sap all
over your sweater. *

CLARK GAGS and COUGHS. *

CLARK (O.S.)

Hold on, I just swallowed a
cocoon. *

(gags) *

Okay. All better. Have you ever
tasted cocoon? It's a little
like cashews but not so salty. *Clark emerges from around behind the tree. He's covered
head-to-toe in sap and pine needles. *

CLARK (O.S.)

What'd you say, honey? *

A62 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

A62 *

Clark and Ellen are cleaning Clark's sweater. He's
working on one sleeve, she's working on the other. She's
picking individual needles off. Clark's herding them
down the cuff.

ELLEN

Did I tell you that I talked to
my mother?

CLARK

(false)

Yeah, and it's a shame they can't
come for Christmas. I was so
looking forward to seeing them.

(CONTINUED)

A62 CONTINUED:

A62 *

ELLEN

I talked to her today. They changed their mind. My dad couldn't get a good enough deal on the condo in Florida so they're coming.

CLARK

Damn.

(corrects himself)

Darn.

(again)

Great!

Clark pulls a large wad of sticky pine needles off the cuff of his sweater and tries to flick it into the wastebasket.

ELLEN

Let's not forget whose idea it was to have the fun, old-fashioned family Christmas here.

CLARK

Am I complaining?

Ellen is trying to get the needles off her hands. All she does is transfer the needles from one hand to the other. They continue talking, not acknowledging the sap and the needles.

ELLEN

No, but I think you're forgetting how difficult it's going to be with all these people at our house.

CLARK

They're family, Ellen, not strangers off the street.

ELLEN

They're family and they don't get along.

CLARK

They get along.

Clark tries to wipe the wad of pine needles on the edge of the grocery bag lining the wastebasket. When he pulls his arm back, the bag goes with it. It's now stuck to his hand.

(CONTINUED)

A62 CONTINUED: (2)

A62 *

ELLEN

All they do is argue. Who sleeps in what room, who do the children love more? Clark, it's endless.

*

CLARK

Christmas is about resolving differences and seeing through the petty problems of family life.

He holds out his hand and the bag stuck to it. Ellen pulls the bag off. It sticks to her hands.

ELLEN

Yeah. And it's about my mother accusing your mother of buying cheap hot dogs and your mother accusing my mother of waxing her upper lip and they stop speaking for three years.

CLARK

Your mother waxes her upper lip?

ELLEN

She has for years.

CLARK

It sure doesn't show.

Clark peels his sweater off and tosses it on the table. It's stuck to his hand. He tries to throw it again. The sweater goes nowhere.

ELLEN

Do you really want to listen to my father and your father go at it over who suffered the most during the war?

CLARK

That's all part of it, Ellen. You take the good with the bad.

ELLEN

The damage is done. They're all coming. But just be aware that it's not going to be all sweetness and light. Especially since my dad had his back operation.

(CONTINUED)

A62 CONTINUED: (3)

A62 *

Ellen puts the bag between her knees and pulls her hand free. The bag stays stuck to her knees.

ELLEN

He's extremely touchy about it.

*

CLARK

No problem. Nothing's going to spoil this Christmas.

Clark puts the sweater in his mouth and pulls it off his hands. He shakes his head. The sweater's stuck to his face.

CLARK

(muffled)

Not even your dad.

ELLEN

What?

CLARK

(softer)

Not even your dad.

B62 EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - LATER

B62 *

The lights are out.

62 INT. BEDROOM

62

Clark and Ellen are in bed.

*

CLARK

How about a little home shopping?

*

ELLEN

Clark, it's so late.

*

CLARK

Can I just thumb through your catalogue?

*

*

Ellen laughs as Clark pulls her to him.

*

ELLEN

Okay, if I can go through yours first.

*

*

INT. BEDROOM - DOOR

It opens and Audrey peeks in.

*

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

ELLEN (O.S.)

Ooo. What a big catalogue this year.

*
*

CLARK (O.S.)

All the better to serve you with.

*

HER POV

Clark and Ellen are under the covers.

*

ELLEN

What's this?

*

CLARK

You're in the sporting goods section.

*
*

CLOSEUP - AUDREY

She has no idea what they're talking about.

*

AUDREY

Oh, sick! What are you guys doing?!

*
*

INT. BEDROOM - BED

Ellen pops up from under the covers. Clark looks up in alarm. Ellen leaps from the bed.

*
*

CLARK

Ellen! Your hand!

*

It's too late. The power of Ellen's leap from bed drags Clark to the floor by his undershorts. He screams as he crashes to the floor.

*
*
*
*

A63 OMITTED

A63

*

63 CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

63

Of the sort that conceals each date behind a paper door. Every day in the month of December, one of the little doors is opened to reveal the date and a symbol of the season. Clark's fingers open the first door to expose DEC. 15 and a tiny illustration of a partridge in a pear tree. As Clark draws his hand away, the paper door sticks to his finger and he tears it off.

*
*
*
*

64 EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

64

The Loop. Decorated for the holidays.

65 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING 65
 Clark's building. A new high-rise in the heart of the city.

66 INT. BUILDING - COFFEE STATION 66 *
 Clark and a co-worker, BILL BURKE, are standing at the coffee station, sipping coffee and chatting. *

BILL
 You'll be looking at a nice fat Christmas bonus this year, huh? *
 From what I hear, you have an excellent shot at being named Food Additive Designer of the Year. *

CLARK
 Nah.

BILL
 I'm not kidding. What's the new thing you have over at Food and Drug? *

CLARK
 Non-nutritive cereal varnish crunch enhancer. It seals the cereal to prevent the milk from penetrating it. *

BILL
 The big question is, what're you gonna do with that big, fat bonus check? Blow it on yourself, I hope? *

CLARK
 Me? Heck, no. Take a look at this. *

He removes a worn, color brochure from his inside jacket pocket and hands it to Bill. *

INSERT - BROCHURE

An ecstatic all-American family frolicking in a deluxe in-the-ground swimming pool and spa. *

CLOSEUP - BILL

He peruses the brochure, sufficiently impressed. *

BILL
 You're putting in a pool? *

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: 66
 CLOSEUP - CLARK *

A proud smile. *

A67 INT. ANOTHER CORRIDOR - CLOSEUP - FEET A67 *

A flying wedge of black wingtips march down the hall.

B67 INT. OFFICE - CORRIDOR - COFFEE STATION B67 *

Clark admires the brochure over Bill's shoulder.

CLARK

It's my Christmas present for Ellen and the kids. I'm gonna turn the old homestead into our own private summer resort.

BILL

Boy, what's it gonna set you back?

CLARK

Can't put a price on happiness, Bill. Plenty. But with the bonus check coming, it's covered. I went ahead and put a seventy-five hundred dollar deposit down so they'll start work as soon as the ground thaws. With the heater, we can be in that thing by May.

BILL

I guess you're the last true family man. Me? Christmas is a big pain in the ass. I get a sore face from smiling for five days at people I hate. I had the perfect holiday last year. Piled the kids in the car, drove by my sister's house, blew the horn, and threw the gifts on the lawn.

CLARK

You're a sentimental guy, huh?

BILL

What's Christmas anyway but an economic high colonic.

The marching wingtips round a corner. CAMERA RISES to see FRANK W. SHIRLEY at the point and two YOUNG MEN off his shoulders a few steps back. Shirley is a stern, stone-faced man in middle age. His minions are young, clean-cut MBAs. They march with military precision and serious purpose. The men stop suddenly.

FRANK

Clem...

CLOSEUP - BILL

He clears his throat and corrects Mr. Shirley.

BILL

Clark.

FRANK

(to Bill)

Clark. Nice to see you. Get back to work.

Bill exits.

CLARK

That's Bill, sir. My name's Clark.

FRANK

Who asked?

CLARK

Pardon me.

FRANK

Are you the one who was working on the non-nutritive cereal varnish?

CLARK

Yes, sir.

FRANK

I'm giving a speech to a trade group and I'd like to mention it. Write me up a brief summary and have it to me by the end of the day.

CLARK

My pleasure.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Layman's terms. None of that
inside bullshit jargon that nobody
understands.

CLARK

Yes, sir.

Shirley and his bootlicks start down the corridor.

CLARK

Mr. Shirley?

Shirley stops and turns back to Clark.

CLARK

We got your Christmas card the
other day. My family and I are
flattered that you remembered us.

Shirley stares at Clark for a confused beat then looks
to one of the Young Men.

YOUNG MAN

(to Frank)

Corporate cards.

FRANK

Oh. Don't forget my speech, Bill.

CLARK

I won't, sir.

They exit. Clark sets his coffee down. He feels foolish.

CLARK

He may not be the warmest guy in
the world, but at least he's fair
and he signs the checks.

MUSIC UP...

- A) Salvation Army band playing.
- B) Crowded downtown department store.
- C) Cash registers ringing.
- D) Screaming kids on Santa's laps.

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED:

68

- E) Garish displays.
- F) Shoppers in and out of revolving doors.
- G) Businessmen testing toys.
- H) Santas having lunch at a counter.
- I) Heaps of purchases on store counters.
- J) Gift wrapping.
- K) Lost, crying child.
- L) Cash and credit cards changing hands.
- M) Hands rubbing sore feet.
- N) Businessman asleep in the mattress dept. with bulging shopping bags at his side. Etc.

END MONTAGE.

69

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LINGERIE DEPARTMENT - CLOSEUP - 69 *
CLARK - NIGHT *

He's peering into a display case. He looks up. Freezes.

CLARK'S POV

Cleavage, MOVE UP TO a beautiful young WOMAN.

WOMAN

Can I show you something?

Clark's bent over a display case, looking at the
delicates.

CLARK

Uh.

WOMAN

For your wife? Girlfriend?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He straightens up. He's very uncomfortable and warm.

CLARK

I guess it wouldn't be the
Christmas shopping season if the
stores were any less hooter...
hotter than they are. It's warm
in here, isn't it?

*

(CONTINUED)

The Woman smiles. She realizes he's nervous.

WOMAN

You have your coat on.

CLARK

Do I?

(catches himself
staring)

Sure I do. How did that happen?

WOMAN

Because it's cold out?

CLARK

Could be!

There's an uncomfortable silence.

WOMAN

So. You were looking at something?

CLARK

You know, I couldn't help it.

WOMAN

(puzzled)

Excuse me?

CLARK

Gesundheit.

WOMAN

Do you want me to take anything out for you?

Clark's jaw drops. He wheezes. He looks over his shoulder to see if anyone's listening to the conversation. He ignores the question and carries on.

CLARK

I was just looking for something for... my mother. Her wife. And obviously she doesn't wear underwear and there's plenty of shopping days left until adultery.

(winces and
corrects himself)

Adulthood. Which is to say Christmas. Yuletide. Yule. As in yulelog. Not a log. I didn't mean a log. I don't have a log.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (2)

69

CLARK (CONT'D)

I mean, I do but not in the sense
that you think I think I said.
Which I said but not meaning what
I said when I said it.

Clark mops his brow with the back of his hand.

CLARK

In other words, I'm late and
you've been very helpful and busy
and I've enjoyed talking about my
log and boy, 'tis this ever the
season to be huge. Uh, merry. *

WOMAN

That's my name.

CLARK

Huh? *

She points to the name plate on her chest. *

WOMAN

Mary. *

CLARK

Christmas. *

WOMAN

And a happy New Year. *

A70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - RUSTY A70

He's moving through the crowds, package in his arms,
looking for Clark.

B70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - RUSTY'S POV - LINGERIE DEPT. B70

THROUGH the crowd he sees Clark at the lingerie counter.
Clark's laughing and enjoying himself. Mary's showing
him a miniscule pair of panties. *

C70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - CLOSEUP - RUSTY C70

He watches Clark with suspicious curiosity.

70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LINGERIE COUNTER 70

Rusty approaches the counter and Clark.

MARY

(to Clark)

These are cut high on the hip. *

(CONTINUED)

70

CONTINUED:

70

She turns around and displays her bottom.

MARY

I'm wearing something very similar. Can you see the line?

CLARK

Oh, yeah.

Clark turns to Rusty.

CLARK

Can you see the line, Russ?

RUSTY

Yeah, Dad.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

It registers that he's just addressed Rusty. His eyes bulge. He snaps his head around to Rusty.

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

Looking at Clark.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Looking at Rusty. Complete terror.

CLARK

Hyew!

A71

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE

A71

Clark and Rusty walk through the store loaded with lingerie boxes. Clark's in a nervous sweat as he tries to explain himself to Rusty.

CLARK

Boy, did I get a lot of shopping done. And that funny-looking gal back there was so helpful.

*

RUSTY

Funny-looking?

*

CLARK

That wasn't fair of me. Unusual looking. So tall and skinny and ... top heavy.

*

*

*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A71

CONTINUED:

A71

CLARK (CONT'D)

The wide hips, the narrow waist, the real big eyes and lips and if her cheekbones were any higher, gee whiz, she'd have to open her mouth to put in her contacts. But she was nice and she knew her underpants and that's all that's important.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

RUSTY

Dad? She was cover girl material.

CLARK

Yeah. For like a medical journal. Sure.

*

(pause)

Gee, I hope I remember where I parked the ole dickster... Truckster.

Clark shoos Rusty on ahead.

RUSTY

Dad!

CLARK

Keep moving, Russ.

RUSTY

But, Dad...!

He pushes Rusty through a door and takes a look back at Mary.

B71

INT. LINGERIE DEPARTMENT - CLARK'S POV

B71

She waves to him.

C71

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LADIES' ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK

C71

A nervous smile. He turns and walks through the door. As it closes we read a brass sign -- LADIES. O.S. there's a collective SHRIEK and a pair of SHARP SLAPS. A beat and Rusty and Clark walk out. Their hair is messed-up. They both rub their stinging cheeks.

71

OMITTED

71

A72

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - MORNING

A72

A clear, bright Saturday morning.

B72

INT. KITCHEN

B72

Ellen's at the kitchen table filling out Christmas cards. She looks up from her work with a troubled look. Some dreadful feeling grips her. OMINOUS MUSIC COMES UP.

C72

INT. AUDREY'S ROOM

C72

She's struck by the same uneasy feeling. She looks up from the gift she's wrapping.

D72 INT. FAMILY ROOM D72 *

Rusty's watching TV. As the feeling comes over him, he hits the MUTE button on the TV.

E72 INT. MASTER BATHROOM E72 *

Clark's trying on a Santa beard. He's taken by the same awful feeling. He slowly removes the beard. A look of terror on his face.

F72 INT. FOYER F72 *

Ellen walks in from the kitchen. She's nervous and tentative. Rusty comes in from the dining room. Clark comes down the stairs. Audrey follows Clark. The DOOR KNOCKER sounds. THREE hard, loud BANGS.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Frightened. He's looking at the front door.

INT. FOYER - FRONT DOOR

MOVING IN.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Cautiously approaching the door.

CLOSEUP - DOORKNOB

Clark's trembling hand grips the knob and slowly turns it.

G72 INT. FOYER - DOOR G72 *

It swings open to reveal four arguing grandparents. CLARK W. GRISWOLD SR., NORA GRISWOLD, ART AND FRANCIS PEARSON.

H72 EXT. HOUSE - FRONT PORCH H72 *

Clark greets the grandparents with open arms.

CLARK
Folks, folks! Merry Christmas!

J72 INT. FOYER J72 *

Clark steps back as the grandparents rush the house. They engulf Clark, Ellen, Rusty and Audrey in hugs and machine-gun chatter. It's an invasion.

NORA
Clarkie, sweetheart!

(CONTINUED)

J72 CONTINUED:

J72

CLARK SR.
How 'ya doin', boy?

Clark breaks his embrace with Nora and shakes Clark Sr.'s hand.

CLARK
Can't complain, Dad.

Art and Francis descend upon Ellen and the kids. Nora breaks from Clark and pushes past Francis to Rusty. Art returns to Clark. Clark Sr. crosses to Ellen. Rusty, Audrey, Ellen and Clark hold their positions as the grandparents move between them. Each family member is verbally attacked, hugged, squeezed and kissed. A hundred individual overlapping comments and questions in 30 seconds.

(CONTINUED)

OVERLAPPING DIALOGUE for grandparents' arrival.

NORA

Clarkie, sweetheart, how are you?

(to Ellen)

Oprah did a show on skinny women.

Did you see it?

(to Rusty)

Maybe if your Mom'd feed you
better you'd put on some height.

(To Audrey)

Since when are you wearing eye makeup?

(to Clark)

The curly hair makes Audrey look too old.

(to Clark)

Do you think this mole on my neck
has changed color? Dad says it
hasn't but I think it has.

(to Ellen)

I have no idea what to get you for Christmas.
You have two of everything.

(to Ellen)

When you go shopping remember to
get Clark Sr. rolled oats.

(to Ellen)

We don't care for T.V. in the
morning. We prefer the radio.

(to Clark)

I brought my old sewing machine. If you
get the time maybe you can fix it up for Ellen.

(to Clark)

Do you still have the rusty taste
to your tap water?

(to Rusty)

You're not seeing girls yet, are you?

(to Rusty)

Do you still like puzzles?

(to Clark)

Art wants to put his car in the garage.
Didn't he have the garage the last time
he was here? Why should our automobile
have to stay out in the elements?

(to Ellen)

It smells stale in here.

(to Clark)

You're working too hard, aren't you?

(to Clark)

This may be Dad's last Christmas.
Don't spend all your time with Art.

(to Ellen)

Dear, you look so tired.

(to Rusty)

I have a very painful spur on my heel
bone.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NORA (CONT'D)

(to Ellen)

I had a nightmare that you talked Clark into making us sleep in the bunk beds.

ART

(to Ellen)

Dearest sweetheart, give me a big kiss!

(to Ellen)

I beat Griswold here so you tell Clark I'm parking the Lincoln in the garage.

(To Ellen)

What's your hot water situation?

(to Audrey)

They drained a pint of fluid from my lower back.

(to Rusty)

Lift with your knees, never with your back.

(to Clark)

You better salt your walk before somebody breaks their skull.

(to Clark)

You could use a little paint on your porch.

(to Clark)

I beat your dad by a good half second so I'm taking the garage space.

(to Clark)

How come you didn't put cones on your rose bushes?

(to Clark)

I'm not sleeping in any damn bunk beds.

(to Rusty)

Hey, pal, you got a kiss for gramps?

(to Audrey)

Give me an Eskimo kiss, kiddo.

(to Rusty)

Your dad still trying to turn you into a fairy?

(to Clark)

My back's killing me. I lost two inches in height on the ride over here.

(to Clark)

Whoever shovels your walk oughta be tarred and feathered. You looking for a lawsuit?

(to Ellen)

Since I bought the Lincoln, it's going to be a light year for gifts.

(to Clark)

You might mention to your dad not to ruin another of our holidays with his cornball jokes.

(to Ellen)

You know how much they wanted for a one-bedroom condo in St. Pete?

(to Clark)

Jump off your roof and land on your back and you'll know the pain I'm enduring.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ART (CONT'D)

(to Clark)

Your mom's put on some weight, huh?

(to Ellen)

Does your pharmacy offer a senior discount?

(to Audrey)

Grandma said you're dating fellas.

We're gonna have to have a talk.

(to Ellen)

You look weary.

(to Ellen)

I'm on a low-sodium diet and your mother's eating a lot of fish.

(to Clark)

Don't try and save a nickel on heat.

I like it at seventy-two.

(to Ellen)

I need a lot of moisture in the air.

I have a sinus condition.

CLARK SR.

(to Clark)

Merry Christmas, son. It's good to see you.

(to Ellen)

Hi, there, sweetheart. You look just so lovely.

(to Ellen)

Are you getting prettier or is my eyesight improving?

(to Rusty)

I ran into Don Mattingly the other day and you know what he said? 'Don't back up!' Get it?

(to Ellen)

Your dad can't be in as much pain as he likes us to believe. If he's in so much pain, he oughta be in the hospital where folks are immune to complaining.

(to Clark)

Don't stick us in those bunk beds again, Clark. I don't have the strength to boost your mom up top anymore.

(to Audrey)

Looks like those mosquito bites turned into mole hills!

(to Rusty)

I talked to your grandpa Art and he said he doesn't want any sympathy for his back.

(to Clark)

I'll lay you odds Art couldn't get a good enough deal on the Florida conco to go south for the holidays.

(to Clark)

Let's see if the two of us can't talk your mother out of making cookies this year.

(to Audrey)

You're not listening to that devil music are you?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLARK SR. (CONT'D)

(to Rusty)

What do you want old Santa to bring you this year?

(to Ellen)

Don't short us on towels this year.

(to Clark)

We like a late breakfast and an early dinner.

(to Clark)

Do you remember Fred Lorraine? He sold a humorous story to the Reader's Digest. Made ten bucks.

(to Ellen)

Don't fill us up with cheese like last time.

(to Clark)

Do you have a good mall where Mom and I can go take an indoor walk?

FRANCIS

(to Ellen)

Oh, my sweet girl. You look so haggard.

(to Clark)

Are you making her do heavy work?

(to Ellen)

I nearly left your father over this back thing. He's unbearable!

(to Audrey)

I clipped an article for you in our paper about disease and open-mouth kissing.

(to Rusty)

Are you getting enough fresh air and sunshine?

(to Clark)

Your dad drives like a lunatic.

(to Ellen)

Hasn't Nora aged? Poor thing. I didn't want to ask but has she gone deaf?

(to Rusty)

All the boys in our neighborhood have after school jobs.

(to Audrey)

They say pizza is very high in sodium.

(to Ellen)

I'm going to need to get my hair done but I'm not going to your place again. Not after that polish gal scalded my scalp.

(to Clark)

If Dad needs a rub down...

(to Ellen)

You have no color in your cheeks.

(to Clark)

Ellen has no color in her cheeks.

(to Audrey)

I hope you'll dress up nice on Christmas.

(CONTINUED)

J72

CONTINUED: (6)

J72

As they arrive, they exit up the stairs en masse yakking all the way, leaving Clark, Ellen, Audrey and Rusty standing stock still. It's as though a tornado passed through.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

Her face is frozen, her eyes fixed in a stare.

CLOSEUP - AUDREY

She's wearing an identical, catatonic expression. Her hair's messed up.

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

The same expression. He has a large, distinct lipstick print on each cheek.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He comes to his senses. He smiles.

CLARK

This is what Christmas is all about. It's gonna be great. I'll be outside. For a few hours.

Clark exits out the front door leaving his stunned family alone.

72
&
A73

OMITTED

72
&
A73

73

EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - GARAGE - LATER

73

The garage door opens and Clark comes out carrying an extension ladder. Rusty follows with a huge carton of lights and decorations. Clark and Rusty are wearing their winter gear. Clark leans the ladder against the house. Rusty sets the carton down.

CLARK

We're gonna have the best-looking house in town, Russ.

Clark reaches into the carton and pulls out a strand of lights.

RUSTY

That's a lot of lights, Dad.

*

(CONTINUED)

73

CONTINUED:

73

CLARK

If I'm out in the cold and I'm committed to decorating the house, I'm gonna do it right and I'm gonna do it big. You want something you can be proud of, don't you?

RUSTY

Yeah, I guess...

CLARK

Sure you do.

RUSTY

You're not gonna overdo it are you, Dad?

CLARK

When have I ever overdone something?

Clark gives a tug on the strand pulling a three-foot ball of tangled lights from the carton.

74

OMITTED

74

A75

EXT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

A75

They exit their house noticing Clark on the ladder. They're dressed for an evening out.

MARGO

I hope he falls and breaks his neck.

*

TODD

He'll fall for sure but we're not lucky enough to have him break his neck.

*

75

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - TODD AND MARGO'S POV - DAY

75

Clark's climbing the ladder, dragging a strand of lights behind him. As he gets to the top of the ladder, it collapses, sending Clark crashing to the ground.

A76

EXT. CHESTER HOUSE - CLOSEUP - TODD AND MARGO

A76

They're irritated and fussy.

TODD

There should be some sort of ordinance prohibiting outdoors lights.

MARGO

If we can't keep kids and dogs out of the neighborhood, we're not going to prevent Christmas lights.

B76

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE

B76

Clark resets the ladder against the house, climbs back up and begins stapling light strands to the roof.

*
*

C76
thru
E76

OMITTED

C76
thru
E76

76

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DUSK

76

Clark Sr. and Art asleep in wingchairs. They're snoring. Nora and Francis are watching a Christmas parade on TV as they construct a prefab gingerbread house. They have to speak up against the loud snoring.

NORA

If you keep eating the shingles we won't have any left for the roof.

Nora remote controls the VOLUME UP on the TV. The snoring increases.

FRANCIS

They're stale anyway.

Francis remote controls the VOLUME LOUDER on the TV. The snoring becomes louder.

NORA

Is that the fella from 'Jeopardy'?

Nora turns UP the VOLUME more. The snoring gets louder.

FRANCIS

I don't know.

Francis turns UP the VOLUME again. The snoring gets louder.

(CONTINUED)

A80

CONTINUED:

A80

EXT. FRONT YARD

Rusty sets the Santa down on the lawn. Behind him a large wooden shutter falls to the sidewalk and shatters. Rusty turns and looks up to the roof.

RUSTY

Dad? I couldn't find the eight tiny reindeer.

CLARK

I think they're in the basement, Russ.

Rusty heads into the house.

80

OMITTED

80

81

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN

81

Ellen and Audrey are making dinner. They have to shout above the snoring and the BLASTING TELEVISION set.

AUDREY

Would it be indecent to ask the grandparents to stay at a hotel?

Ellen's answer is a tired look.

AUDREY

Can we at least forbid them to answer the phone? Alexander called this morning and Grandpa Clark said I couldn't come to the phone because I was going to the bathroom.

ELLEN

We're all making sacrifices, Audrey.

AUDREY

Everybody? Are you sleeping with your brother? Do you know how sick and twisted that is?

ELLEN

Don't be so dramatic.

(CONTINUED)

81

CONTINUED:

81

AUDREY

Mom, I have nightmares about what he does in his own bed. Alone.

ELLEN

Honey, I don't know what to say except that it's Christmas! We're all in misery!

A82

EXT. HOUSE - ROOF

A82

*

As Clark continues crawling along the spine of the roof, he loses his footing on a patch of ice, sending him sliding down the roof face first.

*

*

*

CLARK

Holy... hairy... hell!

He grabs the gutter as he slides past. His body jack-knifes over the eaves.

B82

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

B82

*

Clark's body slams into the house and knocks a picture off the wall in the bedroom.

C82

OMITTED

C82

82

EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - CLARK - NIGHT

82

He's dangling from the gutter. He looks to the side.

CLARK'S POV

The ladder is several feet away, resting on the gutter.

WIDE ANGLE

The gutter has pulled five feet away from the house. Clark is clinging to it, moving cautiously toward the ladder which still rests against the moving gutter. He begins inching toward the ladder, sliding his gloves along the gutter. It begins to tear loose from the house, sending the ladder crashing to the lawn.

*

CLOSEUP - GUTTER

It's filled solid with ice. The ice shoots out of the gutter like a spear.

83 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S LIVING ROOM 83

The ice spear crashes through the side window and impales the stereo.

A84 EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT A84

Clark, holding on to the gutter, as it continues to tear loose, realizes that the lower roof is just below his feet. He lets go of the gutter, leaving him standing on the lower roof. He stands for a beat feeling secure. Suddenly his feet slide out from under him, he hits the roof on his stomach, shoots off like a rocket, and disappears in a cloud of snow into the bushes below. The front door opens the moment he lands.

*
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*
*
*

84 EXT. HOUSE - PORCH 84

Ellen steps outside.

ELLEN

Clark? Dinner's ready!

A beat and Clark answers from the bushes.

CLARK (O.S.)

I'll be right in.

A85 INT. KITCHEN - CLOSEUP - DISHWASHER - LATER A85

A grandmother's hand closes the door and turns it ON.

INSERT - CLOSEUP - COFFEE MACHINE

A grandmother's hand pours water into the machine.

(CONTINUED)

*

A85 CONTINUED:

A85

INSERT - CLOSEUP - REFRIGERATOR

Freshly-wrapped leftovers are placed on a shelf and the door closes.

85 EXT. HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

85

Clark, Ellen, Audrey and Rusty, Clark Sr., Nora, Art and Francis are standing on the front lawn. *

Clark's worn and tattered from his efforts. His enthusiasm and excitement is unabated. He's holding two extension cords, ready to plug them in. *

ART

You want to hurry up with this, Clark? I'm freezing my bagettes off. *

Clark gives Art a sidelong glance. He refuses to let him spoil his fun. *

CLARK

Are you ready? Two hundred and fifty strands of lights, one hundred individual bulbs per strand for a grand total of twenty-five thousand individual miniature imported Italian twinkle lights. Twenty-five thousand! *

AUDREY

I hope nobody I know drives by and sees me standing in the yard staring at the house. *

ART

If they know your dad they won't think anything of it. *

RUSTY

Fire it up, Dad! *

CLARK

I dedicate this house to the Griswold family Christmas.
(to the family)
Drumroll, please. *

No one responds.

CLARK

Drumroll?

(CONTINUED)

Reluctantly Ellen, Rusty and Audrey flutter their tongues in a cheap imitation of a drumroll.

CLARK

Dad? Mom?

*

Clark and Nora join in. After a beat Art and Francis reluctantly flutter their tongues.

*

*

CLARK

Joy to the World!

He joins the drumroll, louder and more enthusiastic. He holds up the plug and the outlet and with great drama and the sound of a CRASHING CYMBAL, joins them.

*

*

EXT. HOUSE - CLARK'S POV

The house is dark.

EXT. HOUSE - FAMILY

Continuing their drumroll. Dampened somewhat. Clark unplugs the cords, gives them a twist, revs up his drums and again joins the extension cords. Nothing. The drums peter out. Clark continues his, but at a lower volume and in an angry tone. He plugs and unplugs the cords a couple of times.

ART

Beeeeee--u-t-tiiiiii-ful, Clark!

FRANCIS

Boy, talk about tinkling your money away. I hope you kids see what a silly waste of resources this was.

AUDREY

He worked really hard, Grandma.

ART

So do washing machines but they don't make very good fathers.

Art and Francis head back to the house.

CLARK SR.

It's probably a bad bulb, son. If one goes out the whole thing doesn't work.

Clark Sr. and Nora go inside. Clark stares at the house. Seething anger.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (2)

85

AUDREY

Sorry, Dad.

RUSTY

Good try, Dad.

ELLEN

Clark?

No response. Clark just stares at the house.

ELLEN

We'll be inside, honey.

She fixes his coat around his neck to cover his neck. *

ELLEN

Don't stay out too late. You have
work in the morning. *She leaves a nearly despondent Clark and slips away into
the house before he explodes.

86 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

86

They've returned home. Todd's looking at the broken
window. Margo's looking at the trashed stereo system. *

TODD

Something had to break the window.
Something had to hit the stereo.

MARGO

And why is the carpet all wet?

TODD

(looking out the
window)I don't know. But I'll bet that
asshole had something to do with
it.

87 EXT. HOUSE - CLARK - NIGHT

87

He sets the ladder against the house and begins to climb.

A88 INT. HOUSE - SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

A88

Nora and Clark Sr. are in Audrey's double bed. Their
debris is all over the room. Medicines, trusses,
clothing, suitcases. A room humidifier is spewing out
cold steam. Nora's snoring softly. Clark Sr.'s reading
a teen fashion magazine with a flashlight. *

B88 INT. FAMILY ROOM B88
 Rusty and Audrey are sleeping on a hide-a-bed. She's on her back, awake. Rusty has his arm around her and his face against her ear. She pushes his arm away and his leg replaces it. She groans. *

AUDREY

Get off me, you little fungus. *

C88 INT. MASTER BEDROOM C88
 Ellen's asleep. Alone. *

D88 INT. RUSTY'S ROOM - INSERT - POSTER D88
 A well-oiled babe in something indecent. The poster is taped to the ceiling. *

CLOSEUP - ART

He's laying on his back staring up with mild curiosity. *

INT. RUSTY'S ROOM

Francis is on the bottom bunk. Art's on the top bunk. *

E88 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT E88
 A lonely figure on the ladder in the dark of the cold night. A sky filled with twinkling stars. *

88 EXTREME CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR 88
 Audrey opens the door marked, DECEMBER 19. Behind the door is a gingerbread man.

A89 OMITTED A89

89 INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY 89
 Clark peeks out of his bedroom. He looks up and down the hall, then sneaks out of his room with a two-handled shopping bag filled with wrapped gifts. He reaches up to the ceiling.

CLOSEUP CEILING - ATTIC STAIRS

Fold-down stairs. Clark slips his finger in a brass ring and turns it, unlocking the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY

Clark pulls down the attic stairs. He does so slowly but the STAIRCASE still SQUEAKS. He brings the stairs down to eye level and stops.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: 89

He listens to see if he's attracted anyone's attention. He looks up at the stairs. The steps, which are collapsed on runners, slide down and hit Clark square in the forehead taking him clear OUT OF FRAME.

A90 OMITTED A90

90 INT. ATTIC - LATER - DAY 90

Clark climbs up the creaky stairs into the attic, rubbing his aching forehead.

It's a standard, cluttered, wood floor, unfinished, unheated attic. He steps carefully over and around the detritus of twenty years of married life to the chimney. He sets down the bag of gifts. He takes out a gift and hides it behind the chimney. As he reaches behind the chimney, he notices something. He brings out a dusty, gift-wrapped package. He reaches back around, stretches, grits his teeth as he reaches far behind the chimney. He pulls out another wrapped gift. He sets it down and again reaches behind the chimney. He finds another gift-wrapped package. He looks at the gifts curiously. He blows the dust off one of the packages and reads the tag.

CLOSEUP - GIFT TAG

The tag reads -- TO MOM, FROM CLARK. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at another package.

CLOSEUP - GIFT TAG

The tag reads -- HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, ALL MY LOVE, CLARK.

91 OMITTED 91
thru thru
95 95

96 INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY 96

Francis comes out of the guest room. She sees the attic stairs down.

FRANCIS

Gee whiz! Feel the cold air
coming down from there!

A97 INT. ATTIC - CLOSEUP - CLARK - DAY A97

He picks up the third gift.

(CONTINUED)

A97 CONTINUED: A97
 CLOSEUP - GIFT TAG
 The tag reads -- HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY, LOVE, CLARK.

B97 INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY B97
 Francis lifts the staircase and lets it crash closed.

97 INT. ATTIC - CLARK - DAY 97
 He freezes.

98 EXT. HOUSE 98
 The Taurus is running. Clark Sr. is in the front, Nora's in the back with Audrey. Ellen's standing at the Taurus. She's going to drive. *

99 INT. ATTIC - DAY 99
 Clark's on his hands and knees pushing on the attic stairs. It doesn't budge. Locked tight.

CLARK
Hello?! Ellen?! Somebody?!

A100 INT. FOYER - DAY A100
 Art and Francis bundle up and exit the front door. They can't hear Clark's FAINT CRIES.

B100 INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY B100
 O.S. Clark's BANGING on the attic stairs.

CLARK (O.S.)
Help!

C100 EXT. HOUSE C100
 Art and Francis come out of the house. Ellen calls to them.

ELLEN
 Dad? Is Clark coming?

ART
 How the hell would I know?

ELLEN
 Was he in the house?

(CONTINUED)

C100 CONTINUED:

C100

ART

If he's not up on the ladder
fartin' around with his lights, he
must be in the house.

ELLEN

I'm sure he wants to go to lunch
and shopping with us.

ART

You've got another car. He can
drive. Me, I have to eat so I can
take my back pill.

D100 INT. HOUSE ATTIC - DAY

D100

Clark works his way down the attic, heading for a small window at the other end. There is a narrow walkway of boards across the joists that runs from one end of the attic to the other. Except for this walkway, the floor is unfinished and consists only of joists and insulation.

CLOSEUP - FLOORBOARDS

Loose planks. Clark's foot steps down on the end of a plank. It sinks under his weight.

INT. ATTIC

Clark, anticipating that he's going to get hit in the face with the loose board, quickly steps back. The board he steps back onto flies up and smacks him in the back of the head. The impact throws him forward onto the first board which flips up and slugs him in the face.

100 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

100

Art and Francis get in the Taurus.

101 INT./EXT. ATTIC WINDOW - CLARK - DAY

101

He's pressed up against the small, dirty attic window. A look of defeat and resignation on his face.

102 INT./EXT. STREET - CLARK'S POV - DAY

102

Far below, the Taurus pulls away and heads down the street.

A103 EXT. ATTIC WINDOW - CLOSEUP - CLARK - DAY

A103

He watches sadly as the Taurus disappears down the street. He sighs in utter defeat.

(CONTINUED)

A103 CONTINUED:

A103

He glances to the side and notices the the window is ringed with his inoperative imported twinkle lights. He reaches into his shirt pocket for a new bulb, opens the tiny window and reaches out to test for bad bulbs.

B103 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - MEN'S ACCESSORY DEPT. - DAY

B103 *

Clark Sr. and Nora are at the counter looking at manicure sets.

CLARK SR.

I don't see anything wrong with getting Rusty an air rifle. That's what he wants.

NORA

Ellen said, no. You heard her.

CLARK SR.

Alright. Clarkie had one when he was a boy.

NORA

And he put out all the windows in the garage and you threw it away. (referring to the manicure set in her hand)

No. I think he'll be just as thrilled with a manicure set. *

CLARK SR.

Yeah. You're right. There's nothing more important to a young fella than well-groomed fingernails. *

NORA

The set also includes a nifty toenail clipper. *

CLARK SR.

That's a heck of a nice deal. Especially in the summer. *

C103 INT. ATTIC - DAY

C103

Clark comes back down the attic from the window, returning the failed bulbs to his pocket. He reaches the boards that whacked him earlier. He gingerly steps on both boards, balancing for a moment. Suddenly, the boards fly up on either side of Clark, smacking him both front and back.

D103 INT. BEDROOM - CEILING - DAY D103

The plaster cracks under the weight of Clark's feet, leaving the approximate shape of human footprints in the ceiling.

E103 INT. ATTIC - CLOSEUP - CLARK'S FEET E103

He's stepping between the joists.

F103 INT. BATHROOM - CEILING F103

More cracked footprints on the ceiling.

G103 INT. ATTIC G103
 Clark's rummaging through boxes, looking for a coat. He finds nothing and crosses to another stack of boxes.

H103 INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CEILING H103
 The footsteps continue across the master bedroom ceiling.

I-103 OMITTED I-103

J103 INT. ATTIC J103
 Clark's rummaging through another box. He comes up with an old wool scarf. He looks at it with a small degree of satisfaction.

K103 INT. RUSTY'S BEDROOM - CEILING - DAY K103
 The girlie poster above the top bunk. Clark's feet suddenly break through the ceiling and tear through the poster.

L103 INT. ATTIC L103
 Clark's sunk to his knees in the attic floor.

M103 INT. RUSTY'S BEDROOM - WIDE M103
 A pair of legs standing on the top bunk.

N103 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LADIES' ACCESSORIES N103 *
 Art and Francis are at a counter discussing a gift for Audrey. *

ART *
 Doesn't Audrey have a purse and *
 gloves? *

FRANCIS *
 This is for when she dresses up. *

INSERT - PURSE AND GLOVES *

A taupe leather purse and matching leather gloves. *

FRANCIS (O.S.) *
 We'll have them monogrammed. *

BACK TO SCENE *

Art looks at the pricetag. *

(CONTINUED)

N103 CONTINUED:

N103

ART

A hundred and ten bucks?! Forget
it. Let's go back to the toy
section and get her that loom.

*
*
*
*

103 INT. ATTIC - LATER

103

Clark is wearing an old fur coat, a hat and white ladies' gloves that he's found among the stored junk. He's rummaging through boxes, resigned to his fate.

CLOSEUP - SHOE BOX

Clark lifts the lid to reveal yellow Kodak boxes. The old home movies. He takes out several and looks through them.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He smiles as the inscriptions on the boxes bring back pleasant memories.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - BOXES

Shuffling through them -- Clark's fifth B-day, Vacation to Toledo, Aunt Lou's funeral and finally, Xmas '59.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at the box for a moment. MUSIC comes up.

8MM FILM PROJECTED ON WHITE SHIRT

A title card with the words in glitter. CUT TO: Griswold house -- a tract ranch house with a single string of lights around the door. CUT TO: Griswold family, Nora, Little Clark (age 9), an ancient woman dressed in black, a young sailor, a smashed old priest, a middle-aged man with a loud sport coat, slicked hair and a pencil moustache with his arm around a middle-aged woman in a low-cut dress -- sitting in the living room eating Christmas dinner on TV trays. A metallic Christmas tree stands in the corner. A wobbly pan across the people, squinting against the harsh light of the light bar.

INT. ATTIC

Clark is sitting on a child's chair with the projector on a box beside him. The image is projected on a shirt hung from a rafter.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He smiles at the old images.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

8MM FILM

The man with the pencil moustache smiles and holds up his middle finger. CUT TO: Family gathered around a free-standing kettle fireplace singing Christmas carols. On the left side of frame, we see flames. The camera pans to the curtains. The heat from the floodlights has ignited the curtains. The camera drops again. CUT TO: The family and three firemen toasting the holidays with eggnog. Behind them, the wall is blackened. CUT TO: Clark Jr. asleep in his bed, despite the floodlights. CUT TO: Clark Sr. in a cheap Santa suit coming in the front door with a pillowcase stuffed with gifts. A German shepherd dog attacks him. The camera drops to the floor. CUT TO: Clark Jr. running down the stairs in the AM. CUT TO: Clark Jr. ripping open a large gift. He looks up to camera with a grim expression. He lifts a handful of wool socks from the box.

104 EXT. HOUSE - DAY (LATER) 104

The Taurus is in the drive. The grandparents are walking carefully up the slick pavement to the house.

105 INT. HOUSE - STAIRWELL - DAY 105

Ellen sneaks up the stairs with packages in her arms.

106 INT. HALLWAY - DAY 106

Ellen turns down the hall, stopping at the attic stairs. She reaches up and turns the attic stair lock.

107 INT. ATTIC - DAY 107

Clark, the chair, the box of memories and the projector fall OUT OF FRAME. O.S., CLARK and his MEMORIES CRASH to the floor. *

108 OMITTED 108 *
thru thru
B109 B109 *

109 INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 109

Todd and Margo have returned home from a run. They're dressed in the best winter running fashions. *

TODD

I want to take off these clothes
and sit in the dark with a glass
of wine and kiss every square
inch of your body. *

(MORE) *

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

TODD (CONT'D)
 (kisses Margo)
 After you shower, of course.

*
*

MARGO
 Of course.

*

110 EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

110

Clark plants a floodlight in front of the Santa Claus
 and the plastic reindeer and a sign announcing MERRY
 CHRISTMAS in glittering plastic letters.

*
*
*

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He feels a degree of satisfaction with the new decor-
 ations, even though the lights on the house are still
 out of order.

EXT. HOUSE - PORCH

Ellen comes out the front door. She closes the door
 and steps down from the porch.

ELLEN
 Clark?

EXT. YARD - CLARK

Ellen walks over to him.

*

ELLEN
 Are you out here for a reason or
 are you just avoiding the family?

*

CLARK
 No. But I still have a few
 hundred more bulbs to check. In
 the meantime, at least I can light
 up the manger and Santa Claus and
 the eight tiny reindeer and the
 Merry X-Mas sign. That should
 look pretty good.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Clark picks up the yellow extension cord that the house
 lights are plugged into. There are two inputs on the
 cord.

CLARK
 Ready?

*

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

ELLEN

Do you want me to do the drumroll thing?

CLARK

No, it's okay. Here goes nothin'.

Clark grimaces as he sticks the floodlight plug into the extension cord input.

EXT. HOUSE - WIDE

Nothing.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Stares in disbelief.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

Winces.

111 INT. GARAGE

111

The door from the house opens.

112 EXT. FRONT YARD

112

Clark's holding the cords, staring at the house.

CLARK

I don't understand it. The house lights don't work, the floodlights don't work.

*
*
*
*

ELLEN

Is it plugged in?

CLARK

Do you honestly think I'd check thousands of tiny little lights if I wasn't sure the extension cord was plugged in?

*

113 INT. GARAGE

113

Nora steps into the garage. She hits the light switch.

*

114 INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

114

Todd and Margo are sitting on their king-size bed in the dark. Todd's in his shorts. Margo's wearing a satin robe. They clink glasses and kiss. The moment their lips touch, the room is flooded with light.

115 EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT 115
 It's a spectacular sight. The home edition of the
 Disneyland Electric Parade.

A116 EXT. CLARK'S TOWN - NIGHT A116 *
 The lights in the panorama dim as the house sucks power.

B116 CLOSEUP - HOME ELECTRIC METER B116 *
 It's a spinning blur.

C116 CLOSEUP - POWER PLANT CONTROL PANEL C116 *
 A male hand slaps a button marked "AUXILIARY NUCLEAR ON."

116 INT. GARAGE 116
 Nora crosses to the refrigerator in the garage and takes
 out a carton of milk. *

117 EXT. YARD - CLARK AND ELLEN - NIGHT 117
 Clark, blasted with light, continues to fiddle with the
 extension cords, unaware that the lights are on. Ellen's
 jaw drops. *

ELLEN

Clark!

CLARK

Just a second, honey, I think I
 know what's wrong... *

118 INT. GARAGE 118
 Nora crosses back to the door. She turns off the light. *

A119 CLOSEUP - HOME ELECTRIC METER A119 *
 It slows down.

119 INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 119
 Margo and Todd climb off the bed and charge the front
 window. The lights go off. Margo and Todd, temporarily
 blinded, crash into a table. *

120 EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE 120
 It's dark.

CLARK

Turn the lights back on,
 sweetheart, I can't see what... *

He looks up slowly. Puzzled. *

121 INT. GARAGE 121
 Ellen rushes into the garage. She hits the light switch and looks for the plug. *

122 OMITTED 122

122A INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 122A
 The lights go back on. Todd and Margo are hopping around the room, holding their banged shins. The wine bottle's fallen to the floor along with cheese and crackers and caviar and fruit, flowers, vase and water. It's a terrible mess, made all the worse by the screaming, bright light flooding into the room. *

123 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 123
 The lights are back on. Clark yells.

CLARK
 Ellen! I fixed it!

124 INT. GARAGE - ELLEN 124
 She follows the extension cord to the plug. It's plugged in. She's puzzled. *

125 EXT. HOUSE - CLARK 125
 He's still yelling.

CLARK
 Everybody out! Quick! Look at the lights!

126 OMITTED 126 *

A127 INT. FOYER A127 *
 Art and Clark Sr. run in from the family room. The grandmothers from the kitchen.

B127 INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM B127 *
 Todd has the cheese, fruit, wine bottle, vase and flowers on the table and is carrying it out of the room.

TODD
 Get a towel! Quick! There's wine all over the carpet!

Margo takes off for the bathroom.

C127 INT. GARAGE C127 *
 Ellen sees nothing wrong. She heads back to the door, reaching for the light switch. *

D127 INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM D127 *
 The lights go out. Margo rams into an armoire. O.S.,
 Todd takes a header down the stairs.

E127 EXT. HOUSE - PORCH E127 *
 Art and Clark Sr. come out on the porch.

ART
 What's all the yelling about?!

CLOSEUP - CLARK
 Bewildered. He wiggles the cords furiously.

F127 INT. KITCHEN F127 *
 Ellen comes back in the house. She stops as something
 occurs to her. She thinks for a moment.

127 EXT. HOUSE - PORCH 127
 Art, Clark Sr., Audrey, Francis and Nora are gathered on
 the porch looking at Clark. *

NORA
 What's he doing, Clark?

CLARK SR.
 I haven't the foggiest...

AA128 THEIR POV AA128*
 Clark's twisting, shaking, whipping the cords and
 cursing. He throws the cords down and in his rage socks
 the Santa. *

CLARK
Damn it! Damn it! damn it... *

CLOSEUP - SANTA
 The face caves in when Clark slugs it. *

EXT. YARD
 Clark kicks the reindeer and the sign.

A128 INT. KITCHEN A128
 Ellen turns and runs back to the garage. *

B128 EXT. PORCH B128
 The family is disturbed by Clark's behavior.

(CONTINUED)

B128 CONTINUED: B128

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He rips the cords from the junction, spreads his arms wide and with a great, dramatic gesture rams them back together.

C128 INT. GARAGE C128

Ellen comes back into the garage. She hits the lights. *

AD128 INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM AD128*

The lights are back on, the room is blown out with light. The armoire is toppled. A television and component stereo is spilled on the bed in a tangle of wires and video cassettes, audio cassettes and CDs.

BD128 INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - FOYER BD128*

Cheese, fruit, flowers, wine, the table and Todd are littered down the staircase. The harsh light is spilling through the living room, dining room and foyer windows.

D128 EXT. HOUSE D128

The lights are on. For good. *

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's stunned that the lights work.

EXT. HOUSE

The family comes down off the porch and onto the lawn, admiring the lights.

RUSTY

Wow! Dad, it's incredible!

Ellen comes out of the house and runs to Clark. He takes her under his arm. Rusty under the other. Audrey hugs him and they look up at the house with great pride. The family gathers around. *

EXT. HOUSE - THEIR POV

A great swell of holiday MUSIC as we HOLD ON the magnificently-decorated house.

128 OMITTED 128 *

129 EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - CLARK 129

He's in tears. The struggle, the frustration, the anger has paid off. The emotion is too much for him.

(CONTINUED)

EXT. HOUSE - FAMILY

It's a great moment of family warmth and love. Clark embraces Nora, then Clark Sr.

NORA

It's lovely, Clark.

CLARK

You deserve a house like this to spend Christmas in.

CLARK SR.

It's a beaut, Clark.

CLARK

Dad, Dad, Dad. You taught me everything I know about exterior electrical illumination.

He embraces Francis.

CLARK

Dear, dear Francis. I hope this adds to your enjoyment of the holidays.

FRANCIS

It's wonderful, Clark.

Clark embraces Art.

CLARK

Art, Arthur, Dad. Thanks for being here.

ART

You got too many blue lights.

Clark doesn't mind the insult. He regards it as a charming moment of truth and honesty.

CLARK

I know, Art. And thanks for noticing.

Clark moves from Art to the next person. It's COUSIN EDDIE. He's dressed in a cheap overcoat with a fake collar and a Kansas City Chiefs stocking cap.

EDDIE

The house looks real swell, Clark.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

Thanks, Eddie. I hope it enhances
your holiday spirit.

CATHERINE'S standing next to Clark. She's wearing a
quilted car coat. Clark takes her in his arms, hugs
her.

CLARK

Catherine! Dear...

Something's suddenly not right. Clark lets go of
Catherine. He steps back and looks at Eddie and her.

CLARK

Eddie?

CATHERINE

The house is gorgeous, Clark.

CLARK

Eddie?

EDDIE

I sure hope you didn't do all this
on our behalf, Clark.

He turns and yells over his shoulder.

EDDIE

You kids get out here and see
what Uncle Clark has done to the
house!

CLARK

Eddie?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's baffled.

CLARK

(to himself)

Eddie?

He looks off and is hit with another surprise...

HIS POV

The biggest commercially-available RV is backed in his
driveway. The door opens and two little kids, a boy and
a girl, ROCKY and RUBY SUE, followed by a mixed breed
hound, Snots, jump out. Rocky's six and Ruby Sue's
five. The kids and dog run across the lawn

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED: (3)

129

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's stunned. He looks at Ellen.

CLARK

Eddie?

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She's equally stunned. She shrugs. She doesn't have any idea why Eddie and Catherine have shown up.

EXT. FRONT YARD

Eddie and Catherine greet the grandparents as the kids walk up.

EDDIE

If you don't remember, this is Rocky.

ART

You got a kiss for me?

EDDIE

Better take a raincheck on that, Art. He's got a lip fungus they ain't identified yet.

Art pats Rocky on the head.

CATHERINE

You remember Ruby Sue.

FRANCIS

Oh, my gosh! Her eyes aren't crossed anymore!

EDDIE

Somethin', ain't it? Falls in a well, eyes go crossed. Gets kicked by a mule, they go back to normal.

Eddie slaps Snots on the flanks.

EDDIE

This here is our pride and joy. Snots.

*

CLARK

Pretty name, Ed.

*

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED: (4)

129

EDDIE

We named him that 'cause he's
got sinus troubles.

*
*

CLOSEUP - SNOTS

*

He SNIFFS, CLEARS his THROAT and...

*

EXT. HOUSE

... SPITS. Clark looks up with disgust.

*

EDDIE

(to Snots)

Snots, you roll over and let
Uncle Clark scratch your belly.

(to Clark)

You never saw a set on a dog like
this one's got.

CLARK

It's alright, Eddie.

EDDIE

You rub his belly, Clark, and
he'll love you till the day you
die.

CLARK

I really shouldn't. My hands are
chapped.

CATHERINE

(to Ellen)

We would have called, but Eddie
wanted to make it a surprise.

EDDIE

Clark? You surprised?

CLARK

Surprised? Eddie, if I woke
tomorrow with my head sewed to the
carpet, I couldn't be more
surprised than I am right now.

Ellen gives Clark an angry look.

ELLEN

We have plenty of room. Plenty
of everything.

(to herself)

I think.

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED: (5)

129

EDDIE

We're pretty much set in the R.V.
It's a little tight, but we
didn't come to impose.

ART

Hell, there's plenty of room.
(to Eddie)
Quit being so damn polite, Ed.
You want to spend the holidays
with four people jammed toe-to-
nose in a motor home?

Eddie reevaluates his position.

EDDIE

Catherine and me are comfy in
there. Maybe you folks wouldn't
mind the youngsters shacking up
with you. After that drive...
(puts his arm
around Catherine)
We could use some time together.
(to Catherine)
Honey, run and get the kids'
things. And don't forget the
rubber sheets and the gerbils.

130 INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

130

Clark and Eddie are standing at the tree sipping eggnog.
Eddie's wearing a flannel shirt tucked into sweat pants
and leather tie shoes. He's showered. His hair's combed
back.

EDDIE

Honey of a tree, Clark. Is it a
real one?

CLARK

Dug it out of the ground myself.

EDDIE

Is that a fact...?

Clark reaches under the tree.

CLOSEUP - SNOTS

He's drinking the water out of the tree stand.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLARK AND EDDIE

Clark shoos the dog out from under the tree.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

Get outta there!

EDDIE

Don't worry about it, Clark, a little tree water ain't gonna hurt him. Before we left, he drank half a quart of Pennzoil. Boy, when he lifted his leg the next morning...

CLARK

If he drinks the water out of there, the tree'll dry out.

EDDIE

Snots! Get outta there! Go to the kitchen and get something to eat!

The dog saunters out of the living room.

EDDIE

Cute, isn't he? Only problem is, he's got a little Mississippi leg hound in him. If the mood catches him right, he'll grab your leg and go to town. You don't want him around if you're wearing short pants, if you know what I mean. A word of warning, though. If he does start on you, you best let him finish.

CLARK

(changes the subject)

I just can't believe you're actually standing here in my living room. I never thought the day would come.

EDDIE

I'm excited about it, too. It's a cryin' shame the older kids couldn't make it. I got the daughter in the clinic to get cured off the Wild Turkey and the older boy, bless his soul, is preparing for his career.

CLARK

College?

EDDIE

Carnival.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK
(facetiously)
You gotta be proud.

EDDIE
Oh, yeah. He worked last season
as a pixie dust spreader on the
Tilt-O-Whirl and he thinks maybe
next season he'll be guessing
people's weight or barking for
the Yak Woman. You ever see her?

CLARK
Sorry to say I haven't.

EDDIE
Big horns growing right above her
ears. Ugly as sin but a real
sweet gal and a hell of a good
cook.

CLARK
(changing the
subject)
Can I refill your eggnog, get you
something to eat, drive you out to
the middle of nowhere and leave
you for dead?

Eddie doesn't catch the insult.

EDDIE
I'm doing fine, Clark. Just glad
to be here.

There's a lull in the conversation.

CLARK
Yeah. So, when did you get the
tenement on wheels?

EDDIE
That's an R.V. I borrowed it off
my buddy. He took my house. We
took the R.V. It's a good-lookin'
vehicle, ain't it?

CLARK
Beautiful. And it looks so nice
backed in the driveway.

EDDIE
Sure does, but don't go fallin'
in love with it. When we leave
next month, it's goin' with us.

(CONTINUED)

- 130 CONTINUED: (3) 130
- CLARK
- Huh?
- 131 EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT 131
- The house is glowing. Neighbors have gathered in the street and on the adjacent lawns.
- 132 EXT. CLARK'S NEIGHBORHOOD 132
- From several blocks away, the house continues to glow.
- 133 EXT. CLARK'S TOWN 133
- Clark's house glows in the distance.
- A134 INT. HOUSE - RUSTY'S BEDROOM - CLOSEUP - ART - NIGHT A134 *
- He's staring at the ceiling. He's bewildered.
- HIS POV - CLOSEUP - CEILING - POSTER
- Two big foot holes are punched through the bimbo's chest.
- CLOSEUP - ART
- He gives up trying to figure out what happened to the poster. He rolls over and settles into the bed. He turns AWAY FROM CAMERA revealing that the back of his head is white with plaster dust. As he pulls the covers up around his shoulders, a cloud of dust rises.
- B134 INT. FAMILY ROOM - CLOSEUP - ROCKY AND RUBY SUE B134 *
- They're sleeping in the hide-a-bed. A cage packed with anxious gerbils rests between them. Rocky smiles and we hear the SOFT SPLATTER of WATER on rubber. We MOVE OFF them TO the floor and Rusty and Audrey. Rusty's laying on top of Audrey. She's struggling beneath his dead-weight.
- C134 INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT C134 *
- Clark and Ellen are in bed, awake. The lights are off. The room is illuminated by the outdoor lights.
- CLARK
- I'm not complaining, I just don't
know how we can have a nice
Christmas with Eddie here.
- ELLEN
- Well, they are sleeping the
driveway.

(CONTINUED)

C134 CONTINUED:

C134 *

CLARK

And isn't that a kick in the nuts?
How can the house look like
anything but a junkyard with his
shack on wheels parked in the
driveway?

ELLEN

You've never judged anyone by how
much or how little they have,
Clark.

CLARK

No, and I never will. If Eddie
was rich...

There's a long pause.

CLARK/ELLEN

He's be worse.

CLARK

Good night, sweetheart.

134 EXTREME CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR 134

Eddie's greasy fingers tear off a door marked, DEC. 21,
to reveal a sprig of mistletoe. He leaves a big smudge
mark on the calendar.

A135 EXT. HOUSE - EXTREME CLOSEUP - SANTA - MORNING A135

MOVE UP FROM Santa's crushed face TO the house and the RV.
The door opens and Eddie lets Snots out. Snots sniffs out
the lawn.

135 EXT. CLARK'S OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING 135

Mid-morning in the business district.

136 OMITTED 136 *

137 INT. EXECUTIVE OUTER OFFICE 137

Clark pokes his head inside. No secretary. He tiptoes
in, holding a poinsettia plant. He crosses to a door,
knocks twice. *

138 INT. FRANK SHIRLEY'S EXECUTIVE OFFICE 138

A vast room with an enormous desk. Shirley is seated behind it, having a conversation over the speaker phone.

FRANK

Get Ed Leftic up here and have him look over these figures.

Clark enters with the poinsettia.

CLARK

Mr. Shirley, merry Christmas.

139 CLARK'S POV - MR. SHIRLEY 139

He's become Scrooge counting his money. He doesn't look up.

FRANK

What do you want?

140 CLOSEUP - CLARK 140

edging forward.

CLARK

It's me, Clark Griswold. I have a gift for you.

INT. OFFICE

Frank Shirley is back to normal. He waves toward an opposite wall.

FRANK

Put it over there with the others, Grisball.

CLARK

(can't resist)

By the way, sir. Hope my report helped out at the trade show.

FRANK

I'm sure it did. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm in the middle of an important call.

He picks up the receiver.

Clark turns to put the poinsettia on a sideboard and sees it's jammed with about fifty other poinsettias.

- 141 EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT 141
The Taurus rolls through heavily-wooded, snow-covered hills.
- 142 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - SIGN - NIGHT 142
A big wooden sign that reads -- OSHGONOGGIN STATE PARK.
- 143 EXT. SLEDDING HILL - NIGHT (LATER) 143
A parking lot at the bottom. A warming house. Outdoor light illuminates the hill. CHRISTMAS CAROLS are playing on the PA.
- 144 EXT. SLEDDING HILL - TOP - NIGHT 144
Clark, Eddie, Audrey, Rusty, Ruby Sue and Rocky are at the top of a suburban park sledding hill. They each have a saucer sled. Clark's on one knee with his saucer sled upside-down on the snow. He's shaking a spray can.

CLARK

This is a new non-caloric silicon-based kitchen lubricant my company's working on. It creates a surface 500 times slipperier than any cooking oil. We're really gonna fly down the hill with this stuff.

RUSTY

Has anybody ever put it on a sled?

CLARK

Not that I know of.

EDDIE

Don't put none of it on my sled, Clark. You know that metal plate in my head?

CLARK

How could I forget it?

He sprays the bottom of the sled.

EDDIE

I had to have it replaced because whenever Catherine revved-up the microwave I'd piss my pants and forget who I was for half hour or so.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Over at V.A. they replaced it with a plastic one and it ain't as strong. I don't think I oughta be sailing down no hill with nothing between the ground and my brain but a piece of government plastic.

Clark's growing weary of the endless blabbering.

CLARK

Do you really think it matters, Ed?

EDDIE

The plate runs right under my part. If it gets dented, my hair ain't gonna look right.

Clark groans and flips his sled right-side up.

CLARK

Let me go first and see how it works.

EDDIE

Be careful there, Clark.

CLARK

There's nothing to worry about, Ed.

Clark mounts the sled.

CLARK

Going for a new amateur recreational saucer sled land speed record, Clark W. Griswold, Jr.

He sets his palms on the snow and rocks the sled back and forth. It's extremely slippery.

CLARK

Oh, yeah. This is gonna be some kind of wild ride!

Clark rocks himself back, holds a split second and pushes off. The sled flies off the peak of the hill.

- 145 EXT. HILL - NIGHT 145
 Looking straight down the hill. Clark's sled streaks down the hill, across the flat and into the dark beyond. One moment he's on top of the hill, the next, he's gone.
- A146 OMITTED. A146 *
- 146 EXT. HILL - EDDIE AND KIDS 146
 They're stunned by how fast Clark flew down the hill.
- 147 EXT. PARKING LOT 147
 Clark's sled sails through the parking lot.
 CLOSEUP - CLARK
 He's holding on for dear life, screaming all the way.
 EXT. PARKING LOT. CLARK'S POV
 LOW and MOVING. Barely missing cars, people jumping out of the way and heading for a Jeep.
 CLOSEUP - CLARK
 He leans back and closes his eyes in anticipation of serious injury.
 EXT. PARKING LOT - JEEP
 LOW. The sled shoots under the Jeep and out.
- 148 EXT. STREET 148
 Clark's sled flies out of the parking lot and onto the street. He reappears every few seconds as he passes through the pools of street lamp light.
- 149 EXT. STAND OF TREES 149
 A heavily wooded area. Branches are breaking, BIRDS are roused and SQUAWKING.
- 150 EXT. SHOPPING CENTER - CHARITY TOY COLLECTION BOX 150
 A big red and green metal bin resting in the parking lot.
 EXT. PARKING LOT
 Out of the darkness into the harsh mercury vapor light of the parking lot, comes Clark and his sled. Sparks fly as he strikes dry pavement.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He opens his eyes for a terrified moment.

HIS POV

The collection box is coming up fast. A freshly-painted Santa and the words HO! HO! HO! is on the red bin.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He braces for the crash.

151 EXT. SLEDDING HILL - EDDIE AND KIDS

151

In the distance, we hear the METAL BOOM of Clark's impact.

EDDIE

Bingo!

A152 INT. CLARK'S OFFICE

A152 *

He's sitting behind his desk, staring out the window.
Bill walks in.

BILL

Clark?

Clark turns in his chair.

BILL

Staying late?

CLARK

Just finishing up a few things.
Last day of the year for me.

BILL

Have a really merry Christmas.

CLARK

Thank you. You, too.

Bill starts to exit. Clark stops him.

CLARK

Did you get your bonus yet?

BILL

I just talked to my son. He said
a messenger brought a company
envelope to the house. I guess
that's it. Nothing like waiting
until the last minute. Did you
get yours?

(CONTINUED)

A152 CONTINUED:

A152 *

Clark shakes his head, no.

BILL

If it's not already at your place,
it has to be on its way. Don't
worry about it.

CLAKR

If I don't get my bonus I'm in
it...

(hand to his nose)
... up to here.

BILL

Don't sweat it. It'll come.
Merry Christmas.

CLARK

Same to you.

Bill exits.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's concerned that something's gone wrong.

152 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

152

The exterior lights are on. The interior lights are off
except for a single light in the kitchen. It's late.

153 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

153

Clark's in a red bathrobe, standing at the sink looking
out the window. He's lost in troubled thought.

154 HIS POV

154

Out the window. It's daytime. The pool is in and the
kids are in the water.

155 CLOSEUP - CLARK

155

A big, happy, dreamy smile.

156 HIS POV

156

Clark and Ellen have joined the fantasy.

157 CLOSEUP - CLARK

157

He slips deeper into his fantasy. MUSIC FADES UP.

- 158 HIS POV 158
 Mary, the girl from the department store, is bouncing on the diving board. MUSIC'S PLAYING. She plays to Clark in the kitchen, waving for him to come out.
- 159 EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - CLARK 159
 In the window, looking out. It's dark inside, light outside. Mary's reflected in the window glass. Clark's in his robe. He shakes his head, "no." He's embarrassed.
- 160 CLOSEUP - MARY 160
 Big, sexy smile. She mouths, "Come on!"
- 161 CLOSEUP - CLARK 161
 From the outside. He begs off again.
- 162 CLOSEUP - MARY 162
 She reaches around behind her back and (BELOW FRAME) unfastens her top.
- 163 CLOSEUP - CLARK 163
 He presses his face to the cold glass.
- 164 CLOSEUP - MARY'S FEET 164
 She kicks off her bathing suit bottom.
- 165 CLOSEUP - CLARK 165
 His face is severely pressed to the window. The bathing suit bottom hits the window.
- 166 INT. KITCHEN DOOR - NIGHT 166
 Ruby Sue appears in the doorway, in her pajamas, rubbing sleepy eyes. She squints. She sees Clark. Her jaw drops.
- HER POV
 Clark is leaning against the sink with his face pressed to the window. We hear a SPLASH.
- 167 EXT. SWIMMING POOL 167
 Mary surfaces and swims to the ladder.
- 168 CLOSEUP - CLARK 168
 He's straining for a better view.

169 CLOSEUP - MARY 169
 She begins to rise from the water and...

170 INT. KITCHEN - RUBY SUE 170
 Her eyes are wide and her jaw is slack.

RUBY SUE
 Holy shit! Santa Claus!

171 CLOSEUP - CLARK 171
 From outside. It's dark again. The pool fantasy has evaporated. He's startled.

172 INT. KITCHEN - CLARK 172
 He lets out a sharp cry as he turns quickly from the window to face Ruby Sue.

INT. KITCHEN
 Ruby Sue approaches Clark.

RUBY SUE
 Uncle Clark! Are you Santy Claus?

CLARK
 Boy, you scared me. No. I'm not Santa Claus. I wish I was.

Clark sits at the kitchen table and pats his heart. He composes himself.

CLARK
 How come you're up, sweetheart?

RUBY SUE
 Rocky bit my thumb.

CLARK
 Huh?

RUBY SUE
 My mom puts bad tasting crap on his thumb so he don't suck it so sometimes he sucks mine and he has a bad dream, sometimes he bites it.

CLARK
 Oh.

RUBY SUE
 Him's nervous because Christmas is almost here.

*

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

172

Clark senses a problem. He sits down and offers his knee to Ruby Sue.

CLARK

Excited or nervous?

RUBY SUE

Shitting bricks. *

CLARK

You shouldn't use that word.

RUBY SUE

Sorry. He's shitting rocks. *

CLARK

Don't use the 'S' word.

RUBY SUE

Oh. Him's nervous because he don't know if he's getting nothing. *

CLARK

Are you in school?

RUBY SUE

Firstus grade. *

CLARK

(to himself)

Good school system. I don't think he should be nervous. And you shouldn't be either. Because if you're good, Santa Claus knows it. If you believe in him and you believe in your mom and your ... dad and you've been good all year, Santa Claus will bring you something.

RUBY SUE

Sometimes I think all that Santa crap's just bull. If he was so real how's come he didn't give us squat last year? We didn't do nothing wrong and we got the shaft. *

CLARK

I know for a fact that Santa Claus is real. And somehow in the next couple days I'm going to prove it to you. He comes to this house every year. I've seen him. *

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (2)

172

RUBY SUE

That's for true? *

CLARK

Cross my heart. It's a good idea
you came to stay with us, isn't
it? *

RUBY SUE

(nods) *

I love it here. You don't gotta
put on your coat to go to the
bathroom and your house is always
parked in the same place. *

CLARK

I think you better get back in
bed. *

RUBY SUE

How's come you ain't sleeping? *

CLARK

I was just looking for something. *

Did you notice if a man came to
the house today to deliver a
letter?

Ruby Sue thinks hard as she recalls the day.

RUBY SUE

Nope. How come? *

CLARK

Just wondering. You go back to
bed now, okay?

RUBY SUE

Okay.

She slips down off his lap and waddles across the
kitchen. She stops and turns back to Clark.

RUBY SUE

You sure you ain't Santy Claus?

Clark smiles and shakes his head. Ruby Sue exits.

CLARK

(to himself)

I can't even afford to be an elf.

Clark walks back to the kitchen window and looks out.

173 HIS POV 173

Mary's bathing suit is laying on the frozen ground in the dark, cold, barren back yard.

174 OMITTED 174 *
thru thru
177 177 *

A178 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING A178 *

Rusty, Audrey, Francis, Nora, Clark Sr., Art, Ruby Sue, Catherine and Rocky are at the kitchen table. The kitchen looks like an Army mess hall.

178 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING 178

Clark's standing at the window looking out. Ellen walks in. *

ELLEN
Aren't you having breakfast?

CLARK
I'm not really in the mood.

ELLEN
What are you looking at?

CLARK
The silent majesty of a winter's morn. The clean, cool, chill of holiday air. And an asshole in his bathrobe emptying a chemical toilet into my sewer.

She pulls the curtain aside and looks out.

179 HER POV 179

Eddie, unshaven, in his bathrobe, black socks, brown loafers, a baseball cap, with bare legs and a cigarette is watching over a four inch black plastic corrugated hose that runs from the RV, across the lawn to the curb and the sewer. Snots is on a rope anchored to the manger. The Santa, the busted reindeer and assorted trash bags are piled up on the curb. Eddie takes a drag of his cigarette, spits and looks to the window. He notices Clark and Ellen in the window. He smiles and waves. *

180 EXT. HOUSE - WINDOW - CLARK AND ELLEN 180

Limp, forced smiles and waves.

181 THEIR POV 181

Eddie yells to them.

(CONTINUED)

181 CONTINUED: 181

EDDIE
Shitter was full!

182 INT. HOUSE - CLARK AND ELLEN 182

Ellen smiles sheepishly. Clark sighs.

CLARK
Have you checked our shitters, honey?

ELLEN
Clark, please. He doesn't know
any better. *

CLARK
He oughta know that's illegal. *
That's a storm sewer. It fills up *
with gas, pity the person who lights *
a match within ten yards of it. *

183 EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH 183

Todd comes out the front door in sweats. He's on his way
for a run. He notices a strange odor. He looks to *
Clark's house.

184 HIS POV 184

Eddie smoking his cigarette, kicking the hose to keep it
flowing. The RV's in the drive, Snots is tied to the *
manger. Eddie sees Todd. He waves.

EDDIE
Merry Christmas!

185 CLOSEUP - TODD 185

He's shocked.

186 EXT. HOUSE - EDDIE 186

Eddie leans down and picks up Clark's saucer sled. The
bottom is worn clean through. He hurls it toward the RV,
intending to keep it.

187 OMITTED 187 *

A188 INT. LIVING ROOM 188 *

Clark turns away from the window in disgust.

(CONTINUED)

A188 CONTINUED:

A188

ELLEN

You know, Clark, I have this terrible suspicion that he and Catherine don't have any presents for their kids.

Clark recalls the conversation with Ruby Sue.

ELLEN

Rocky said something about Eddie telling him that Santa wasn't coming this year.

CLARK

Ruby Sue said something like that last night. How could they not have anything for their kids?

ELLEN

Eddie's been out of work for close to seven years.

CLARK

In seven years he couldn't find a job?

ELLEN

Catherine says he's been holding out for a management position.

CLARK

Jeez, what a worm. *

188 INT. TOY STORE - DAY

188

A large, chain toy store jammed with last minute holiday shoppers. Eddie and Clark are strolling down an aisle.

CLARK

How's the live bait business, Ed? *

EDDIE

Can't complain. How're you doing?

CLARK

Not that good, actually.

EDDIE

Your company kill all them people in India not too long ago?

CLARK

No, we missed out on that one.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLARK (CONT'D)

(continues)

You're pretty well set so far as shopping goes?

Eddie senses that Clark knows he's been lying.

EDDIE

(after a pause)

Can't lie to you, Clark. The truth is things aren't going good at all. I said I borrowed the RV from my neighbor? It's mine. We live in it. I sold off the house and the barn and the ten acres. All I kept was a 50 foot plot and the pigs and the worm farm.

(angry)

If I had back all the money me and Catherine sent that T.V. preacher that was screwing the hockey players...

CLARK

What about the kids?

EDDIE

I sent the money to the preacher himself, his kids can fend for themselves.

CLARK

Your kids, Ed.

EDDIE

Oh, well, that's the bitch of it, Clark. I don't know what to do. We coasted into town on fumes. Gas money run out in Kankakee.

CLARK

Ellen and I want to help you give the kids a nice Christmas.

EDDIE

I couldn't do that, Clark.

CLARK

No, we insist.

EDDIE

I'm not one for charity, Clark.

(CONTINUED)

188 CONTINUED: (2)

188

CLARK

I know that Eddie, but it's not charity. It's family.

*
*

EDDIE

I don't know...

*

CLARK

If you don't tell me what they want, I'll get the stuff on my own.

EDDIE

Boy, this is a surprise, Clark. Just a real nice surprise.

Eddie reaches into his pocket and pulls out a piece of brown paper grocery bag.

EDDIE

Here's a little list. Alphabetical starting with Catherine. And if it wouldn't be too much, I'd like to get something for you, Clark. Something real nice.

189 OMITTED
thru
201

189
thru
201 *

202 EXTREME CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

202

Ruby Sue's hand opens a door marked, DEC. 24. Behind the paper door is a candy cane. Ruby Sue leans INTO FRAME and licks it.

203 EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - MORNING

203

A beautiful sunrise. Except for the RV and the dog tied to the manger and the Santa and the broken reindeer on the curb, the house looks great.

*
*

204 OMITTED
thru
213

204
thru
213 *

A214 INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS TREE

A214 *

Gifts are placed beneath the tree.

B214 INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM

B214 *

A floral centerpiece is placed on the table.

C214 INT. KITCHEN - SINK C214
Potatoes are being peeled.

D214 CLOSEUP - ROCKY D214
Catherine combs his hair.

E214 CLOSEUP - ART E214
He ties his Christmas tie.

F214 INSERT - CHRISTMAS CANDLES F214
Ruby Sue lights them.

G214 INSERT - TABLE G214
A place is set.

H214 EXT. HOUSE - DUSK H214
The outdoor lights are lit.

J214 CLOSEUP - SNOTS J214
Eddie puts a ribbon around his neck. MUSIC ENDS.

214 INT. FOYER - FRONT DOOR - DUSK 214

It opens to reveal Clark and Rusty helping an elderly woman, AUNT BETHANY, and her husband, UNCLE LEWIS into the house. Rusty's following behind with their gifts. Uncle Lewis is in his late eighties, cranky, stooped, dressed in a tweed suit and sucking on a long cigar. Aunt Bethany's also in her late eighties, four and a half feet tall, wearing a well-worn mink stole, a polyester pant suit and a hat. She's taking two-inch steps, clinging to Clark.

BETHANY

Don't throw me down, Clark.

CLARK

I'll try not to, Aunt Bethany.

CLARK'S POV

Aunt Bethany is now a skeleton.

CLARK

(calls)

We're here!

UNCLE LEWIS

Say, Griz, me and Bethany figured out the perfect gift for you.

(CONTINUED)

214 CONTINUED:

214

CLARK

Gee, Uncle Lewis, you didn't have
to get me anything.

*
*

UNCLE LEWIS

Dammit, Bethany, he guessed it!

*

Ellen, Catherine and Francis come into the foyer from the
kitchen.

*
*

AUNT BETHANY

Oh, that was fun! I love riding
in cars.

Ellen helps her off with her coat as Francis and
Catherine greet her.

CATHERINE

Aunt Bethany, you look so
wonderful. Hello, Uncle Lewis.

UNCLE LEWIS

How do, princess.

FRANCIS

Hello, Bethany. Lewis.

Francis embraces Uncle Lewis. The rest of the family
crowds into the foyer. Lewis shifts his cigar in his
mouth to keep it from setting Francis's hair on fire.

*
*
*

UNCLE LEWIS

Watch the stinkeroo! I don't want
you to burn down your wig.

INT. FOYER - RUSTY AND RUBY SUE

*

Ruby Sue tugs on Rusty's coat to get his attention. He
looks down at her.

*
*

RUBY SUE

Who're the old geezers?

RUSTY

That's your mom and my mom's great
aunt and uncle.

*
*
*

RUBY SUE

What's so great about 'em?

(CONTINUED)

214

CONTINUED: (2)

214

INT. FOYER

Ellen helps Bethany off with her stole. Clark tries to help Lewis with his.

UNCLE LEWIS

Get your fingers out of my armpits!

He peels off his hat and hands it to Clark. He's bald.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at Lewis curiously. Something's not right. He looks in the hat.

CLOSEUP - HAT

A gray toupee is inside the hat. Lewis has removed his hat and his hair.

INT. FOYER

Clark takes the toupee out of the hat and attempts to place it back on Lewis's head. He stands behind Lewis waiting for his opportunity.

RUSTY

Where do you want the presents, Mom?

ELLEN

In the living room. Thanks.
(to Aunt Bethany)
Aunt Bethany, you shouldn't have done that.

AUNT BETHANY

Oh, dear. Did I break wind? *

UNCLE LEWIS

Jee-zuz! Did the room clear out, Bethany? Hell, no! She means presents. You shouldn't have brought presents. *

Clark tries to drop the toupee on Lewis's head. He moves forward. Ellen sees him. He explains what happened in gesture.

AUNT BETHANY

Well, heavens, it isn't every day that somebody moves into a new house.

(CONTINUED)

UNCLE LEWIS

They didn't move to a new house!

AUNT BETHANY

You'll have to speak up, dear. *

Uncle Lewis throws his arms in the air and heads for the living room. Clark flips the toupee, Frisbee-style at Lewis. *

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

The toupee lands on his head. He looks up. He pats his head and straightens his toupee. *

INT. FOYER

Clark take's Bethany's coat from Ellen and hangs Lewis's and her coats in the closet. *

RUSTY

Mom?

ELLEN

Just put the presents in the living room.

RUSTY

But, Mom...

ELLEN

Not tomorrow, Rusty. Now!

AUNT BETHANY

This house is much bigger than your old one. *

ELLEN

(to Aunt Bethany)
Why don't you go with Catherine into the living room and say hello to everybody?

AUNT BETHANY

Oh, sure.

Catherine and Francis help her into the living room.

RUSTY

Mom?

ELLEN

What?!

(CONTINUED)

RUSTY

This box is meowing. *

Clark takes the box from Rusty. He shakes it. From inside we hear a MUTED CAT'S MEOW.

CLARK

She wrapped up her damn cat!

ELLEN

Take it in the kitchen and open it up.

CLARK

Then we'll have a cat running around.

ELLEN

You can't leave it in a box. *

RUSTY

Why would somebody wrap a cat in a box? *

ELLEN

She gets confused, Rusty. She's old. She and Uncle Lewis don't have much money. She takes things from around the house and wraps them up as gifts. *

RUSTY

Oh, great. I can't wait to see what I got. *

Eddie walks back in with a box. *

EDDIE

This one's leaking. *

Eddie licks his finger. *

EDDIE

Mmm. It's cherry-flavored. *

Ellen samples it. *

ELLEN

Oh, God. It's her Jell-O mold. I'll take it. Everybody just go into the living room. *

The foyer clears, leaving Ellen and Clark with their packages. Ellen's is leaking. Clark's is HOWLING. *

215 INT. LIVING ROOM

215 *

Aunt Bethany is sitting with a fat Persian cat in her lap. Lewis, Clark and Eddie are standing at the tree. Audrey's sitting next to her.

AUNT BETHANY

I have a cat just like this at home.

Audrey forces a polite smile.

UNCLE LEWIS

Clark, that's the ugliest goddamn Christmas tree I've ever did see. What the hell did you do to it?

He reaches out and touches it.

UNCLE LEWIS

I'm glad I'm not sleeping here tonight.

CLARK

You and me both.

UNCLE LEWIS

This son of a bitch can't wait to catch fire and kill a household.

EDDIE

(sniffs)

Hmm! Boy! Do you smell that?

AUNT BETHANY

Oh, dear! I'm so sorry...

UNCLE LEWIS

The turkey, Bethany! He's smelling the turkey!

A216 INT. DINING ROOM - CLOSEUP - TURKEY

A216 *

It's a magnificent twenty-pound turkey. Perfectly prepared, perfectly presented.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks up from the turkey with delight.

CLARK

Catherine, if your turkey tastes half as good as it looks, we're all in for a big treat.

Catherine smiles sheepishly.

(CONTINUED)

A216 CONTINUED:

A216

EDDIE

Save the neck for me, Clark.

Clark throws Eddie a tired glance. He puts his smile back on and prepares to carve the turkey.

CLOSEUP - TURKEY

Clark puts the gleaming knife to the turkey. He punctures the hind end. A great gush of gas escapes.

INT. DINING ROOM

Everyone leans back from the table as the turkey SPUTTERS and COUGHS.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - TURKEY

The slit in the turkey skin flutters as the gas escapes.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's leaning back. The gas runs out and the SPUTTERING STOPS. Clark leans forward and looks at the turkey.

CLOSEUP - TURKEY

The legs slowly begin to rise up on their own.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He leans back again. His look is curious and mildly frightened.

INT. DINING ROOM

Everyone leans back again.

CLOSEUP - TURKEY

The legs are standing straight up. The wings pull away from the body and extend themselves. The incision Clark made begins to expand. It tears slowly from the crotch to the neck with the sound of RIPPING CANVAS.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's leaned back as far as he can go. His eyes are wide with alarm.

(CONTINUED)

A216 CONTINUED: (2)

A216

CLOSEUP - TURKEY

The skin separates like two hard, brown flower petals opening in time-lapse, exposing the breast meat. A beat and it falls from the bones in dry, dusty threads.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He fishes through the debris and comes up with a can of prepared poultry stuffing.

CLARK

Ed? Did you make the dressing?

CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He smiles.

EDDIE

I gotta confess, Clark, it's store bought. Found it in the R.V. last night. All you gotta do is pop the top off it and serve it up.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He glances down at Ellen, seated at the other end of the table.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She offers a stern, silent warning for him to keep quiet.

216 OMITTED
thru
C217

216 *
thru
C217 *

D217 INT. LIVING ROOM

D217 *

Bethany's cat approaches the Christmas tree and sniffs the needles.

217 INT. DINING ROOM

217

Clark has served everyone their turkey threads. He makes an announcement.

*
*

CLARK

Since this is Bethany's 80th Christmas...

*

Everyone breaks into applause -- including Aunt Bethany.

*

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

I think she should lead us in the saying of grace. Bethany?

AUNT BETHANY

What, dear?

NORA

Grace.

AUNT BETHANY

(after a pause)

Grace? She passed on, oh, goodness, thirty years ago?

UNCLE LEWIS

Aw, for the love of God and country. She won't wear a hearing aid because she says it makes her look old.

(to Bethany)

They want you to say the grace!

Aunt Bethany shakes her head, "no." She doesn't get it.

UNCLE LEWIS

The blessing!

Bethany catches on. She bows her head. The others follow suit. She clears her throat. Several times.

AUNT BETHANY

I pledge allegiance to the flag...

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks up.

CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He looks at Clark.

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

He exhales loudly out his nose and strokes his forehead in defeat.

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

She continues.

AUNT BETHANY

... of the United States of America...

(CONTINUED)

217 CONTINUED: (2)

217

Everyone joins in. They all slowly rise off their seats and put their hands over their hearts.

ALL

... And to the Republic for which
it stands...

218 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

218

Aunt Bethany's cat is playing with the Christmas tree lights. Batting them. She bites a strand and pulls. She backs up, pulling the lights off the tree.

219 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

219

Everyone's eating in silence. Art picks through the over-cooked food with disgust. Nora scowls at Eddie's kids' horrible table manners. Lewis power-spits an olive pit into his hand. Bethany is eating with a huge serving fork which Francis removes from her, replacing it with a conventional fork, all of which she is oblivious to. Clark takes a bite of Jello mold. Eddie feeds the dog under the table. It CRUNCHES loudly. And tastes terrible. Clark Sr. cuts Audrey's meat for her. Rusty struggles to keep Rocky out of his food. Catherine silently apologizes for her family's manners.

*
*
*
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*
*
*
*

CLARK

I heard on the news that an airline
pilot spotted Santa Claus' sled on
his way in from New York.

The adults look to the kids for their reaction. Ruby
Sue and Rocky smile.

EDDIE

You serious, Clark?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He gives Eddie a tired look. He takes a bite of Jello mold. He chews. It doesn't taste right. He looks down at his plate.

CLOSEUP - JELLO MOLD

In the Jello mold are little dry cat food stars.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He takes a sip of water and swishes it around his mouth.

CLARK

Bethany? By any chance, does your
cat eat Jello?

(CONTINUED)

219 CONTINUED:

219

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She gives Clark a dirty look.

CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He's chewing his Jello. Crunching away.

EDDIE

I don't know about the cat, but
I sure am enjoying it. Clark?
You want to load me up with a
little more? It is goo-ood!

From underneath the table comes a loud, ugly DOG COUGH.
Everyone but Bethany stops eating. The DOG COUGHS again.
A deep, resonant crack. The DOG COUGHS again. An ex-
tremely LONG and DEEP COUGH. The force of the cough
causes the dog to hit the table leg and rattle the
glassware.

CLARK

Ed?

EDDIE

Yeah, Clark?

CLARK

What's wrong with your dog?

CATHERINE

(to Eddie)

Honey? Maybe the bow you put
around his neck is too tight.

Eddie peeks under the table.

EDDIE

(sitting up)

He was yacking on a bone but he
got it up. He's alright now.

CLARK

Maybe if you didn't feed him from
the table.

EDDIE

No, Clark. He was probably just
nosing around in the trash.

220 OMITTED
thru
221

220 *
thru
221 *

222 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (LATER) 222

Trash is strewn across the kitchen floor. Snots has gotten into the trash under the sink and has spread it across the kitchen floor.

223 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 223

The cat continues to pull the lights off the tree.

224 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (LATER) 224

Clark and Ellen are cleaning up the mess.

CLARK

I don't know why he isn't in here cleaning this up. It was his dog...

ELLEN

If you want to go in and have dessert, I'll finish.

CLARK

That's alright. When I was cutting the pie, I found half a Band-aid.

ELLEN

That must have been Ruby Sue. She was helping roll the dough. Did you find the other half?

225 INT. DINING ROOM - CLOSEUP - LEWIS AND BETHANY 225 *

Bethany is chewing with considerable difficulty. She swallows hard. Lewis leans back and yells to the kitchen. *

UNCLE LEWIS

Griz! You're not doing anything constructive, you wanna run into the living room and get my stogie?

226 INT. KITCHEN 226

The last of the mess is off the floor. Clark is annoyed with the order from Lewis.

CLARK

Anything else I can do for you, Lewis?

ELLEN

He's an old man. This could be his last Christmas.

(CONTINUED)

226 CONTINUED: 226

CLARK

He keeps it up, Ellen, it will
be his last Christmas.

He exits the kitchen.

227 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CAT 227

It's still chewing. It yanks its head for a little more strand.

Clark walks in and takes Uncle Lewis' cigar case from the coffee table. The lights on the tree go out. Clark looks at the tree, puzzled. He walks over to it. He bends down and plugs in the lights. The tree lights go back on. Clark starts to straighten up. He notices something.

CLOSEUP - FLOOR

The strand the cat's chewing is unplugged.

CLARK

He plugs the lights in.

There's a horrendous SCREECH from under the club chair. A tremendous electrical SIZZLE, the lights dim and then an EXPLOSION and the house falls dark.

228 INT. UTILITY ROOM (OR GARAGE) 228

Rusty holds a cigarette lighter to the circuit box. He resets the breaker and the lights go on.

229 INT. LIVING ROOM 229

Clark and Eddie are at the chair. The others are gathered around and behind. The room smells horrible.

ELLEN

What's that smell?

EDDIE

I think it's your chair, Ellen.

CLARK

Move it away from the wall.

ART

I told you you had too many plugs
in one socket.

Clark grumbles to himself. He and Eddie lift the chair and carry it away from the wall.

(CONTINUED)

229 CONTINUED:

229

Everyone leans forward to see what's behind the chair.
There's a collective gasp.

CLARK

Oh, God...

CLOSEUP - FLOOR

The blackened, smoldering outline of a cat scorched into
the carpet.

CLOSEUP - AUNT BETHANY AND UNCLE LEWIS

They're trying to see past the others.

UNCLE LEWIS

What is it?

Ellen shepherds them away.

ELLEN

It's nothing. Let's go finish our
dessert.

Eddie tilts the chair and looks at the underside.

EDDIE

If this one's got nine lives, she
just spent 'em all.

230 OMITTED

230 *

&
A231

&

A231 *

B231 INT. FOYER - LATER

B231 *

CLARK

Dad? Can you get the door?

Clark Sr. opens the front door. Ellen walks in.

ELLEN

What are you doing, Clark?

CLARK

What's it look like I'm doing?
Throwing away the chair.

ELLEN

Is it ruined?

CLARK

Honey, you and I will not outlive
the stink in this piece of
furniture.

(CONTINUED)

B231 CONTINUED:

B231

ELLEN

What did you do with the cat?

CLARK

There's nothing to do anything with, Ellen. It blew up. Eddie found its asshole stuck to the wall, for God's sake.

ELLEN

Watch your mouth!

RUSTY

Oh, sick! I thought it was a piece of licorice Rocky spit on the wall.

EDDIE

You know, Clark, if somebody hadda got hit with that thing, it coulda put an eye out.

CLARK

Thanks for sharing that with me, Eddie.

They cart the chair outside. Ellen makes a general announcement.

ELLEN

Everything's fine now. Let's just carry on. It's tragic and distressing, but it's over.

C231 EXT. HOUSE - CURB

C231 *

Clark and Eddie dump the chair on the parkway next to the Santa and the reindeer. Clark notices an odor.

EDDIE

If you wouldn't mind, Clark, I'd like to see if I can fumigate that chair. It's a good-quality item. You mind if I ask how much it set you back?

CLARK

Do you smell something?

EDDIE

Deep-fried pussy cat.

CLARK

No, it's some kind of gas.

(CONTINUED)

C231 CONTINUED:

C231

Clark looks into the gutter.

CLARK

It's coming from the sewer.

Eddie picks up the Santa and sets it over the sewer grate.

EDDIE

That oughta take care of it.

Clark shakes his head in disgust and heads back up to the house.

D231 INT. LIVING ROOM

D231 *

Uncle Lewis is alone in the living room. He's standing in front of the tree. He's lighting his cigar. He puffs furiously and he waves the flame under his stogie. He shakes the match. It doesn't go out.

E231 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLARK

E231 *

Clark has come back inside. He's putting his coat in the closet. There's a flash of intense light from the living room and a low-pitched poof! Clark dashes into the living room.

231 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLARK

231

He rushes in and recoils in alarm.

*

CLARK

Lewis!

HIS POV

Uncle Lewis is happily puffing a cigar. The quick, intense flash fire has left the tree a blackened skeleton.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's in horror.

CLARK

The tree!

UNCLE LEWIS

He looks up, oblivious to the raging fire storm behind.

(CONTINUED)

231 CONTINUED:

231

UNCLE LEWIS
 (cranky)
 What're you yelling about?

CLARK

He points.

CLARK
 Look what you did to my tree!

INT. LIVING ROOM - UNCLE LEWIS

He catches the signal and turns to look at the tree. He turns around. His backside's in flames.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Horror upon horror.

CLOSEUP - UNCLE LEWIS

He's looking wide-eyed at the burning tree.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark rips a curtain down and dashes to Uncle Lewis.

CLOSEUP - SMOKE DETECTOR

*

It GOES OFF.

*

A232 INT. KITCHEN

A232 *

The women are cleaning up the kitchen and getting desert ready, Christmas CAROLS are playing on the RADIO, the TV's BLASTING for Aunt Bethany's benefit. Ellen hears the SMOKE DETECTOR.

ELLEN
 Is that the smoke alarm?

NORA
 (listens)
 Sounds like it.

ELLEN
 Lewis probably lit a cigar.

232 OMITTED

232 *

A233 INT. LIVING ROOM

A233

The tree has burned out. Clark slowly unwraps Lewis from the curtain.

(CONTINUED)

A233 CONTINUED:

A233

CLOSEUP - UNCLE LEWIS

His toupee's in his face, his cigar's crushed but still smoldering.

UNCLE LEWIS

Griz, you're on my priority shit list.

233 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

233

The tree is a blackened skeleton. The ceiling is blackened. The few gifts that were placed around the bottom of the tree are charred. The ornaments and lights are fried. The carpet around the tree is melted.

The family, minus Clark, is in the living room, looking at the burned tree.

ART

It was an ugly tree anyway.

UNCLE LEWIS

At least it's out of its misery.

Ellen takes Rusty and Audrey into the foyer.

ROCKY

(to Eddie)

Will Santy Claus still come?

EDDIE

(thinks)

That's a good question, Rock. Catherine? If the tree's...

CATHERINE

Of course he'll still come, Rocky.

UNCLE LEWIS

If he's smart, he'll stay well clear of this joint. It's a death-trap from stem to stern.

234 OMITTED

234

&
235&
235

236 INT. FOYER - ELLEN AND KIDS

236

Audrey and Rusty are confused and upset.

AUDREY

Mom? The tree burned down, the cat blew up...

(CONTINUED)

236 CONTINUED:

236

ELLEN

I know, honey, but there's nothing we can do about it.

RUSTY

Dad's gonna flip out, right?

ELLEN

Nobody's going to flip out. We're going to have a wonderful Christmas. We just have to be patient. There's nothing to be upset about.

The DOORBELL CHIMES. Clark stomps in from the kitchen. He grabs the front door handle and whips it open.

237 INT. HOUSE - DOORWAY

237

A DELIVERY BOY in a blue uniform is standing at the door. He's holding the door knocker that's been torn off the door in his hand. The door wreath with blinking lights is dangling around his arm. His other hand is poised over the doorbell, index finger pointed. He's shocked. *

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He barks at the Boy.

CLARK

What the hell do you want?!

*

CLOSEUP - DELIVERY BOY

He's horrified. *

DELIVERY BOY

I have a delivery for Clark W. Griswold. I was supposed to deliver it yesterday but it fell between the seats and I didn't see it. I'm sorry. *

*

*

*

*

*

*

He holds up an envelope. *

*

CLOSEUP - CLARK

His angry expression withers as he sees the envelope.

238 INT. FOYER

238

The Delivery Boy hands Clark the envelope. *

*

DELIVERY BOY

Merry Christmas. *

*

(CONTINUED)

238

CONTINUED:

238

CLARK

(looking up from the
envelope)

Merry Christmas...

*
*
*

He closes the door and stares at the envelope.

*

CLARK

I can't believe it.

ART

What is it? A letter confirming
your reservation at the nuthouse?

CLARK

It's from my company.

ELLEN

Your bonus!

CLARK

My bonus!

He grabs Ellen and hugs and kisses her. He brings Audrey
and Rusty into his embrace.

NORA

Open it, Clarkie.

EDDIE

Clark? I hope it's a fortune.

Clark starts to sob. Smiling, sobbing, gushing emotion.

UNCLE LEWIS

I never saw such a sight,
jeezuzzz!

*
*

CLARK

I thought... I never knew... I was
afraid...

*
*

ART

You gonna bawl all over it or are
you going to open it?

CLARK

I was going to wait until tomorrow
to tell you all this but what the
heck. With this bonus check...

(holds up the envelope)

... I am putting in a swimming pool!

There's a moment of stunned silence followed by a glee-
ful outburst.

*

(CONTINUED)

238 CONTINUED: (2)

238

CLARK

That's it, the big one. *

ELLEN

Open it, honey.

CLARK

I'm sorry if I've been a little
 short with everyone. I've been
 waiting for this check. To make
 sure the pool goes in as soon as
 the ground thaws, I had to lay out
 the money in advance. Until this
 little miracle arrived, I didn't
 have the money to cover the check. *

AUDREY

Tear the sucker open, Dad! *

He tears open the envelope slowly and deliberately,
 teasing himself and the others. He brings the envelope
 to his lips and blows, inflating it. With great flair,
 he reaches two fingers into the envelope and snares its
 contents. He withdraws a green slip of paper. He waves
 it in the air.

CLARK

If there's enough left over, I'll
 fly you all in to help us dedicate
 it!

EDDIE

Clark? I can't swim. *

CLARK

I know. *

He turns the slip of paper over and looks at it.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

His face freezes. He stares at the check. He lets out a
 strange, high-pitched giggle. Then he turns deadly
 serious.

The family stares at Clark, unable to understand his
 sudden change of spirit.

ELLEN

Clark? What's wrong?

Clark doesn't answer. He just stares at the piece of
 paper.

(CONTINUED)

238 CONTINUED: (3)

238

ELLEN

Honey?

He doesn't respond.

ELLEN

Is it bigger than you expected?

Clark shakes his head, no.

ELLEN

Smaller?

Clark shakes his head again.

ELLEN

Well, what is it?

CLARK

A one-year membership in the
Jelly-Of-The-Month Club.

ELLEN

Oh, God, Clark.

The family is knocked into silence by the news.

EDDIE

(innocently)

That's a gift that keeps on giving
the whole year.

CLARK

That it is, Edward. That it is,
indeed.Ellen tries to calm Clark down, fearing another
explosion.

ELLEN

Clark? I'm sorry.

The family backs away as Clark's temper rises.

CLARK

If this isn't the biggest bag-
over-the-head punch in the face
I ever got. Goddamnit! Listen,
if any of you are looking for
last minute gift ideas for me, I
have one. I'd like Frank Shirley,
my boss. Right here. Tonight.

(CONTINUED)

238 CONTINUED: (4)

238

CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He looks at Clark as an idea seeps into his thoughts.

CLARK (O.S.)

I want him brought from his happy holiday slumber over there on Melody Lane with the other rich people and I want him brought right here.

INT. FOYER

Clark's eyes are wide with anger.

CLARK

With a big ribbon on his head. I want to look him in the eye and tell him what a cheap, lying, no-good, rotten, four-flusing, low-life, snake-lickin', dirt-eatin', in-bred, overstuffed, ignorant, pus-oozing, blood-sucking, dog-kissing, brainless, dickless, heartless, hopeless, fat-ass, bug-eyed, stiff-legged, spotty-lipped, worm-headed sack of monkey shit he is!

(pause)

Hallelujah! Holy shit! Where's the Tylenol?!

Clark storms out of the room into the kitchen, leaving the family silent.

CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He grins.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She clears her throat.

ELLEN

How about some eggnog?

O.S. a CHAINSAW kicks in.

239 EXT. HOUSE

239

Clark comes out of the garage with the CHAINSAW ROARING. Ellen and all the kids hurry out the front door.

(CONTINUED)

239 CONTINUED:

239

AUDREY

He's got that look, doesn't he?

RUSTY

We should have gone to Hawaii.

ELLEN

Turn that thing off and get in the house!

Clark ignores her and heads for the corner of the house.

RUSTY

I'll talk to him, Mom.

Rusty steps off the porch and approaches Clark.

RUSTY

Dad?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He turns to Rusty. He has an angry look in his eyes and a chainsaw in his hands. *

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

He steps back. *

RUSTY

Good talk, Dad.

Clark turns from Rusty and marches across his lawn to a blue spruce on the corner of his property. He lays the chainsaw into the trunk and yells at the top of his voice. *

CLARK

Tim-bar!!

240 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

240

They're sitting in the living room having cocktails, listening to New Age Christmas MUSIC. *

MARGO

Aren't you just the tiniest bit sorry we didn't get a Christmas tree? Even if they are dirty and messy and corny and cliched? *

TODD

Where are we going to get a tree at this hour on Christmas Eve? *

(CONTINUED)

240 CONTINUED: 240

Behind them, the end of Clark's blue spruce CRASHES through their WINDOW. *

241 INT. MASTER BATHROOM - LATER 241

Clark's washing his hands. Ellen is scowling at him. *

CLARK

What?

ELLEN

Was that really necessary?

Clark plays dumb. The heat of the moment has cooled and he feels slightly foolish for his outburst.

CLARK

What?

ELLEN

Making a scene like that?

CLARK

We needed a tree.

ELLEN

May I remind you...

CLARK

(finishes her thought) *

That this was my idea. No. I am well aware of it.

ELLEN

Could you keep that in mind next time you go berserk?

CLARK

I didn't go berserk. I simply solved a problem. We needed a coffin... tree. There are no tree lots open on Christmas Eve. Your uncle burned down my tree so I simply replaced it as best I could.

ELLEN

You're okay?

CLARK

Honey, I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

241 CONTINUED: 241

Clark picks up his chainsaw off the bathroom vanity and exits.

242 INT. HOUSE - FOYER - STAIRWAY - NIGHT 242

Clark comes down the stairs. He grabs the newelpost and the ornamental piece atop it comes loose in his hand. He looks at it angrily, puts it back, STARTS UP the CHAINSAW and levels the newelpost in one, clean swipe. *

CLARK
(loud, to Ellen)
Fixed the newelpost!

243 EXT. STREET 243

The burned tree is on the curb next to the chair. The RV backs out of the driveway. *

A244 OMITTED A244 *

244 INT. LIVING ROOM 244

The new tree is up and has been hastily decorated with ornaments salvaged from the burned tree. A single strand of lights, melted, elongated bulbs, and charred tinsel. The family has reassembled in the living room. Clark walks in and places presents under the tree. *

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

She perks up. *

AUNT BETHANY
What's that sound?

All eyes turn to Bethany. *

BETHANY
Do you hear it? A funny squeaking sound?

UNCLE LEWIS
You couldn't hear a dump truck driving through a nitroglycerine plant...

CLARK
Shh! I hear it, too.

We hear a FAINT but distinctive, HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL.

245 INT. LAUNDRY ROOM 245

Snots is locked in the laundry where he's thoroughly chewed up a full load of wash. He stops chewing. He looks at the door. His ears perk up.

246 INT. LIVING ROOM 246

The SQUEALING grows LOUDER. Everyone leans forward to listen closer.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He leans down to the tree and has a listen.

CLARK

I don't hear it anymore.

HIS POV

Thick, fresh branches with charred ornaments and a single strand of lights. *

CLOSEUP - CLARK

From inside the tree. Clark's hand separates the branches as he peers into the tree. A sudden look of shock. *

HIS POV

A squirrel LEAPS INTO CAMERA.

All hell breaks loose as a wild crazed, SHRIEKING SQUIRREL bursts into the room. *

CLARK

Holy infant!

RUSTY

Squirrel!

People are running every which way, bumping into each other. Nora faints dead away in the middle of the room. Lewis' cigar ashes spray as he rams Clark Sr. Ruby Sue and Rocky are screaming at the top of their voices. The women are screaming. Art decks Francis on his way out. The squirrel goes up the drapes and leaps onto the couch. *

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

She's oblivious to the mayhem.

CLOSEUP BETHANY'S LEGS

Befitting her age, she's sitting with her legs relatively far apart. A beat and the squirrel runs up one of her legs under her skirt.

(CONTINUED)

246 CONTINUED:

246

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

A puzzled look on her face. She grimaces and gives a yank on her undies. *

AUNT BETHANY

Oh, my! I hope somebody got me a girdle. This one's pinching and binding something terrible. *

The family's in horror as they watch Bethany. *

THEIR POV

Bethany is still unaware of what's up her skirt. We can see the squirrel scrambling around her lap. *

CLOSEUP - LEWIS AND CLARK *

He looks up from Bethany to Clark. *

UNCLE LEWIS

You can write that son of a bitch off. Nothin' goes up there and lives to tell about it. *

Clark and Lewis look back at Bethany. A beat and they scream. The squirrel flies INTO FRAME. *

247 OMITTED

247 *

A248 INT. FOYER

A248 *

Everyone's huddled in the foyer screaming and shivering in revulsion.

CLARK

Quiet! Shut-uuuuup!

The screaming dribbles out.

CLARK

We don't want it to get out of the living room! Give me a coat! Where's Eddie? He eats these goddamn things.

CATHERINE

Not recently, Clark. He read that squirrels are high in cholesterol. *

CLARK

Thank you, Catherine. *

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A248 CONTINUED:

A248

CLARK (CONT'D)

(continues)

I'll try and trap the thing under
a coat. Audrey, get me Grandpa
Art's overcoat. Rusty, go get the
hammer.

*
*
*
*
*

ELLEN

What do you need a hammer for?

*

CLARK

I'll catch it in the coat and
smack it with the hammer.

*
*

Ruby Sue screams. Francis faints.

*

248 OMITTED

248 *

A249 INT. LIVING ROOM

A249 *

It's silent. Nora's out cold in the middle of the room.
Bethany's still sitting on the couch. Clark and Clark
Sr. tiptoe into the room.

*
*

CLARK SR.

Nora?

For whatever reason, Nora's playing dead. She lays
perfectly still.

NORA

(whispers)

Is it gone?

CLARK SR.

Nope. Just lay still. Clark?
You want to get Bethany out of
here?

CLARK

Dad, do you honestly think
there's anything else the
squirrel could do to her?

CLARK SR.

That's a point.

Clark steps lightly into the room. He makes a chirping
sound. There's no response.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's on full alert. Nerves tingling.

(CONTINUED)

A249 CONTINUED:

A249

CLARK

It probably got scared and ran
back into the tree.

CLARK'S POV

MOVING TOWARD the tree.

BACK TO SCENE

As Clark steps over Nora, she starts to slowly get up.
She lifts her butt in the air, afraid to move too
quickly. As Clark passes, CAMERA GOES WITH him, REVEAL-
ING the squirrel on his back.

CLOSEUP - CLARK SR.

He sees the squirrel and yells.

CLARK SR.

It's on your back!

BACK TO SCENE

Clark screams, turns and plows into Nora, spilling her
ass over tea kettle again. It's mayhem in the foyer as
everyone runs in opposite directions.

B249 INT. KITCHEN

B249 *

Ellen and Rusty burst into the kitchen.

C249 INT. DINING ROOM

C249 *

Catherine crashes into the dining room table.

D249 INT. KITCHEN

D249 *

Clark flies into the kitchen.

E249 INT. FOYER

E249 *

There's a wild scramble for the stairs. Everyone runs
up. Audrey runs out of the kitchen with the squirrel
clinging to her head. As she passes the stairs, the
squirrel leaps onto Clark Sr. and onto the stairs.

249 INT. KITCHEN - LAUNDRY ROOM DOOR

249

Snots bursts through the door.

250 OMITTED

250 *

A251 INT. FOYER A251 *

Snots charges in from the kitchen, decking Art. In a spray of foam and spit, the DOG tears up the stairs, BARKING and SNARLING. A beat and the people that ran upstairs plow back down.

251 OMITTED 251 *

A252 INT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM A252 *

Everyone charges into the living room.

252 OMITTED 252 *

A253 INT. HOUSE - FOYER A253 *

The squirrel, followed by Snots, clambers down the stairs and runs into the kitchen. *

253 OMITTED 253 *

thru thru *

A255 A255 *

B255 EXT. MARGO AND TODD'S HOUSE - PORCH B255 *

Todd and Margo stand on the porch.

MARGO

You march right over there and slug that prick in the face!

TODD

I can't just attack someone. *

MARGO

If you're not man enough to put a stop to it, I am. *

She marches off the porch, heading for the Griswolds. *

255 INT. FOYER 255

Clark cautiously comes back in. It's silent. Snots and the squirrel charge in from the kitchen. Clark grabs the door handle and whips the door open. *

CLOSEUP - MARGO

She's standing in the door. Her eyes pop and she screams.

HER POV

The squirrel leaps for her face. Snots is right behind, heading for her midsection.

256 INT. FOYER - CLARK

256

slams the door.

CLARK

Gone!

A257 INT. MARGO AND TODD'S HOUSE - FOYER

A257 *

The DOORBELL RINGS. The front door opens. Margo steps in. Her face is clawed from the squirrel, the bottom half of her outfit is torn off. Her pantyhose is shredded and hanging around her ankles. Her top is clawed open.

CLOSEUP - TODD

He's horrified.

TODD

My God! What happened to you?

CLOSEUP - MARGO

She pushes the hair out of her face. She draws back and throws a mighty punch.

Todd hits the deck. Margo steps over him and heads for the stairs.

257 INT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - FOYER

257

Clark comes down the stairs in a Santa suit. Ellen and the kids follow. Catherine is behind them. Art and Francis are at the closet getting their coats.

*
*
*

CLARK

Where do you think you're going?

*

Art and Francis look up at Clark with alarm.

*

CLARK

Nobody's leaving. Nobody's walking out on this fun, old-fashioned family Christmas. No, no. We have a full-blown, four-alarm holiday emergency here. We're gonna press on and we're gonna have the hap-hap-happiest Christmas since Bing Crosby tap-danced with Danny fuckin' Kaye. And when Santa squeezes his fat, white ass down the chimney tonight, he's gonna find the jolliest bunch of assholes this side of the nuthouse.

*

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

257 CONTINUED:

257

ART

You're goofy!

CLARK

Don't piss me off, Art.

ELLEN

Clark! It's over.

CLARK

Not according to Santa's watch,
it's not.

CLARK SR.

Son?

CLARK

Dad? Stay out of this.

ELLEN

I think it's best if everybody
just goes home before things get
any worse. *
*
*

CLARK

How the hell could it get any
worse? Take a look around, Ellen.
We're at the threshold of hell.

A258 EXT. MANSION

A258 *

The RV whips out of a long driveway and hits the street
on two wheels.

B258 INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN

B258 *

Clark Sr. is talking to Clark.

CLARK SR.

Son, I love you, we all love you.
This is a terrible night, nothing's
gone right, it's a disaster, but
you sitting out there singing like
a lunatic only makes things worse.

Clark looks at him, feeling slightly foolish.

CLARK SR.

You're too good a father to act
like this. In years to come, you
want your children and your family
to remember all the love you gave
us and how hard you tried to make
the perfect Christmas.

(CONTINUED)

B258 CONTINUED:

B258

CLARK

I just...

CLARK SR.

You just cocked it up. It's okay.
It happens. Go upstairs and put
on some fresh clothes and a happy
attitude.

CLARK

All of our holidays were always a
mess. How did you get through it?

CLARK SR.

I had a lot of help from Jack
Daniels.

CLARK

Good talk, Dad.

CLARK SR.

Good talk, son.

CLARK

Are you gonna recite 'The Night
Before Christmas'?

CLARK SR.

No. It's your house, it's your
Christmas. I'm retiring.

C258 INT. LIVING ROOM

C258 *

The family is seated in the living room. Clark's
standing at the fireplace. *

CLARK

The children were nestled all
snug in their beds,
While visions of sugarplums
danced in their heads. *

D258 EXT. HOUSE

D258 *

The RV ROARS into the driveway and slams to a stop.

E258 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK

E258 *

He continues his recitation.

CLARK

When out on the lawn
there arose such a clatter. *

(CONTINUED)

E258 CONTINUED: E258 *

CLOSEUP - ROCKY AND RUBY SUE

They listen intently.

CLARK (O.S.)

I sprang from my bed to see
what was the matter. *

F258 EXT. HOUSE - RV F258 *

The RV door flies open.

G258 INT. LIVING ROOM G258 *

Clark steps from the fireplace as he physically
interprets the poem.

CLARK

Away to the window I flew like a
flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw
up the sash.

With great flair, Clark throws open the curtains on a bay
at the front of the room.

CLARK

The moon on the breast of the
new-fallen snow
Gave luster of midday to objects
below;
When what to my wondering eyes
should appear...

Clark takes a close look out the window.

CLARK

But a miniature sleigh and...
Eddie, my cousin,
A man with no brain
And my boss in his jammies
All wrapped up in chain. *

H258 INT. FOYER H258 *

The front door opens and Eddie enters with FRANK SHIRLEY.
His hair's mussed, his face is red with anger, a
Christmas bow is tied tightly over his mouth to silence
him. He's in his pajamas and slippers, bound wrist and
ankle in dog chain. He mumbles and grumbles with rage. *

J258 INT. LIVING ROOM J258 *

The family is gathered in the doorway in stunned silence.

K258 INT. FOYER - CLOSEUP - EDDIE K258 *
Big, proud grin.

EDDIE
Merry Christmas, Clark.

L258 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK L258 *
He's speechless with shock.

M258 INT. FOYER - EDDIE AND FRANK M258 *
Eddie looks at Frank.

EDDIE
You ready to do some kissing?

Frank's eyes bulge in horror.

258 EXT. MANSION - NIGHT 258
Frank Shirley's house. The lights are on. *

259 INT. MANSION - LIBRARY 259
Helen Shirley is on the phone. She's frantic.

HELEN
My husband's been abducted. *

260 INT. GRISWOLD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER) 260
The ribbon and chain has been removed from Frank Shirley.
He shakes the cramps out of his wrists.

FRANK
I've never been treated like this
in my life.

ELLEN
I'm sorry. This is our family's
first kidnapping.

FRANK
(to Clark)
You're fired! Where's the phone?
I'm calling the police. *

EDDIE
Hold your wad, there, fella.
Clark didn't have nothing to do
with it. This was my idea.

FRANK
Alright. He's still fired and
you're going to jail! *

261 OMITTED 261 *

A262 CLOSEUP - BOOTS A262 *

Several pair of Jack boots run across the snow.

262 INT. GRISWOLD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 262 *

CLARK
 No. It's my fault, Eddie.
 (to Frank)
 I lost my temper when I got my
 bonus and I said some things I
 shouldn't have.

Frank's confused. He thinks for a moment. *

FRANK
 How did you get a bonus? I cut
 out bonuses this year. *

A263 CLOSEUP - RIFLE A263 *

A fresh clip is slammed into an assault rifle.

B263 INT. LIVING ROOM B263 *

Clark is offended by Frank's arrogance.

CLARK
 And thanks for telling us. I was
 expecting a check and instead I
 got enrolled in a jelly club.
 Seventeen years with the company
 and I've gotten a Christmas bonus
 every year but this one. If you
 don't want to give bonuses, that's
 fine, but when people count on it
 as part of their salary, what you
 did just plain...

RUSTY
 Licks it.

CLARK
 Thanks, Russ.
 (pause)
 My brother-in-law, whose heart is
 a lot bigger than his brain...

EDDIE
 (sincere)
 I appreciate that, Clark.

(CONTINUED)

B263 CONTINUED:

B263

CLARK

... is innocent. I'll be more than happy to take the rap on this. On my behalf and on behalf of every other employee you rear-ended this Christmas.

CLOSEUP - FRANK

He feels guilty. He looks around the room.

FRANK'S POV

MOVING ACROSS the sad, confused, angry faces of the Griswold family. Clark's weary face, Ellen's embarrassment, the children's confusion, the cold anger of the grandparents. Small, common people who are righteous in their innocence.

CLOSEUP - FRANK

He can't sustain his anger. His heart melts. He sees, first-hand the people his bloodless policies affect. After a considered pause he offers his apologies.

FRANK

Sometimes things look good on paper but lose their luster when you see the effects on real folks. A healthy bottom line doesn't mean much if to get it you hurt the ones you depend on. Clark? Whatever you got last year, add twenty percent.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's bursting with joy. He looks to Ellen, to the kids, the rest of the family.

The family delights in the news. Ellen runs to Clark. He lifts her off her feet.

CLARK

Merry Christmas, Ellen.

C263 EXT. STREET - POLICE CARS

C263 *

Three suburban squad cars grind to a halt.

D263 INT. LIVING ROOM

D263 *

Rusty holds up his hand to Clark.

(CONTINUED)

D263 CONTINUED:

D263

RUSTY

To the old-fashioned fun family
Christmas.

Clark slaps his hand. Audrey kisses him.

AUDREY

Thanks, Daddy.

Art walks over to Clark and offers his hand.

ART

Merry Christmas, son.

Clark takes Art's hand.

CLARK

Thanks, Art.

E263 EXT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - PORCH

E263

Police officers stream into the house.

F263 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK

F263 *

He turns to the family with a huge grin.

CLARK

Hey, everybody! Merry Christmas
to all and to all a good night!

G263 ANGLE

G263

Florid, sentimental MUSIC COMES UP. CAMERA PULLS BACK
from Clark. OUT the WINDOW TO the lawn and two dozen
police officers on the lawn. TO a street jammed with
police vehicles and cops.

H263 EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - CLOSEUP - POLICE COMMANDER

H263 *

He barks a sharp order.

J263 INT. HOUSE - FOYER - CLOSEUP - UNCLE LEWIS

J263 *

Uncle Lewis standing at the front door.

K263 EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - LEWIS'S POV

K263 *

A wave of officers approach the house.

L263 INT. LIVING ROOM

L263 *

Lewis saunters into the living room.

(CONTINUED)

L263 CONTINUED:

L263 *

UNCLE LEWIS

Griz! You got just what you need.
More friggin' company!

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He turns to Lewis, puzzled. He looks to Frank Shirley.

CLARK

Frank? Did you call and let your
wife know you're alright?

CLOSEUP - FRANK

It occurs to him that he's forgotten to call his wife.

FRANK

(pause)

No.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The living room windows are bashed-out by rifle barrels.

M263 INT. FOYER

M263 *

Cops storm in the door.

263 OMITTED

263 *

thru
265thru
265 *

A266 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

A266 *

Margo's in bed. Alone. There's a KNOCK on the door.

MARGO

(yells)

Go to hell, you worm!

There's another KNOCK.

MARGO

If you want to come in here,
you're gonna have to break down
the goddamn door!

The door blows off the hinges. Armed officers charge into
the room and clamor over the bed to the window facing the
Griswold house.

266 OMITTED 266 *

thru thru

274 274 *

275 INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM 275

POLICE charge the room. *

OFFICER

Freeze! *

The family freezes. Clark's on one foot, arms out, caught in mid-stride. Ellen, Clark Sr., Francis and Frank Shirley, are caught in a rising squat. Nora freezes adjusting her bra. Audrey's adjusting her underpants, Rusty's about to sneeze. Uncle Lewis is frozen holding a lighted match. Art is bent forward in pain. Rocky has a finger in his nose, Catherine in holding a hankie to Ruby Sue's nose, Eddie is adjusting his balls. Bethany continues to drink her eggnog. Snots is in the corner frozen in a half-seated position. *

276 EXT. HOUSE 276

A police car pulls up and stops at the curb. A middle-aged woman, HELEN SHIRLEY, gets out. A high-ranking OFFICER greets her and escorts her to the house. *

A277 INT. LIVING ROOM A277 *

The police hold the family at gun point as they search the family.

CLARK

I think you've made a terrible mistake.

COP

I told you to freeze!

Clark holds his position and talks through his clenched teeth.

CLARK

May we blink?

B277 INT. FOYER B277 *

Mrs. Shirley and the Officer walk in and cross to the living room.

277 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - FRANK 277

He's frozen in semi-squat with his hand in his hair. *

FRANK

Helen! *

(CONTINUED)

277 CONTINUED:

277

Helen runs to Frank and embraces him.

HELEN

Thank God, you're alright!

FRANK

I'm fine. I'm just fine. There's been a big misunderstanding tonight.

*
*
*

OFFICER

Excuse me, would you and Mrs. Shirley like to step outside while we take care of business here?

*
*
*

FRANK

There's no business. I'm not pressing any charges.

*
*

HELEN

What?

*

FRANK

It was a mistake.

*

HELEN

Frank, you were kidnapped.

*

FRANK

I did something I shouldn't have and these people called me on it. This is Clark Griswold and his family.

*
*
*
*

ELLEN

Welcome to our home. What's left of it.

*
*

Helen is completely baffled.

HELEN

What is going on here?

*

FRANK

Remember how I was toying with the notion of suspending Christmas bonuses?

*
*
*

HELEN

You didn't...

*

FRANK

I changed my mind. I'm reinstating all the bonuses.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

277 CONTINUED: (2)

277

HELEN

Of all the cheap, lousy ways to
save a buck. I'm ashamed of you,
Frank.

*
*

FRANK

You're not going to fire me, are
you, honey?

*
*

CLOSEUP - ROCKY

*

He's standing at the window looking out.

*

ROCKY

Look!

*
*

Everyone turns to Rocky.

*

278
thru
282

OMITTED

278 *
thru *
282 *

A283 INT. FOYER

A283 *

Rocky runs into the foyer and dashes outside.

*

B283 INT. LIVING ROOM

B283 *

The family, the police, Frank and Helen exit.

C283 EXT. FRONT YARD

C283 *

Rocky stands on the lawn, looking up at the sky. Every-
one comes outside and gathers around him.

*
*

D283 EXT. SKY

D283 *

A red dot of light, low in the sky.

E283 EXT. FRONT YARD - CLOSEUP - CLARK

E283 *

He looks up at the light with a grin.

CLARK

That's the Christmas star.

A snowflake falls.

CLARK

And it's all that matters tonight.
Not bonuses or gifts or turkey or
trees. It means something
different to everybody and now I
know what it means to me.

F283 EXT. HOUSE - DOORWAY

F283 *

Aunt Bethany's standing in the doorway. She begins to recite softly.

AUNT BETHANY

'Yea, Lord, we greet thee
Born this happy morning
Jesus, to Thee all glory
Giv'n Word of the Father.'

G283 EXT. HOUSE

G283 *

Clark takes Ellen's hand. Ellen takes Audrey's hand. Audrey takes Rusty's hand. Rusty takes Nora's hand. Nora takes Francis's hand. Francis takes Frank Shirley's hand. And so on until everyone is holding hands.

H283 OMITTED

H283 *

283 EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD

283

Aunt Bethany begins to sing. *

AUNT BETHANY

'Now in flesh appearing
O come let us adore him
O come let us adore him
Venite adoremus Dominium
Christ the Lord.'

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

He's standing next to the Santa on the curb. He has a cigar in his mouth. He strikes the match on the Santa's ass and lights his cigar. *

UNCLE LEWIS

That ain't the friggin' Christmas
Star, Griz. That's the light on
the water treatment plant. *

CLOSEUP - CLARK

A terrible thought crosses his mind. *

CLARK

Sewer gas! *

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

He finishes lighting the cigar and shakes the match. *

(CONTINUED)

283 CONTINUED: 283

- CLOSEUP - CLARK

He makes a move for Lewis. *

CLARK

Don't drop that...! *

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

He flips the match over his shoulder. *

EXTREME CLOSEUP - MATCH

drops in the sewer. There's a FLASH of light. An *
EXPLOSION. *

The explosion blows the Santa and the reindeer and the *
Merry Christmas sign into the sky. Everybody hits the *
deck. Bethany remains standing. *

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

She looks into the sky. *

284 EXT. SKY - BETHANY'S POV 284 *

The Santa rockets into the air, glowing and sparking.

285 EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - BETHANY 285 *

looking to the sky. She puts her hand to her heart and *
begins to sing again. *

AUNT BETHANY

'And the rocket's red glare *
The bombs bursting in air *
Gave proof through the night *
That our flag was still there...'

Everyone puts their hands to their hearts and joins in. *

ALL

'Oh, say does that star-spangled *
banner yet wave. *
For the land of the free *
And the home of the brave.'

AUNT BETHANY

Play ball! *

CLOSEUP - RUBY SUE

She looks up into the sky.

286 EXT. SKY - RUBY SUE'S POV 286 *

The Santa and the reindeer and the sign arc across the full moon. *

287 EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - RUBY SUE 287 *

A huge smile.

RUBY SUE

Uncle Clark? *

CLOSEUP - CLARK *

He looks at Ruby Sue. *

CLOSEUP - RUBY SUE

She points to the sky.

RUBY SUE

Santy Claus ain't bullshit! He's real. *

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at Ruby Sue and gives her a wink. *

288 INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM 288 *

Frank and Helen, the police, the grandparents, Eddie and his family, Rusty and Audrey are crowded into the living room. The grandmothers are serving coffee. The police commander's playing the piano and the officers are singing, in less than wonderful voices, "I SAW MOMMY KISSING SANTA CLAUS." *

289 EXT. HOUSE - YARD 289 *

Clark's still in the yard looking up at the Christmas star. Ellen puts her arm around his waist.

ELLEN

Merry Christmas, Clark.

She kisses his cheek and heads back to the house. Clark continues to look at the star.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He grins triumphantly.

CLARK

I did it!

(CONTINUED)

289 CONTINUED: 289

He laughs to himself.

Snots returns from the squirrel chase and saunters over to Clark. Clark looks down at him.

HIS POV - CLOSEUP - SNOTS

Snots looks up at him, sucks, COUGHS, and...

CLOSEUP - CLARK

... Spits. A troubled thought crosses Clark's mind. *

CLOSEUP - CLARK'S LEG

Snots puts his paw between Clark's feet.

290 EXT. HOUSE - PORCH 290 *

Ellen stands in the doorway.

ELLEN

Clark? Are you coming in?

291 EXT. YARD - CLOSEUP - CLARK 291 *

He looks down at Snots and then to the door.

CLARK

In a couple minutes, honey.

292 EXT. HOUSE PORCH - ELLEN 292 *

She goes inside and closes the door. The lights on the house go off.

293 EXT. YARD - CLOSEUP - CLARK 293 *

He looks down at Snots.

CLARK

Merry Christmas, Snots.

FADE ON Clark's smiling face. THE SINGING DOGS' rendition of "JINGLE BELLS" COMES UP and...

FADE OUT.

THE END

POST-CREDITS

FADE IN:

294 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 294 *

They're in bed. *

TODD *

It's over, honey. Griswold had *

his Christmas. Nothing else can *

happen. It's quiet, it's peaceful, *

all is calm. *

MARGO *

Will you just hold me? *

TODD *

Of course. *

He folds her into his arms. *

TODD *

Let's go to sleep and let visions *

of sugarplums dance in our heads. *

MARGO *

I'm so tense. *

TODD *

Sweetheart, if we don't go to *

sleep, Santa Claus won't come. *

MARGO *

You're so cute. *

A long beat and the SANTA, the REINDEER and the LIGHTS *

CRASH through the ceiling into the bedroom. *

FADE OUT.