

Repeat Noel

David Schwartz

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Snow coats the busy sidewalk and road. Festive people stroll in and out of buildings doing some last minute Christmas shopping. It's clear the Christmas spirit is in the air.

A four story building stands on the edge of a sidewalk. From the top floor, it's dark with the window blinds half open.

INT. SECOND FLOOR BUILDING - BAR - DAY

EMPLOYEES dressed in ugly festive sweaters, reindeer, elves, and other holiday attire, mingle with alcoholic beverages in hand as music BLASTS throughout the room.

Some people dance on the dance floor while others takes some finger food from a silver tray.

MALE EMPLOYEE

Any sign of Michael? He's missing out.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE

Who cares? He's just be a big 'ol party pooper.

They laugh.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR BUILDING - OFFICE - DAY

A majority of the room is dim. Garbage overflows a garbage can near the large wooden desk.

MICHAEL (46), a modern-day Scrooge, impeccably dressed in a sharp business suit, sneers at the cheerful holiday shoppers below him from his office window.

He faces EVAN (44) dressed in a buttoned up shirt, standing near Michael's desk in the middle of his pitch.

Michael sits at his desk, kicking his feet up.

EVAN

So, as they're passing the bottle of Fizz Cola around, an upbeat song or harmony plays.

Michael's eyes lag behind Evan's movements.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Once it's empty, they're holding hands
and swaying to the beat. Then, we pan
up. The caption reads "Fizz Cola:
Spread the Love".

He resumes his seat. Michael plants his feet on the floor,
miming shooting himself in the head.

MICHAEL

Nobody's going to buy that crap. Get
your head in the game!

EVAN

Don't you see? It's about people
coming together.

MICHAEL

That isn't going to get customers
flooding the stores!

Michael SNAPS his fingers.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Now, here's what I'm thinking--

EVAN

Uh, Mike, remember the disastrous
condom commercial pitch?

His cell phone SOUNDS. He takes a peek and rises.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Can't keep wasting time. At least
consider it for once. Unlike some
people, I'm going to enjoy the company
of my family. Merry Christmas.

BILL (50's), wearing a Christmas sweater and Santa hat, pokes
his head into the room with a cup of eggnog in one hand and
hiding something behind his back with the other.

Evan starts to storm out of the room, brushing past Bill.
Michael turns his attention as he enters, now in full view,
taking in the dark environment.

BILL

Ah, Michael, still holding down the
fort, I see. Smells like productivity,
or is that just the leftover pizza
from last week?

MICHAEL
What is it, Bill?

Bill joins Michael at his desk.

BILL
All of the fun is happening
downstairs. Been a while since the
family stopped by. Is everything okay?

MICHAEL
Oh, I'm swell. Why?

BILL
You didn't sign up for Secret Santa,
no charitable donations. Hell, you
didn't even sign the annual office
Christmas card.

Michael narrows his eyes at him.

Bill heads to the window and opens the blinds, now lighting
half of the room.

BILL (CONT'D)
You know, I always liked this time of
day. Light hits just right. Funny how
certain times make you think about
who's around...

Bill faces the window, turned away from Michael for a moment.

BILL (CONT'D)
...and who isn't.

Bill places his drink on Michael's desk.

BILL (CONT'D)
If you put aside your selfishness and
act with empathy, generosity, and
kindness, then you will find true
fulfillment and create meaningful
connections with others.

He hands Michael TWO WRAPPED GIFTS.

BILL (CONT'D)
You're welcome.

They head to the door.

BILL (CONT'D)

Take some time off until January
third. Meanwhile, I'll be in the
Bahamas.

Bill glides out of the room, humming a festive Christmas
tune. Michael groans to himself as he shoves the gifts into
his work bag.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DUSK

There's plenty of parking spaces. Faint RINGING from a
Salvation Army bell ringer echoes in the distance.

Michael grudges to his car with a scarf wrapped around him.

Just as he's about to approach his car, a MAN IN WHITE,
grasps his shoulder.

He freezes, then turns his head to the man in white.

MAN IN WHITE

Twelve chances.

Michael examines him and distances himself. He jumps into his
car and drives away.

INT. STORE - NIGHT

Michael skims through the aisles with an empty shopping cart
and talking on the phone with his other hand.

MICHAEL

(into phone)

Yeah, I know what day it is!

He turns down an aisle full of Christmas decorations. He
scowls at each decoration as he hurries down the row.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Would a gift card work?

He turns into the pharmacy aisle, skimming some products.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Whatever.

He hangs up and starts throwing a few items into the cart.

A friendly ELDERLY WOMAN strides up to him.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Doing some last minute shopping?

MICHAEL
No. I'm here to file my taxes.

The elderly woman peers into his cart for a moment.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Got any better ideas?

He hurries away from her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Organized wrapped gifts circle the base of the decorative six foot Christmas tree near the window. Stockings hang over the roaring fireplace.

KRISTEN (43) places a tray of cookies on a table in front of CONNOR (12), a shy hopeless romantic, and LUCY (13).

Kristen joins them on the couch, letting out an exhausted sigh. Connor and Lucy exchange a look, somewhat concerned.

LUCY
Is it about...you know?

KRISTEN
You know how he is.

CONNOR
Maybe it's his time of the month.

He takes a bite of a cookie, savoring the taste while awkward silence kicks in for a moment.

LUCY
(to Kristen)
He'll come around eventually. We just need a little faith in him.

Connor finishes off his cookie and heads to the piano. He starts playing "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing".

Michael barges into the room with a few items in a plastic bag, including his "Secret Santa" gifts.

Lucy gives him a tight hug.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Finally! Got anything good?

MICHAEL
Um, we'll see.

He drops the bag on the floor and faces the window.

Across the street, he sees JOSEPH (40) lighting eight Hanukkah candles on a menorah from inside his house.

Joseph glances up and waves to him. Michael snarls and closes the window blinds.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
What the hell is his problem?

KRISTEN
He's not bothering anyone.

Someone KNOCKS on the door. Michael answers, revealing Joseph carrying a fruit cake.

JOSEPH
Happy holidays Mike!

MICHAEL
Again with the daily candle lighting?
What are you, Amish?

JOSEPH
No. We're Jewish.

Kristen strides up to him and takes the fruit cake into the other room.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(to Kristen)
Nice seeing you!

KRISTEN (O.S)
You too! Tell Anne I said hello.

Joseph nods. Lucy strides over to them.

LUCY
(to Joseph)
Guess who got the lead role!

JOSEPH
No way! You're going to do great!

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(to Michael)
Anyways, I'll see you around.

Michael closes the door as Joseph leaves.

MICHAEL
(to Lucy)
What lead role?

LUCY
The Christmas pageant.

Kristen reenters the room, heading to the couch.

KRISTEN
She's been rehearsing for a few weeks.
You're going, aren't you?

Michael folds his arms, shaking his head.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
When was the last time you've spent
quality time with your family?

MICHAEL
Can't I have a day to myself?

He spins to Connor, nostrils flaring.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Knock it off! You're giving me a
migraine headache!

Connor stops playing the piano. Tense silence fills the air.
Lucy tucks her legs in. Her entire body shivers.

Michael looks around, clueless.

KRISTEN
(to Connor and Lucy)
Head upstairs for a minute. I'll be
right there.

Connor and Lucy leave them alone.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
What the hell is the matter with you?
Don't you get tired of this routine?
Can't we have a nice Christmas?

MICHAEL
I haven't missed out on much.

KRISTEN
Oh? What was Lucy in last year?

Michael takes a moment to think.

MICHAEL
Jesus Christ Superstar?

KRISTEN
The Nutcracker.

MICHAEL
Is that a porno?

Kristen gathers the plates from the table and heads out of the room.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Snow falls from outside the window. Faint Christmas music sounds in the distance. The room is spacious and clean.

Michael, dressed in his pajamas, rests in bed, distant from Kristen, turned away from him.

MICHAEL
Come on! Ask me another one.

KRISTEN
When was the last time you were truly present with us?

Michael avoids her gaze, arms folded.

MICHAEL
I'm here, aren't I?

KRISTEN
I meant connecting with your kids and taking interest in what they're doing.

MICHAEL
And I'd do that because?

Kristen throws a spare pillow at him.

KRISTEN
Forget it. Goodnight.

She shuts off the light. Michael turns away from her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael heads downstairs and places his wrapped gifts under the tree. The doorbell RINGS. He drags his feet to the door.

He opens the door, revealing TWELVE CHRISTMAS CAROLERS at his doorstep, smiling.

CAROLERS

(singing)

On the first day of Christmas, my true
love gave to me a partridge in a pear
tree!

He SLAMS the door on their faces.

He shivers, attempting to get rid of the Christmas cheer, as he returns to the couch, soon running into Kristen, Connor, and Lucy.

CONNOR

Merry Christmas!

LUCY

Merry Christmas!

KRISTEN

What was that about?

MICHAEL

Just a couple of cockroaches.

Connor and Lucy gather around the Christmas tree, examining the various wrapped gifts.

CONNOR

Can we open them now?

Kristen gives Michael a look.

He shrugs his shoulders without a care in the world.

Connor shreds the wrapping paper. His excitement fades as he stares at a box of condoms.

KRISTEN

What ya got there?

CONNOR

Uh...I don't know.

Connor hands it over to Kristen. She turns to Michael.

KRISTEN

Really?

MICHAEL

It's a good one!

Lucy unwraps her gift, soon revealing a box of tampons.
She SHRIEKS.

LUCY

(to Michael)

You're not serious.

Kristen folds her arms.

MICHAEL

You never know when Aunt Flow is going
to visit.

CONNOR

We have an Aunt Flo?

Kristen giggles, kind of embarrassed.

KRISTEN

I'm sure they're just joke gifts,
right Michael?

Michael rubs the back of his neck, avoiding eye contact.

Kristen takes the tampons and pulls Michael to the side while
Connor and Lucy continue opening gifts.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

How much did you have last night?

MICHAEL

Not a drop. Honest to God.

KRISTEN

Did you raid a pharmacy or something?

Michael doesn't respond.

She joins the kids as they open their next gifts.

Michael observes from the distance.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Music sounds from the radio on the desk. Some papers scatter on the desk in front of the computer.

Michael skims through some notes.

Kristen pops into the room, leaning in the doorway.

KRISTEN

So, are you coming or what? She could use your support.

MICHAEL

We just talked about it last night.

She cups her hand over his.

KRISTEN

Do it for me, please. She'd love to have you there.

Michael turns his chair away from her, resuming going through the scattered papers in front of him.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

And Connor, well he's been at the piano for the past few months.

MICHAEL

I've noticed.

KRISTEN

Fine. Don't say I didn't warn you.

She leaves him alone.

RADIO DJ 1 (ON RADIO)

Once again it's that time of year. The kiddos are out having snowball fights, opening gifts--

RADIO DJ 2 (ON RADIO)

Given they celebrate.

RADIO DJ 1 (ON RADIO)

Right, but get this we've been giving away a free week long trip to the Bahamas!

Michael turns his attention to the radio.

RADIO DJ 1 (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)
So far eleven lucky listeners have won
and we've got one more left.

RADIO DJ 2 (ON RADIO)
You know the drill. We're going to ask
a trivia question, and if you're the
twelfth caller and get it correct you
can say "Aloha!"

RADIO DJ 1 (ON RADIO)
Uh, that's Hawaii. Anyways, twelve
chances to win.

Michael's eyes widen, like he's heard those two words from
somewhere before.

RADIO DJ 2 (ON RADIO)
Here we go! Name all of the gifts from
the song "The Twelve Days of
Christmas". Good luck!

Michael turns off the radio.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Food surrounds the table. Two lit candles are placed in the
center of the table over the red table cloth.

Kristen carries in a few drinks, placing them next to the
empty plates. The doorbell RINGS once again.

She checks her watch and heads out of the room.

Connor and Lucy stride into the room, taking a seat at the
table. Michael approaches the head table, distancing himself
from the kids.

Kristen reenters with her parents BARBRA (80) and HANK (84).
Michael places his hand on his forehead.

HANK
(to Lucy and Connor)
There's my favorite grandkids!

BARBRA
(to Michael)
Merry Christmas, Michael.

Barbra and Hank take their seats at the table. Kristen sits
next to Michael, shooting a serious look.

HANK
(to Lucy)
How'd the thing go?

KRISTEN
She did...great. Right, Luce?

LUCY
(soft)
Sure.

Michael places some food on his plate.

MICHAEL
Doesn't sound like it.

LUCY
Fine. I choked. Happy?

Connor nudges her playful.

CONNOR
Yeah. She looked like a deer in the
headlights.

Connor catches himself and comforts her.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
At least you tried.

HANK
(to Michael)
What happened?

KRISTEN
Don't bother asking him.

She tilts her head toward Michael.

BARBRA
That's not a surprise.

The others start placing food on their plate.

LUCY
How was the drive?

HANK
Miserable! Nothing but bumper to
bumper traffic. Don't people have
families to visit?

MICHAEL

Like they have a choice.

Barbra turns to Kristen.

BARBRA

Don't you think you've had enough of this? Sometimes, you just have to cut the cord and move on.

Michael SLAMS his hands on the table. He throws his chair back, spinning to Barbra.

MICHAEL

What are you implying?

LUCY

Uh...Hey Connor, why don't you play us a song?

Connor stays put, fully invested in Barbra and Michael's conversation. Kristen darts her eyes between them.

BARBRA

Clearly you've been working a lot, yet you never spend time with them!

MICHAEL

Is that all I am to you? Just a wallet with a pulse?

Lucy rocks back and forth in her chair, plugging her ears.

LUCY

(singing to herself)
Jingle bells. Jingle bells.

KRISTEN

(to Michael)
You could be involved a little bit more. That's all.

MICHAEL

I'm a great father! Isn't providing for my family financially enough for you people? Jesus Christ!

Dead air fills the room.

Kristen throws her napkin on the table.

Michael marches out of the room. Connor looks around.

CONNOR

So, what's for dessert?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Very few patrons scatter around the room with drinks at their tables. A basketball game plays on the flat screen televisions.

Michael, seated at the bar, chugs his drink and SLAMS the glass on the counter next to four other empty glasses.

He signals to the BARTENDER.

MICHAEL

Hit me.

The bartender collects the empty glasses.

BARTENDER

Don't think so, pal. You know, some people drink to forget their troubles.

MICHAEL

I'm one of them.

Michael rests his head on one hand.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What is it with this holiday? All the kids want are toys and gifts and for the rest of the year, we get squat!

The bartender starts to clean the glasses, still listening to Michael's rant.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Since when has Christmas been about gifts? It's all "Buy me this!" or "Buy me that!"

He shakes the final drops of alcohol into his mouth.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And we don't get a simple "Thank you!"

Michael sulks.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Face it, Christmas is overly
commercialized product placement.
Stupid ungrateful family. That's what
they are!

BARTENDER
Ever heard the saying, it's better to
give than to receive?

Michael glares up at him.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
You know, not many people get a chance
to spend time with their families this
time of year. Be thankful for that.

Michael hands over some money. He wobbles out of the room.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michael pulls up to the driveway, just as Kristen, Connor,
Lucy, Barbra, and Hank, exit the house.

He turns the car off and approaches them.

MICHAEL
What's going on?

KRISTEN
The Christmas festival ends in a few
hours. Join us.

MICHAEL
I'd rather not.

Kristen yanks Michael's elbow.

KRISTEN
I wasn't asking.

HANK
(to Connor and Lucy)
Kids, don't grow up to be like your
dad, okay?

They nod.

MICHAEL
What's so great about it?

LUCY

You'll love it! There's decorative Christmas trees, the annual snowman building contest, and tons of games!

CONNOR

Don't forget the Christmas lights.

Connor sprints to a car.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I call shot gun!

LUCY

Wait up!

Lucy chases after him.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Stars twinkle in the clear night sky. For now, the snow has stopped falling. Various snacks and attractions are displayed on each side of the closed road.

Michael lags behind while the other family members explore different venues and snacks.

He runs into a SANTA, offering him a candy cane. He declines the offer and pauses.

He digs his hands in his pockets, observing the joy surrounding him.

A KID throws a snowball at him, laughing giddy.

Michael shakes his fist at him. The kid runs away crying.

He catches up with the others at the giant Christmas tree in the center. He tilts up to the bright glowing star at the top and scoffs to himself.

KRISTEN

Isn't it beautiful?

MICHAEL

Star doesn't look straight.

BARBRA

Maybe you should see an optometrist.

Michael turns to her.

MICHAEL
Maybe you should be six feet under.

Kristen jabs Michael's arm.

KID (O.S)
That's the man who threatened me!
That's him alright!

MICHAEL
Huh?

The kid and his MOTHER march up to him.

KIDS MOTHER
Are you crazy?

MICHAEL
I should be asking you the same thing.

KRISTEN
What's going on?

KIDS MOTHER
(to Kristen)
Your "husband" threatened to hit my
poor sweet innocent boy.

The kid nods.

MICHAEL
First of all, he threw a snowball at
me. Second, all I did was this.

Michael shakes his fist. The kid buries his head into his
mothers arm.

KRISTEN
(to kids mother)
I'm so sorry about that. It won't
happen again.

KIDS MOTHER
Hope not. My husband's a lawyer.

Both of them leave.

KIDS MOTHER (O.S)
Don't worry. He's just being a
Scrooge.

KID (O.S)
Yeah. Bet he got a lump of coal in his
stocking this year.

Lucy tugs Michael's sleeve.

LUCY
Can I have some money?

MICHAEL
Do I look like an ATM to you?

Michael turns to a nearby cotton candy vendor.

He shakes his head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Forget it. You'll get cavities.

LUCY
Please?

Kristen gives her some cash. Lucy heads over to the vendor.

MICHAEL
How much longer?

CONNOR
Come on dad, live a little. Want to
build a snowman?

MICHAEL
I'd rather die from hypothermia.

Connor turns away and takes in the decorations. Lucy returns
with a huge pink cotton candy. She offers some to Michael.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I'm kind of full actually.

LUCY
Come on. Just one bite. 'Tis the
season to be jolly.

Michael dismisses the offer. Lucy lures the cotton candy
closer to him.

He swipes it out of her hand and stomps all over it. He
bursts a frustrated YELL.

Santa strides up to them with candy canes in his hand.

SANTA

Ho ho ho! Has someone been naughty?

Michael wags his finger.

MICHAEL

Cram it!

SANTA

I'll take that as a yes.

He offers Lucy and the others some candy canes while giving Michael a stern look.

As he rushes away, Michael almost slips on some ice, but catches himself.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Watch out for the ice.

Michael grumbles, placing his hands into his pockets.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael flips through various television stations while Kristen gets ready for bed.

Kristen exits the restroom, swipes the remote control away from him, and turns off the television.

KRISTEN

Care to explain?

MICHAEL

What's there to say?

She joins him on the bed, keeping her distance.

KRISTEN

Why are you acting like this? We miss the old you.

MICHAEL

You're nuts. I'm fine.

KRISTEN

Maybe we could see a marriage counselor sometime soon.

Michael sinks into the bed.

MICHAEL

Why? So they can berate me?

KRISTEN

At least give it a chance.

Michael rolls onto his side, facing her.

MICHAEL

Forget it. It's a waste of money.

KRISTEN

You barely spent any time with us.

MICHAEL

That's not true! I went to the
Christmas thing.

Kristen strums her hands through her hair.

KRISTEN

Because I made you. Don't you want a
better connection with your kids?

MICHAEL

There's still time.

KRISTEN

Life is short. Next thing you know
they'll be so far ahead, you'll barely
see them.

She places her hand near his.

MICHAEL

Tell you what, I'll reconnect with
them once I retire.

Kristen throws herself back onto a pillow.

KRISTEN

Forget it. I'll make a few calls in
the morning.

Michael straightens himself up, hovering over Kristen.

MICHAEL

You're overreacting. This will blow
over tomorrow!

She turns off the light. Michael turns away from her.

In the distance, one of the neighbor's doorbell RINGS.

CAROLERS (O.S)

(singing)

On the second day of Christmas, my
true love gave to me two turtle doves
and a partridge in a pear tree.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael stands in the doorway, faced with the carolers.
Again, he SLAMS the door on their face.

He stares at the closed door for a moment. Something doesn't
feel right, yet it's so familiar.

He turns around just as Connor and Lucy run up to him.

CONNOR
Merry Christmas!

LUCY
Merry Christmas!

KRISTEN
What was that about?

Michael reopens the door.

The carolers are no longer there.

He closes it and faces Kristen.

MICHAEL
Didn't we do this yesterday?

KRISTEN
Did what?

Michael looks around, uncertain.

MICHAEL
Really, what day is it?

CONNOR
(in a corny British accent)
Why it's Christmas kind sir!

Kristen guides Michael away from the kids.

KRISTEN
Are you hungover or something?

MICHAEL

I wish.

Michael eyes his wrapped "joke" Christmas gifts placed under the tree. Connor and Lucy examine the gifts.

CONNOR

Can we open them now?

Kristen gives Michael a look. Michael sighs and nods. Just like the day before, Connor shreds the wrapping paper off while Michael cringes, knowing what's going to happen.

KRISTEN

What ya got there?

CONNOR

Uh...I don't know.

Michael snatches the box of condoms.

MICHAEL

Ah! Got you. Just a practical joke.
I'll make it up on your birthday.

Kristen raises an eyebrow.

KRISTEN

What's it going to be? Viagra?

Lucy removes the wrapping paper.

Michael covers his ears a second before she SHRIEKS.

LUCY

(to Michael)
You're not serious.

Michael plops on the couch.

KRISTEN

Is everything okay?

MICHAEL

Does it look like it?

He takes a moment to think.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You're sure we didn't do this
yesterday?

KRISTEN
Pretty sure. Why?

MICHAEL
Never mind.

Kristen returns her attention to Connor and Lucy opening their gifts.

Michael walks away from them.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Just like the day before, Michael searches through a few papers while music plays from the radio.

Kristen pops into the room with her arms folded.

KRISTEN
So, are you coming or what? She could use your support.

MICHAEL
Don't think so. I might be coming down with something.

She cups her hands over his.

KRISTEN
Do it for me, please. She'd love to have you there.

MICHAEL
And watch her choke? Forget it.

She places both hands on her waist, offended.

KRISTEN
She's been rehearsing for a few weeks! And Connor--

MICHAEL
He's been practicing with the piano. I've noticed. Since when does he play an instrument?

KRISTEN
At least a few years.

Michael leans back in his chair.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
Fine. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Kristen leaves.

INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Lucy looks in the mirror, taking a few deep breaths, attempting to compose herself. She takes a quick glance at her script on the desk and places it down.

LUCY
(rehearsing to herself)
How can this be, for I am a virgin.

Kristen knocks on the door and enters. Lucy turns to her.

KRISTEN
Almost ready?

LUCY
Kind of.

She tilts her head away from Kristen for a moment.

KRISTEN
You're going to do great!

Kristen wraps her arm around her.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
It's just a few lines. Simple, right?

LUCY
I guess.

KRISTEN
Don't let whatever happened last night
between your father and I effect you.
Let's get going.
(calling over her shoulder)
Connor! Get your shoes on!

CONNOR (O.S)
Okay!

Lucy puts her script away and takes a final deep breath.

KRISTEN
Remember, it doesn't have to be
perfect. You've got this!

LUCY
I'll try.

INT./EXT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Lucy sits in the passengers seat while Connor sits in the back. Kristen lowers the radio's volume.

CONNOR
How did dad get out of this?

KRISTEN
He's just in his typical routine.

CONNOR
Is he having a mid-life crisis?

Kristen adjusts the mirror, now showing Connor in view.

KRISTEN
What makes you think that?

CONNOR
Maybe it's the mood swings or the unusual gifts he gave us.

KRISTEN
We'll return them to the store first thing tomorrow.

Connor looks out the window, observing the decorated houses.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
We can't let one small thing ruin our day. There's still the Christmas festival tonight.

CONNOR
Do you think he'll come?

KRISTEN
He better.

Lucy closes her eyes attempting to remember her lines.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
(to Lucy)
Pretend your father's there in spirit.

Lucy takes another deep breath.

LUCY
Sure. Pretend.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael takes his seat at the head of the table as Kristen places drinks at each seat. Just like before, the doorbell RINGS. Kristen checks her watch and answers.

He counts down on his fingers from three to one.

In that exact moment, Connor and Lucy stride into the room, taking their seats at the table.

Kristen reenters with Barbra and Hank. Michael groans. Here we go again.

HANK
(to Lucy and Connor)
There's my favorite grandkids!

BARBRA
(to Michael)
Merry Christmas, Michael.

MICHAEL
Is it though? Is it "merry"?

Kristen sits next to Michael, again with a serious look on.

HANK
(to Lucy)
So, how'd the thing go?

MICHAEL
She choked!

He grins as he places food on his plate. Lucy slumps in her chair, avoiding his gaze.

HANK
(to Michael)
You went?

KRISTEN
Don't listen to him. She did fine.

BARBRA
Typical.

The others put food on their plate.

HANK
(to Kristen)
Maybe his tune would change if he was
visited by some spirits.

Barbra and Hank laugh.

MICHAEL
(under his breath)
Bite my frostbitten ass.

KRISTEN
Michael!

Lucy darts her eyes around the room. Just before she can say anything, Michael turns his attention to Connor.

MICHAEL
Hey Connor, why don't you play us a
song?

LUCY
(somewhat thrown off)
Uh, yeah. What do you think?

Connor continues eating.

CONNOR
(with mouth full)
Later.

KRISTEN
(to Hank)
Everyone loved it.

MICHAEL
Probably because it was over.

Barbra turns her attention to Kristen.

Again, just before she says anything, Michael chimes in.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(to Barbra)
Don't say it.

BARBRA
Say what?

MICHAEL
Unlike some people, I'm a good parent!

Barbra returns her attention to Kristen.

BARBRA

What do you see in him?

MICHAEL

Oh hell no! She's not going to "pull the cord" and leave me! Right?

Kristen fiddles with her wedding ring.

BARBRA

(whispering to Kristen)

It's up to you. I know a guy.

Michael, again, throws his chair back.

Just before taking a step out of the room, he picks his chair up and sits.

MICHAEL

I'm...I'm sorry everyone.

Connor finishes off his food, looking around the table.

CONNOR

So, what's for dessert?

MICHAEL

There's plenty of sweets at the Christmas festival.

Kristen places her hand on his shoulder.

KRISTEN

(to Barbra)

Guess he's not that bad. There's still some hope.

HANK

We'll believe it when we see it.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Michael, once again, lags behind while the others visit different venues and snacks.

He runs into Santa, holding eleven candy canes. He declines the offer. He digs his hands into his pockets.

The same kid as before throws a snowball at him.

Michael sneers at the kid for a moment, and catches up to the others gathered at the giant Christmas tree in the center.

KRISTEN
Isn't it beautiful?

MICHAEL
Eh, whatever.

BARBRA
(to Kristen)
It sure is.

Lucy tugs Michael's sleeve.

LUCY
Can I have some--

Michael once again declines to give her money. Kristen hands her some cash. Lucy sprints over to the cotton candy vendor.

KRISTEN
(to Michael)
What's with you?

MICHAEL
We've done this before.

KRISTEN
What do you mean? It's tradition to go
on the last night it's in town.

Michael scratches his head, picking his next words wisely.

MICHAEL
Ever had déjà vu?

KRISTEN
What type of cuisine is that?

MICHAEL
Never mind.

Connor approaches Michael.

CONNOR
Hey dad, want to build a snowman?

MICHAEL
Go ahead. I'll watch.

CONNOR
I can't enter alone. Please?

Michael turns to the Santa striding up to them.

SANTA
Ho ho ho! Has someone been naughty?

Santa offers Connor a candy cane. Lucy returns with a giant pink cotton candy, offering some to Michael.

Again, he refuses and turns away from them.

MICHAEL
I'll be in the car.

KRISTEN
Michael, wait.

She pulls him back.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
Just stick around a little bit longer.
There's so much more to see.

MICHAEL
I've seen enough, thanks.

He removes himself from her, dragging his feet through the snow. Kristen sighs.

As he makes his way out, he slips on the ice, but recovers, pulling a full on split on the ground.

He winces as he struggles to rise.

SANTA
Watch out for the ice.

Michael brushes himself off, disgusted.

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michael rings the door bell. Joseph answers.

JOSEPH
Hey Mike. Happy holidays!

MICHAEL
Got a sec?

JOSEPH

It's kind of late. How about tomorrow?

Michael inches closer to him.

MICHAEL

You've had experience reliving the same day over and over, right? You know, the whole candle lighting thing?

Joseph takes a step back.

JOSEPH

Each candle represents a different night.

Michael leans in the doorway.

MICHAEL

Fair, but what would you do?

JOSEPH

Good question. Want some latkes?

Michael bangs his head against the outside wall. Joseph pats his shoulder.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Tomorrow's going to be better.

MICHAEL

Easy for you to say!

JOSEPH

Take care, Mike.

He closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael sits on the couch alone glancing at the clock. It's almost midnight.

He turns on the television, flips through some stations, most of them showing Christmas specials and movies, and stops on the local news.

He curls up on the couch and closes his eyes.

NEWS REPORTER

(on TV)

As the final minutes of Christmas comes to a close, we've got one last song from some special guests already in full swing.

CAROLERS

(on TV)

On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael appears in the doorway faced with the carolers. He does a quick double take and closes the door on them.

He spins around, dashing to his wrapped gifts. Connor and Lucy hurry down the stairs in unison.

CONNOR

Merry Christmas!

LUCY

Merry Christmas!

Michael takes a quick look at the kids. He turns around, just as Kristen is about to speak.

KRISTEN

What was that ab--?

Michael plugs his ears and sprints out of the house.

CONNOR

Is he okay?

Kristen chases after him.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - DAY

He sprints down the snow covered driveway. He drops to his knees, letting out a frustrated groan to the sky.

Kristen approaches him cautiously, kneeling beside him.

KRISTEN

Michael? What is it?

Michael grabs her shoulders, pulling her close.

MICHAEL
(soft to himself)
No. No. No. No. No.

He releases her and sulks.

KRISTEN
Are you having a mid-life crisis?

MICHAEL
Maybe. I don't know! It's complicated.

He pauses, a thought dawning on him.

They stand.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
If yesterday is today and today is
tomorrow...

He spots the kid from the Christmas festival passing by on the sidewalk with his mother.

He rolls some snow up into the ball and hurls it at the kid.

SMACK! It strikes him hard. The kid and his mother spin to his direction, looking for the culprit.

Michael hurries back inside.

Kristen trails behind him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael joins Lucy and Connor near the tree. Kristen heads over to the couch, keeping a close eye on Michael.

CONNOR
Can we open them now?

MICHAEL
Go nuts!

He watches Connor shred the wrapping paper off. Once again, Connor stares at the box of condoms.

KRISTEN
What ya got there?

CONNOR
Uh...I don't know.

MICHAEL

They'll come in handy one day.

Connor turns slow to Michael.

CONNOR

Thank you?

Lucy unwraps her gift. Michael counts down on his fingers.

Three. Two. One.

Lucy SHRIEKS at the sight of the box of tampons.

KRISTEN

Did you raid a--

MICHAEL

Kind of, yes.

Lucy and Connor turn their attention to Kristen.

LUCY

I don't think I want to know what dad got you.

KRISTEN

At this point, I'd assume cough syrup.

MICHAEL

Good one! Not!

He turns away from the kids as they continue opening gifts. Kristen consoles him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Fine. I'll go.

LUCY

Really?

Lucy drops what she's doing and joins them on the couch, then squeezes Michael tight.

INT. CONNOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

As Connor plucks the last petals from the lone sunflower at his desk, ten others scatter to the floor.

Just before he can pick off the last petal, Michael enters.

MICHAEL

I did the same thing at your age,
except I got bored by the fifth petal
or so.

He sits on Connor's bed.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

When you're in college, you'll be
thankful that you have condoms handy.
What you have to remember is--

Connor covers his ears.

CONNOR

Oh God, please stop!

He places his hands at his side.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

How do you know if someone is
interested in you, romantically?

Michael smiles.

MICHAEL

Kind of depends on the relationship
you want. Need a wing man? I've been
out of the game for a while.

CONNOR

Never mind. Forget I asked.

MICHAEL

Might be best to wait until puberty
fully kicks in. Chicks dig cute guys.

Michael WHISTLES. Connor cringes.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Half of the place is packed with CHURCHGOERS dressed smart
casually. The main stage is set for the Nativity pageant.

Michael and Kristen sit in the second row with Conner taking
his place at the piano on the right side of the stage.

PASTOR RICHARD (50s) an upbeat extremely religious Christian,
approaches Michael.

PASTOR RICHARD
There he is! Thank the Lord my prayers
have been answered!

MICHAEL
I tried praying once, but I kept
getting forwarded to voicemail.

PASTOR RICHARD
(laughing)
You just need a little faith and God
will answer.

Pastor Richard pats Michael's shoulder, playful.

PASTOR RICHARD (CONT'D)
You should've seen Lucy during
rehearsals. She has star potential.

MICHAEL
Riiight. Rich, about this play, don't
you think it's a bit...strange?

PASTOR RICHARD
How so?

Pastor Richard checks his watch for a moment.

MICHAEL
Think about it. A virgin giving birth
and Joseph isn't the father? How's
that possible?

PASTOR RICHARD
Pay attention and the answer will
present itself. Welcome back, bud.

Pastor Richard takes his position on the stage.

LATER

Michael rests his head on his hand as Pastor Richard flips to
another page in his script, then signals to Connor.

He starts to play "O Little Town of Bethlehem".

Lucy, dressed as the Virgin Mary, takes in the surrounding
eyes. Her legs wobble while holding her "pregnant stomach".

PASTOR RICHARD (CONT'D)
And lo, the angel of the Lord appeared
(MORE)

PASTOR RICHARD (CONT'D)
and said unto them...

A light shines on the KID ANGEL, a bit of a show off, facing the audience. He turns to Lucy.

KID ANGEL
Mary, you are blessed by God and will
give birth to a son and he shall be
named Jesus.

The spotlight shines on Lucy. She takes in the audiences stares, then to Michael, now completely tuned out.

Connor stops playing the piano.

Silence fills the air. Lucy contains herself and motions to Connor. He resumes playing the song.

LUCY
How can it be? For..for I'm...

She releases her stomach and collapses on the stage.

Michael becomes alert. Unsure what to do, he rises and CLAPS. He spots the kid angel on stage.

Something SNAPS as he's about to charge. Kristen lunges from her seat and yanks Michael's arm back before his foot touches the stage.

MICHAEL
Let me at him! Let me at him!

The churchgoers give him a disapproving look while Kristen attempts to hide her face with a church pamphlet.

CHURCHGOER
(whispering to Kristen)
I'll pray for you.
(sternly to Michael)
And you need Jesus!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Connor, Lucy, and Michael sit at their chairs. It's very awkward between them. Kristen answers the door.

CONNOR
That was...something.

MICHAEL
 (to Lucy)
 Feel any better?

Lucy gives Michael the "talk to the hand" signal. She's in no mood to speak to him.

Barbra and Hank enter the room.

HANK
 (to Connor and Lucy)
 There's my favorite
 grandkids.

MICHAEL
 (mocking Hank)
 There's my favorite
 grandkids.

Michael scoots his chair back and steps closer to Barbra.

BARBRA
 (to Michael)
 Merry Christmas, Michael.

Michael pulls her into a bear hug that's just a little too tight, lifting her an inch or so off the ground.

MICHAEL
 I have missed you so...so much.

BARBRA
 Uh...thanks?

Barbra tries to wiggle free from his grip, but Michael, oblivious to her discomfort, ruffles her hair in a playful, but over-the-top gesture.

MICHAEL
 I bet the traffic was awful, but hey,
 you're here now, safe and sound!

He releases himself from her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 Oh, by the way, your daughter's got
 quite the vocal cords, doesn't she?
 Must run in the family!

KRISTEN
 Michael!

HANK
 What did you just say?

Barbra removes some pepper spray from her purse and sprays

Michael's face.

Michael drops to the floor, flailing around and wailing in dramatic agony.

Barbra scoots her chair back.

BARBRA
(to Kristen)
That's it! First thing tomorrow I'm
calling my attorney!

Barbra and Hank leave in a huff.

KRISTEN
(glaring down at Michael)
What's wrong with you?

MICHAEL
(weak)
Worth it.

KRISTEN
Forget it, I'll take the kids.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael rests on the bed with a wet rag over his eyes. He removes the rag and turns to the window. Snow coats all over the ground.

In the distance faint sounds of the carolers echo.

Michael covers his face with a pillow.

CAROLERS (O.S)
(singing)
On the fourth day of Christmas my true
love gave to me four calling birds,
three French hens, two turtle doves,
and a partridge in a pear tree.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael closes the door on the carolers.

He heads to the Christmas tree and kneels as Connor and Lucy run up to him.

CONNOR
Merry Christmas!

LUCY
Merry Christmas!

Michael hugs them both tight.

KRISTEN
Someone's got the Christmas spirit.

MICHAEL
How do my eyes look?

KRISTEN
They're fine. Why do you ask?

Michael wipes his brow, relieved.

MICHAEL
Just to think one minute you both were
tykes and now, you're becoming a man.

He lifts Connor up.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Time sure flies by fast, huh?

CONNOR
I guess?

Michael swings him around as if he were an infant. Connor attempts to hang on for dear life.

Michael places him on the ground. Connor wobbles around and vomits on the floor. Lucy backs away from him, before he can lay his hands on her.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael and Kristen once again sit in the second row. Michael turns his attention to Pastor Richard.

MICHAEL
Yo, Rich, don't you think the whole
nativity thing needs a little
more...class?

Pastor Richard doesn't follow.

PASTOR RICHARD
Nothing's more classier than the
Bible.

MICHAEL
Yeah, but don't you think they want a
story they can relate to?

Michael hands him a few pages of a script. Pastor Richard skims it over.

PASTOR RICHARD
Are you nuts? This is blasphemous!

MICHAEL
It'll lighten the mood and take the pressure off of Lucy.

PASTOR RICHARD
Fine. I'll give it a go.

LATER

Pastor Richard runs his finger through Michael's "script".

PASTOR RICHARD (CONT'D)
And lo the angel Gabriel appeared and said unto them...

KID ANGEL
When it comes to the newborn baby Jesus, Joseph, you are NOT the father!

Connor plays "Joy to the World" on the piano. The churchgoers exchange confused looks.

Lucy SMACKS her forehead.

The THREE WISE MEN come on stage and bow before Mary.

WISE MAN 1
We've heard you have been presented with a blessing.

LUCY
(thinking off the top of her head)
Who are you?

WISE MAN 1
We are simple wise men who have traveled a long way. For the newborn king, we bought gold.

WISE MAN 2
Bitcoin.

WISE MAN 3
And NFTs.

One by one, the churchgoers start to leave. Lucy drops her head avoiding Michael completely.

As each person leaves, Connor veers his attention to NOELLE (12) a sweet Christian girl. Connor's fingers tremble over the piano keys as she heads out of the doors.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone takes their usual seats. Michael inhales the food displayed on the table. Connor and Lucy exchange a look as Kristen answers the door.

MICHAEL
(to Lucy)
Wasn't that great?

Lucy doesn't respond. Connor whispers something to her.

LUCY
(to Kristen)
Is it too late to convert religions?

MICHAEL
Didn't that take the edge off? Connor liked it, right?

CONNOR
(kind of joking)
Other than the innkeeper saying "No room for you!" it was okay.

Barbra and Hank enter while Michael remains seated.

Just before Hank says anything, Michael chimes in.

MICHAEL
(to Hank)
Hank! My favorite father-in-law! Merry Christmas!

HANK
Oh, uh Merry Christmas, Michael.

He takes a seat at the table. Barbra joins him, somewhat skeptical of Michael's behavior.

BARBRA
Yeah. Merry Christmas.

HANK
(to Lucy)
How'd the thing go?

Lucy places her head on the table, pointing to Michael. Hank squints at him.

HANK (CONT'D)
What happened?

MICHAEL
Oh, just lightened the mood. There's
always next year. Not a big deal.

Michael starts to pile food on his plate.

Lucy lifts her head up, moving her plate to the side. She places both hands on the table.

LUCY
It was to me! Why couldn't you have
stayed out of it?

MICHAEL
You were going to choke either way.

Lucy trembles as she sinks into her chair. Hank pats her hand while gritting his teeth at Michael.

Without saying a word, she storms away from the table.

KRISTEN
She's right, you know.

BARBRA
Michael, everyone gets stage fright.
Hell, I'd like to see you try to act.

MICHAEL
I am acting...like I care about
everyone. Isn't that enough?

Connor drops his head, saying a silent prayer to himself.

KRISTEN
That's what you think?

MICHAEL
Okay, poor choice of words. What do
you suggest I do?

Kristen fiddles with her wedding ring. Barbra and Hank each place a hand on her shoulder.

KRISTEN
Figure it out.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Michael starts to ease into the familiar environment.

He pauses in front of a hot dog vendor and ducks.

SWOOSH!

A snowball flies over him, hitting the hot dog vendor's face.

KID
Sorry, mister.

Michael runs into Santa, holding out the candy canes. He takes one and joins the others.

He sticks the candy cane in his mouth, nonchalant, as he takes in the decorations.

He scopes around the area browsing various attractions such as a reindeer petting zoo, the snowman building contest, and people roasting marshmallows over a fire.

Lucy tugs his sleeve. Before she says anything, Michael hands her nine dollars. She sprints away.

MICHAEL
(to Connor)
You up for roasting some marshmallows?

CONNOR
Depends if you're faking it or not.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry, okay? It'll be fun.

Michael links his arm to Connor's and strides over to the fire pit. Michael takes two marshmallows and places them on a stick. They hover their marshmallows over the fire.

The flames reflect in Connor's eyes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
This is kind of neat, huh? When I was
in the scouts, we'd see who could
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
roast their marshmallow without
setting it on fire.

He distances his marshmallow, keeping to himself.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Wow! Looking good!

Michael's marshmallow catches on fire.

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Woah! Check it out.

He sprints over to Kristen, and slips on some ice, releasing
the flaming marshmallow from his grip.

The flaming marshmallow soars in the air, and strikes the
Christmas tree, causing it to combust.

The reindeer's bolt out of the wooden fence, almost trampling
into things.

People burst horrified GASPS.

KIDS MOTHER
What do you know? The Grinch finally
stole Christmas.

Barbra and Hank distance themselves from Michael.

MICHAEL
I can explain.

Kristen hands him her wedding ring. She catches up to Barbra
and Hank with Connor and Lucy by her side.

He faces the nine twinkling stars scattered in the sky.

A POLICE OFFICER marches up to Michael with a pair of
handcuffs in hand.

POLICE OFFICER
Sorry sir, but they want you to leave.

MICHAEL
It was an accident.

POLICE OFFICER
You're running out of chances.

Wind chimes sound from one of the venues.

MICHAEL
What was that?

POLICE OFFICER
I said you're skating on thin ice.
Come on, let's go.

MICHAEL
(whispering to himself)
Twelve chances.

Michael takes a moment to count on his fingers.

The officer throws him to the ground. He grabs Michael's hands, and cuffs him.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

The police officer closes the cell door on Michael. For a moment, he grasps the bars, grinning.

POLICE OFFICER
Are you mentally challenged?

MICHAEL
No. It's just...never mind.

The officer walks away from him.

Michael turns to a small window, witnessing the carolers once again singing.

CAROLERS
(singing)
On the fifth day of Christmas my true
love gave to me five golden rings!
Four calling birds, three French hens,
two turtle doves, and a partridge in a
pear tree!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael throws his fist in the air and closes the door. He dashes to Connor and Lucy, arms extended wide.

CONNOR
Merry Christmas!

LUCY
Merry Christmas!

Michael hugs them.

MICHAEL
Say, how about we wait until grandma
and grandpa get here to open gifts.

Kristen sits on the couch, keeping a close eye on Michael,
somewhat suspicious.

KRISTEN
How'd you know?

MICHAEL
They visit every year, don't they?

KRISTEN
Not last year when they were in
Cancun. Remember?

Connor and Lucy get a good look at their wrapped gifts.

CONNOR
Come on. Just one gift. Please?

MICHAEL
It wouldn't be fair.

Connor joins Kristen on the couch.

CONNOR
Okay, but next year we're opening
gifts at seven.

Michael checks the time and hurries out the door.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - DAY

The festival grounds are mostly empty, with about eight
vendors just beginning to set up their stalls. Faint sound of
festive music drifts through the cold air. A large TOYS FOR
TOTS bin, brimming with donated gifts, stands near the stage.

Michael approaches the Toys for Tots bin, glancing around
cautiously to ensure no one is watching.

He gives a sly, mischievous grin as he starts sifting through
the toys, tossing a TEDDY BEAR and a DOLL that land awkwardly
in the snow, leaving small impressions.

He spots a REMOTE-CONTROLLED CAR and brightens, testing it briefly on the snowy ground, spinning it in circles before coming to a stop at his feet.

He returns his attention to the bin and digs through a few more items before placing them into his large garbage bag.

He pauses, suddenly tense, as a LITTLE GIRL (6) in a bright pink coat wanders into view, holding a steaming cup of hot chocolate. She stops a few feet away, eyes locked on him.

Michael freezes, hovering his hand over the bin.

The little girl tilts her head, somewhat curious.

He forces a smile and quickly starts wrapping the toys from his bag with festive paper from a nearby gift wrap display.

As he works, he keeps stealing nervous glances at the girl while she watches him intently, barely sipping her drink.

Michael finishes wrapping the gifts and returns them to the garbage bag, unaware of the scattered toys on the ground.

The little girl raises an eyebrow, still not moving.

Again, Michael checks his surroundings to see if the coast is clear. The little girl places her drink on top of a garbage can and grabs the remote controlled car. She takes the controller and circles the car around the snow.

Michael strides away, nearly tripping on the teddy bear and doll he tossed earlier.

While he returns the teddy bear and doll to the bin, the little girl aligns the remote controlled car to Michael's direction. Michael spins around and starts to exit the festival, only soon to be knocked over by the toy car.

He grabs a giant inflatable snowman, soon causing it to deflate. The little girl takes a sip of her hot chocolate while watching Michael struggle to lift himself up.

A nearby vendor notices the chaos unfolding, and approaches them, somewhat suspicious.

Michael heaves the garbage bag over his shoulder and bolts to the exit.

The little girl and vendor watch Michael get into his car and flee the scene.

They glare at their surroundings, unsure of what just happened. The little girl moseys around other venues.

INT./EXT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Michael joins Connor in the backseat while Kristen and Lucy are in the front. Kristen lowers the volume.

KRISTEN

See? Told you that he'd come.

Michael pats Lucy's shoulder.

MICHAEL

You've got this, Lucy. Just be yourself. No pressure.

LUCY

I'll try my best.

She straightens up a bit, finding some comfort in his words. Michael then turns his attention to Connor, who's staring out the window.

He nudges him with a playful elbow.

MICHAEL

And you--no rushing things. Take it easy, okay?

Connor shrugs, his response noncommittal.

CONNOR

I guess I can manage that.

Michael smirks and stretches his legs, accidentally nudging Connor's leg, who shifts uncomfortably.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

Hey, watch it.

MICHAEL

Just keeping you on your toes.

Kristen glances back at the brief exchange, her eyes narrowing slightly.

KRISTEN

You two behave back there. This isn't a wrestling match.

Michael puts his hands up in mock surrender.

MICHAEL
(chuckling)
No worries. We're all good.

Lucy tries to suppress a giggle, the tension in the car easing just a bit.

LUCY
Maybe we should've put you both in
timeout.

Connor rolls his eyes but can't help a small smile. Kristen shakes her head, focusing back on the road.

KRISTEN
At least I wouldn't have to listen to
their bickering.

Michael winks at Lucy, leaning back in his seat with a satisfied grin as the car continues down the road.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Pastor Richard, once again, stands on the stage with his script in front of him.

Michael gives Lucy a thumbs up.

Connor plays "O Little Town of Bethlehem" on the piano.

PASTOR RICHARD
And lo, the angel of the Lord appeared
to said unto them...

The light shines on the kid angel.

KID ANGEL
Mary, you are blessed by God and will
give birth to a son and he shall be
named Jesus.

LUCY
(sluggish)
How can this be, for I am a virgin.

KID ANGEL
(over dramatic)
The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will
(MORE)

KID ANGEL (CONT'D)
overshadow you. Therefore, the child
to be born will be holy, and he will
be called the Son of God.

The kid angel exits the stage.

Connor plays "We Three Kings" as the three wise men take
their place on stage.

PASTOR RICHARD
As the time came for Mary to give
birth, the three wise men from the
East followed a star that took them to
Bethlehem.

Lucy glances at the audience, where a few churchgoers are
nodding off. She turns to the wise men, kneeling in front of
her, presenting gifts.

WISE MAN 1
We have traveled far to honor the
newborn King and come bearing gifts of
great joy, for I have gold.

WISE MAN 2
Frankincense.

WISE MAN 3
And myrrh.

LUCY
(under her breath)
Yay. More myrrh.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Barbra, Hank, Lucy, Connor, Michael, and Kristen gather
around on the couches. Michael passes around his fresh
wrapped gifts to them.

As usual, Connor shreds the wrapping paper off. He glances at
the box of action figures, puzzled.

CONNOR
Didn't I outgrow these, like years
ago?

MICHAEL
Did you? Well they're classics, right?

Lucy unwraps the gift, soon dropping it to ground. Kristen hovers over her shoulder.

HANK
What did you get?

LUCY
Oh, wow! Just what I needed for my
inner kindergartner!

Lucy hurls the coloring book at Michael, almost striking him.

MICHAEL
Don't you want to relive the
nostalgia?

KRISTEN
(to Michael)
Michael...aren't these from...?

Michael nods slow. Kristen hands the items to him.

He drops his head.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Michael returns the toys to the Toys for Tots bin while the rest of the family take in the sights around them.

He buys some hot cocoa from one of the vendors.

Just before collecting the drinks, the kid strikes him with a snowball. Michael ignores him and carries the drinks to the others, now gathered at the giant Christmas tree.

MICHAEL
Hot cocoa anyone?

Connor and Lucy take a cup.

CONNOR
No apple cider?

MICHAEL
Didn't check.

KRISTEN
It's the thought that counts.

Hank whispers something to Barbra. She laughs. Michael notices, trying not to react.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
Isn't it beautiful?

MICHAEL
Yeah. We should have a bigger tree
next year.

CONNOR
Oh boy! Can we?

Barbra chuckles, playful.

BARBRA
A size like that would never fit in
your house.

Michael pulls Barbra to the side.

MICHAEL
What's with the act, Barb?

BARBRA
What do you mean?

MICHAEL
I'm trying, okay? Just...cut me some
slack.

She doesn't believe him.

BARBRA
It's going to take more than that.

MICHAEL
Just for tonight, can't we get along?

BARBRA
Okay, Michael.

Michael widens his eyes in utter horror.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael scrambles to the remaining two wrapped gifts left
under the tree.

Just before he can get of them, Kristen passes them to Connor
and Lucy.

They unwrap their gifts. Again, Lucy SHRIEKS while Connor
appears puzzled at the box of condoms.

HANK

Hey! I've used that brand before. Fits like a glove too.

KRISTEN

Oh Michael. What were you thinking?

He collapses on the couch, burying his head into his hands.

MICHAEL

Go ahead and say it. I can handle it.

Kristen rubs his back.

KRISTEN

They're not awful.

Michael rises from the couch, gesturing to the gifts.

MICHAEL

Was I supposed to show up empty handed? Is that what you want?

KRISTEN

Of course not. It's--

MICHAEL

Don't say it! For the love of God, just don't!

He points his finger at Barbra.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Fuck you and your attorney! There's still some time left. Bet on it!

Michael bursts away from them, stomping up the stairs.

BARBRA

(to Kristen)

Let me know if you need a therapist.

INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucy sleeps in her bed fast asleep. Michael creaks the door open and tip toes around the room, careful he doesn't make a single noise.

He skims his fingers through some books on the bookshelf next to her desk.

He slides the top desk drawer open, and spots a diary.

Lucy tosses and turns in her sleep, swatting at something, likely having an intense dream.

He flips through some of the pages and stops on one. In that exact moment, church bells CHIME in the distance.

CAROLERS (O.S)

(singing)

On the sixth day of Christmas my true
love gave to me, six geese a laying,
five golden rings, four calling birds,
three French hens, two turtle doves...

Michael SLAMS the diary shut, bolting to the window.

CAROLERS (O.S) (CONT'D)

(singing)

And a partridge in a pear tree!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael closes the door with caution as Conner and Lucy's footsteps from upstairs grow LOUDER.

He composes himself and approaches them.

CONNOR

Merry Christmas!

LUCY

Merry Christmas!

Michael wraps his arms around them.

MICHAEL

How about I make some breakfast and
we'll open gifts when grandma and
grandpa come this evening.

KRISTEN

How'd you know?

MICHAEL

Lucky guess.

Connor takes a good look at the wrapped gifts.

CONNOR

Okay. We can wait.

MICHAEL

That's the spirit! Maybe next year
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
we'll open at seven on the dot!

Connor squeezes him tight.

CONNOR
Yay! You're the best!

Kristen takes a sip of her coffee, hiding her joy.

MICHAEL
Who wants blueberry pancakes?

Lucy and Connor SQUEAL with delight.

CONNOR
This is the best holiday ever! Suck it
Arbor Day! Take a hike Labor Day!

MICHAEL
(chiming in)
Yeah! Peace out St. Patrick's Day!

Awkwardness settles in. Michael heads into the kitchen while the three take their seats in the other room.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Michael passes around some crispy blueberry pancakes. Despite its appearance, they start to eat.

LUCY
Mmm...this is great.

CONNOR
Yeah, I can barely taste the
blueberries.

Kristen wipes her mouth with her napkin.

KRISTEN
Come, join us.

MICHAEL
I, uh, have to...shovel the driveway.

Kristen scoots her chair back.

KRISTEN
I'll help. It's the least I can do.

MICHAEL

It won't take long. Enjoy yourself.

Michael leaves them alone.

LUCY

Since when does dad cook?

CONNOR

Or do chores for that matter.

KRISTEN

Hmm...hard to say.

Connor inspects his pancake.

CONNOR

Maybe we should get him a cookbook for his birthday.

The three continue eating.

INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Michael thumbs his fingers through the bookshelf, just like the night before.

Faint footsteps grow LOUDER up the stairs.

Panic sets in as he searches under Lucy's bed.

He freezes and backs up, turning to Kristen leaning in the doorway. He lifts himself up.

KRISTEN

Looking for something?

Michael places his on his chest, rocking back and forth.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

You can tell me.

MICHAEL

I was, uh, making sure Santa didn't leave any gifts in here.

Kristen smirks.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's difficult.

KRISTEN

Sure it's not the long work hours?

He rests his head on her shoulder. She comforts him.

MICHAEL

Think so?

KRISTEN

Forget about it. Today is about family, okay?

He takes a step back, containing himself.

MICHAEL

Even if my gifts aren't good?

KRISTEN

The only thing that matters is spending time with us.

They hug.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lucy stands in front of Michael, seated on the couch with a script in front of him.

MICHAEL

(reading the script)

Mary, you are blessed by God and will give birth to a son and he shall be named Jesus.

LUCY

How can it be, for I am...uh..line?

MICHAEL

I'm just a virgin.

She tilts her head away, rubbing her arm.

LUCY

Right. Virgin.

Michael places the script to the side, now giving her his full attention.

MICHAEL

Don't overthink it so much. It's just a few simple lines. Piece of cake.

LUCY

Easy for you to say. How can there be a pageant without Joseph?

Michael shrugs his shoulders.

MICHAEL

Maybe he didn't get the memo. Five lines isn't that bad.

LUCY

Mary and Joseph have to swaddle baby Jesus near the end, but we don't have anyone to play him.

She joins him on the couch.

MICHAEL

You've got this. Just focus on the lines and you'll do fine.

LUCY

Memorization is one thing but...

She places her hands over his.

LUCY (CONT'D)

After what happened last night, what if you fall back into your routine?

MICHAEL

I'll try not to.

Lucy sinks into the couch.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Luce, don't worry so much about me and focus on yourself. If this is what you want to do, just give it your all. Who knows? You might surprise yourself.

She rises from the couch, again taking her position. Lucy closes her eyes, taking a deep breath in.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Here we go, from the top.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Lucy faces the kid angel, taking a final deep breath as she's about to say her line.

LUCY
 (somewhat confident)
 How can this be, for I am a virgin.

KID ANGEL
 The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
 and the power of the Most High will
 overshadow you. Therefore, the child
 to be born will be holy, and he will
 be called the Son of God.

The kid angel exits. While Connor plays "We Three Kings" on the piano, he takes a quick glance at Noelle, seated in the front row.

He cracks a smile, but she doesn't respond.

Pastor Richard signals to Connor to stop. He places his hands at his side.

As the pageant continues, Michael gives Lucy a thumbs up. She takes a quick glance at him, shrugging her shoulders.

One of the wise men signals to her.

Lucy faces them, now blanking on her next line.

PASTOR RICHARD
 (whispering)
 You're up.

LUCY
 We truly appreciate your gifts and
 you'll forever be missed.

Tense silence fills the room. She covers her mouth, taking in the audiences blank stares.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 Blessed! I meant blessed.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Michael joins Kristen, Connor, Barbra, and Hank with drinks on a tray.

MICHAEL
 Drinks, anyone? Hot cocoa, apple
 cider, and coffee-cream or no cream.
 Get 'em while they're hot.

They take their drinks and take a sip.

BARBRA

You didn't have to go all out.

MICHAEL

It's Christmas! What's a little extra effort?

Hank leans close to Kristen.

HANK

Whatever he's on, I could use some.

MICHAEL

Just running on a little Christmas spirit. You should try it sometime.

He turns to Connor, placing a hand on his shoulder.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

How about we do something fun?

CONNOR

Like what?

Michael turns him to the snowman building contest across from them. Connor glances away for a moment.

MICHAEL

How about we build the best snowman the town has ever seen?

Connor sips his drink, eyeing the snowman building contest then to Michael.

CONNOR

Do you mean it?

MICHAEL

Yep. What do you say?

Connor hesitates, then nods, a small smile forming.

EXT. SNOWMAN BUILDING CONTEST - NIGHT

Michael and Connor take their places at the snowman contest, joining six other teams.

A crowd begins to gather as the whistle blows.

Kristen, Barbra, Hank, and Lucy, with cotton candy in one hand and a drink in the other, watch from the sidelines.

Michael and Connor start rolling snow into a giant ball for the snowman's base.

CONNOR

(as he works)

What if our snowman had a mustache? I could find some sticks.

MICHAEL

(laughs)

Why stop there? Let's give him a top hat, a monocle-make him the classiest snowman in town.

CONNOR

And maybe a tie! And he'll have a British accent too, like, "Good day, sir!"

MICHAEL

Now that's a snowman with style. Didn't know you had such a wild imagination.

CONNOR

Suppose I'm just gifted.

As they finish the snowman's middle section, Michael pats the snow.

MICHAEL

You've got a knack for this, kid. Don't ever lose that creative spark.

CONNOR

I'll try not to.

Connor rolls a snowball for the head, placing it on top.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Thanks for doing this with me.

Michael smiles warmly, feeling the bond between them strengthen.

EXT. SNOWMAN BUILDING CONTEST - LATER

The teams stand next to their completed snowmen. The JUDGE,

clipboard in hand, examining the seven built snowman close.

He pauses in front of Michael and Connor's distinguished snowman, with its mustache, monocle, and top hat.

With a nod, the judge places a first-place ribbon on their snowman. The crowd erupts in cheers.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The family watches Connor and Lucy unwrap their gifts.

Connor, as usual, stares at the box of condoms and Lucy SHRIEKS at the sight of the box of tampons.

KRISTEN
(to Michael)
What were you thinking?

MICHAEL
I wasn't.

Hank kicks his feet back with his drink in hand.

HANK
You never do.

Barbra elbows him.

MICHAEL
Isn't quality time with my family the
best gift of all?

Connor places the box of condoms to the side.

CONNOR
It might come in handy when I'm older.

MICHAEL
That's the spirit!

While Barbra and Hank gather their things, the carolers appear in view from the side window.

Michael faces them, rubbing his eyes in disbelief. Are they real or just a figment of his imagination?

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Uh, Kristen?

She ignores him while hugging both Barbra and Hank.

CAROLERS

(singing)

On the seventh day of Christmas my
true love gave to me seven swans a
swimming, six geese a laying, five
golden rings, four calling birds,
three French hens...

MICHAEL

(calling back to Kristen)

Kristen!!

She resumes escorting Hank and Barbra out the door.

CAROLERS

(singing)

Two turtle doves, and a partridge in a
pear tree.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Michael carries in a plate of six stacked blueberry pancakes,
this time it's perfect.

LUCY

Wow! These look amazing! Thanks, dad!

KRISTEN

Michael, they're perfect. You've
really outdone yourself.

MICHAEL

Anything for my favorite people. Dig
in!

As they start eating, Michael watches them, pleased with
their reactions.

He then turns to Lucy.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Feeling ready for today?

LUCY

Sort of. You'll be there, right?

MICHAEL

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

Lucy's face brightens. Kristen gives him an approving nod.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You know...what if we took a trip to the Bahamas? Get away from all this for a while.

KRISTEN

Bahamas? That's a bit extravagant, don't you think? Especially after Rome...remember how that went?

MICHAEL

I still say Rome wasn't built in a day and I'm sticking to that.

Kristen moves her plate to the side, leaning in slightly.

KRISTEN

Since when are you into travel? Aren't you worried about missing work?

MICHAEL

Could use a break, honestly. I've got two weeks of paid vacation just sitting there.

Kristen isn't convinced.

She crosses her arms, considering the idea more critically.

KRISTEN

And the kids' school? My schedule? You think you can just drop everything?

Michael releases a frustrated sigh. She might be right.

MICHAEL

We'll figure everything out. We always do, right?

Kristen's gaze softens a bit, but she still looks uncertain.

KRISTEN

It's not that simple. We can't rush into something without thinking it through.

Michael sighs, realizing she might be right.

The excitement in his voice dims.

MICHAEL

Maybe I'm just trying to make up for
lost time...do something special for
once.

A moment of silence. Kristen looks at him, still cautious.

KRISTEN

We'll figure it out together.

Michael nods, appreciating her understanding.

Lucy, oblivious to the tension, is still happily eating her
pancakes, while Kristen and Michael exchange a more
meaningful look.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Pastor Richard strides up to Michael.

PASTOR RICHARD

Thank the Lord! My prayers have been
answered. What's up Mikey?

MICHAEL

Not much. Given this pageant doesn't
have a Joseph, I'll do it.

PASTOR RICHARD

Are you high? You do realize they were
married, right?

Kristen turns to Michael, thrown off.

MICHAEL

Lucy's been working hard and...just to
be there for her personally...She
needs me.

Michael rises, inching closer to Pastor Richard.

PASTOR RICHARD

But it's so...wrong!

MICHAEL

Don't you want a good performance?

PASTOR RICHARD

Hurry up. You're on in ten minutes.

Michael hurries backstage.

INT. CHURCH - BACKSTAGE - DAY

The kids, dressed in their costumes, wait to take their position on stage.

Lucy closes her eyes, taking some deep breaths. Michael, dressed as Joseph, taps her shoulder.

She spins to him, covering her mouth.

LUCY
What are you doing?

MICHAEL
Surprise!

Pastor Richard scurries by, passing out a revised script to the other actors before heading back out.

Lucy stares at her script.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Thought you were going out there alone, huh?

LUCY
Are you trying to humiliate me?

The three wise men hold their scripts to their mouth, hiding their chuckling.

MICHAEL
Not at all. When was the last time we bonded or did something?

LUCY
This was your idea of bonding?

Michael skims the script. He places it aside, placing his hand on Lucy's shoulder.

MICHAEL
We're going to do great!

Music starts to play as the lights dim on the stage.

Lucy's legs wobble as she darts her eyes around the room.

LUCY
(quiet)
Oh God...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael, dressed as Mary's husband Joseph, approach an INNKEEPER center stage.

PASTOR RICHARD
(reading from script)
As they journeyed through the night,
Mary and Joseph soon found out there
was no room at the inn.

MICHAEL
(to Innkeeper)
Excuse me sir, we're looking to see if
there's room at the inn.

The innkeeper folds his arms.

INNKEEPER
Afraid not.

MICHAEL
You don't understand, for you see,
my...wife is bearing child.

INNKEEPER
Very well. I have a manger out back.

The innkeeper hands over the keys.

Connor starts playing "Away in a Manger" which captures Noelle's attention.

He takes a quick glance at her then to the sheet music.

The kid angel takes his position, just like before.

PASTOR RICHARD
And lo, the angel of the Lord appeared
said unto them...

KID ANGEL
Mary, you are blessed by God and will
give birth to a son and he shall be
named Jesus.

Lucy faces the audience, this time somewhat more dramatic than before.

LUCY
How can this be, for I am a virgin.

She turns to the kid angel.

KID ANGEL

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will
overshadow you. Therefore, the child
to be born will be holy, and he will
be called the Son of God.

MICHAEL

And it shall be done.

The kid angel heads off stage.

Again, Connor switches the tune to "We Three Kings" as the
three wise men approach them.

PASTOR RICHARD

As the time came for Mary to give
birth, the three wise men from the
East followed a star that took them to
Bethlehem.

The wise men get on their knees, presenting their gifts.

WISE MAN 1

We have traveled far to honor the
newborn King and come bearing gifts of
great joy, for I have gold.

WISE MAN 2

Frankincense.

WISE MAN 3

And myrrh.

Lucy motions to them to rise.

LUCY

We truly appreciate the gifts and
you'll forever be blessed.

WISE MAN 2

Thank you Mary.

Pastor Richard flips to the final page in the script.

Kristen reaches for a tissue in her purse while Connor plays
"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing", the final song.

PASTOR RICHARD
Moments after the baby Jesus was born,
Mary and Joseph were soon gathered by
animals and shepherds.

The SHEPHERDS take the stage with their animals close behind.
They gather around Michael, Lucy, and a doll resembling baby
Jesus. Kristen dries her eyes with the tissue at this
beautiful sight.

Connor flips the sheet music over, and starts playing "Silent
Night". Noelle becomes fully hooked on Connor as each of his
fingers touch the keys.

Michael reaches for a swaddle and wraps the baby Jesus.

He faces the audience, one arm wrapped around Lucy.

MICHAEL
This child is truly a blessing to us.

The audience APPLAUDS.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone settles in at the table.

MICHAEL
(to Barbra)
How about I lead tonight?

BARBRA
Uh, sure.

Everyone joins hands.

Michael closes his eyes, bowing his head.

MICHAEL
Thanks for this meal. Amen.

They begin serving themselves.

HANK
(to Lucy)
How'd the thing go?

LUCY
Fine, I guess.

MICHAEL

Fine? I was practically Shakespeare
out there!

Kristen gives Michael a playful nudge.

KRISTEN

Let's not get carried away.

Barbra sips her drink, curious.

BARBRA

Who were you?

LUCY

Joseph.

Barbra suddenly chokes on her drink, eyes wide.

HANK

(to Michael, cautious)
Wait, you were...Joseph?

BARBRA

That's...a choice.

KRISTEN

They did great!

Barbra puts her napkin down, clearly displeased.

BARBRA

(whispering to Michael)
What were you thinking?

MICHAEL

Other than I was born to play the
role? Not much.

Lucy abruptly stands and leaves the table.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Michael quietly hands out drinks. Lucy takes hers without a
word.

CONNOR

Hey, Dad. Want to enter the contest?

MICHAEL

In a minute. I'll catch up.

Connor heads off to the snowman building contest.

Michael pulls Lucy aside, gentle.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Everything okay, kiddo?

LUCY
(shrugs)
Depends. How do you think you're
doing?

She finishes her drink and tosses the cup away.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Guess we'll see tomorrow.

MICHAEL
I'm not going anywhere, Luce.

Lucy looks at him, skeptical.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Look, I'm trying here. You're changing
so fast...I just want to keep up.

LUCY
Maybe if you weren't always playing
catch-up, you'd already know.

She turns and walks back to Kristen, Barbra, and Hank.

Michael watches her go, then heads over to join Connor at the
snowman contest.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - NIGHT

Michael and Pastor Richard sit in silence for a moment, the
weight of Michael's thoughts filling the room.

MICHAEL
You ever think just being there would
be enough? Like, showing up is all it
takes?

Pastor Richard tilts his head, understanding where this is
going.

PASTOR RICHARD
Seems simple, doesn't it? Until it
isn't.

Michael nods, a small, bitter laugh escaping him.

MICHAEL

Yeah. I thought I had it all figured out whether it was the gifts, smiles. But now, it's like I'm swinging and missing every time.

Pastor Richard leans back, fingers clasped together.

PASTOR RICHARD

Funny thing about people-they usually want more than just things. Remember, it's the quiet moments that mean the most.

MICHAEL

I just...I don't want to screw this up. What if I already have?

Pastor Richard pats Michael's hand.

PASTOR RICHARD

You're here, talking about it. That's a start, isn't it?

Michael gives a slight nod.

MICHAEL

Guess I've been looking in the wrong direction.

Pastor Richard leans close to him.

PASTOR RICHARD

Try something different. Not grand gestures, but just being there. Really being there.

Michael exhales slowly, as if some of the weight is starting to lift off his shoulders.

MICHAEL

Yeah. I think I get it now.

Michael scoots his chair back and they both rise.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Numerous candles illuminate the room. Faint angelic singing echoes throughout the church.

Michael sits alone in the front row, hands clasped together.

MICHAEL

(praying soft)

Dear God, if you can hear me, please
just help me out.

He takes a big deep breath.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

If you could look into your heart and
let today be the last, I'll continue
mending relationships with my family.

The echoing singing comes to a halt as a gust of wind blows
the church doors open.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Please, it's all I ask. Amen.

He opens his eyes, turning his attention to the carolers
trotting up to the stage.

CAROLERS

(singing)

On the eighth day of Christmas my true
love gave me me eight maids a milking,
seven swans a swimming, six geese a
laying, five golden rings...

Michael sinks into the seat.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)

(singing)

Four calling birds, three French hens,
two turtle doves, and a partridge in a
pear tree.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael makes his way to the tree, takes the wrapped gifts,
and throws them in the trash.

Connor and Lucy hurry down the stairs, rushing toward him.

Before they can say anything, Michael hugs them tight.

Kristen leans against the staircase.

KRISTEN

What was that about?

MICHAEL

It was nothing. Uh, I'll make
breakfast. My treat.

Connor searches through the wrapped gifts.

There's no sign of Michael's anywhere to be found.

CONNOR

Where's our gifts? It's not like him
to forget.

KRISTEN

I'm sure it's around somewhere.

She shoots him a serious look.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

You did get something, right?

MICHAEL

Of course. It'll be there after
breakfast.

Just before he heads to the kitchen, Kristen tugs him back.

KRISTEN

What's gotten into you?

Connor peeks in the trash can and discovers Michael's gifts.
Kristen and Lucy gather around for a moment.

Connor sits on the floor, tucking his head into his legs.

MICHAEL

Oh! You mean those gifts!

Kristen rubs Connor's back, comforting him.

CONNOR

Why did you throw them away?

MICHAEL

Doesn't matter. You'd hate them
anyways. Aren't we forgetting the true
meaning of Christmas?

KRISTEN

Clearly, you have.

She inches close to Michael's face.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

Do whatever you want today. We can celebrate without you.

MICHAEL

Don't you understand that there's more to life than gifts? We have each other, and that's what matters.

Connor glances up at him, drying his eyes with his sleeve.

CONNOR

We used to be.

Kristen wraps her arms around both kids, escorting them to the dining room.

MICHAEL

I'll make it up! Promise!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family sits sound holding hands. Michael, again, bows his head in prayer position.

MICHAEL

Thank you God for the food that has been blessed upon us. Thank you for bringing us all together as we celebrate our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

They start putting food on their plates.

BARBRA

How lovely.

HANK

Touching, really.

Hank turns to Lucy.

HANK (CONT'D)

How'd the thing go?

LUCY

Alright I guess, thanks to dad's help.

MICHAEL

See? Told you a little practice never hurts. You were fine.

Connor picks at his food.

CONNOR
Good for her.

HANK
(to Connor)
Why so glum?

MICHAEL
Girl issues, am I right?

Connor groans, sliding the plate away from him.

The family eats in silence, subtly judging Michael.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Michael gathers some candy canes from Santa and hands them to Connor, Lucy, Kristen, and Hank, along with their drinks at the giant Christmas tree.

KRISTEN
Why are you doing this?

MICHAEL
Because I want to.

Kristen doesn't believe him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Can't you forgive me?

KRISTEN
Is that what you want? Forgiveness?

Barbra and Hank escort Lucy and Connor to the side, giving Michael and Kristen some space.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
Fine. I forgive you. Merry Christmas.

MICHAEL
That doesn't sound sincere.

Kristen throws her hands up.

KRISTEN
Sincere? Are you kidding? After what happened this morning, you want me to be sincere?

MICHAEL

At least I'm honest!

Kristen tosses her drink in the trash and breaks the candy cane in half. She tosses it on the ground, fed up.

KRISTEN

Want some honesty? I'm done.

MICHAEL

Done with what?

KRISTEN

You. Us...everything really.

She storms away from him.

MICHAEL

(calling to her)

It's okay! Jesus forgives you!

He starts to head out of the festival and slips on some ice. His legs fly above his head while everything around him moves in slow motion.

THUMP!

He lands on the ground, laying motionless. Everything starts to go dark.

SANTA (O.S)

(echoing)

Watch out for the ice.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Michael, with a big bandage wrapped around his head, lays in a hospital bed, still unconscious.

A nurse opens the curtain, checking on Michael. They scribble something onto a clipboard and leave without closing the curtains.

The carolers surround Michael's bed.

CAROLERS

(singing)

On the ninth day of Christmas my true
love gave to me nine ladies dancing,
eight maids a milking, seven swans a
swimming, six geese a laying...

Michael opens his eyes, slow.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)

(singing)

Five golden rings, four calling birds,
three French hens, two turtle doves,
and a partridge in a pear tree.

Michael plops his head back on the pillow.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael stands in the doorway, rubbing his head. He meets Connor, Lucy, and Kristen at the tree.

CONNOR

Merry Christmas!

LUCY

Merry Christmas!

Michael glances up at Kristen with her usual drink in hand.

KRISTEN

What was that about?

Michael pulls Kristen aside while Connor and Lucy examine the gifts around the tree.

MICHAEL

I'm so...so sorry.

KRISTEN

For what?

MICHAEL

Everything. Not being there for you
and the kids, spending a majority of
my time at work.

Kristen sips her drink, casual.

KRISTEN

You actually sat with what we talked
about last night?

MICHAEL

Most of it, yes. I'll get breakfast
ready. My treat.

Michael heads out of the room.

CONNOR
(to Kristen)
What got into him?

KRISTEN
He's just full of Christmas spirit.

CONNOR
And he wasn't last night?

Kristen chuckles, rubbing Connor's head.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Guess Santa finally got my letter from
when I was eight.

KRISTEN
Maybe he did.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael heads over to Connor at the piano.

MICHAEL
Don't worry about making her notice
you now. You can wait until after to
seal the deal.

CONNOR
What deal?

Michael nudges him.

MICHAEL
You know, using your charm to butter
her up. Ladies like being swept off
their feet.

Connor takes a quick look at Noelle, avoiding eye contact
with him. Michael pats his back.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You have a few minutes. Just go over
and say hello. Oh, and here's
something just to be safe.

Michael slides some sheets of paper into Connor's pocket. He
tip-toes over to Noelle and clears his throat.

She doesn't respond.

Connor tries again, but a little louder. Noelle faces him, alert. Noelle scoots an inch to the side.

NOELLE

Are you sick? I just recovered from
having a severe cold.

CONNOR

Oh I'm in good health. I was
wondering...

He takes a glance at one of the sheets of paper in his pocket then returns his attention to Noelle.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

How'd you like to be on my naughty
list?

NOELLE

I'm sorry?

Connor panics and takes a look at another line.

CONNOR

What I meant was, wanna roast these
chest nuts later?

Noelle moves to the back row. Michael SLAPS his forehead, ashamed of himself.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family holds hands around the table. Again, Michael says a prayer.

MICHAEL

Thank you Lord for bringing the family
on this special day as we celebrate
the birth of Jesus Christ. Amen.

They unlink hands and start placing food on their plate.

BARBRA

That was beautiful.

HANK

Well said.

Hank faces Lucy.

HANK (CONT'D)
How'd the thing go?

LUCY
It was good, all thanks to some final
rehearsal preparation.

Lucy cracks a thankful smile to Michael.

MICHAEL
And you didn't tense up one bit.

Connor sighs, picking at his food.

HANK
(to Michael)
What's with him?

CONNOR
Let's just say dad's not a "love
expert".

MICHAEL
Fine. I dropped the ball on that one.
We're still up for building a snowman
later, right?

Connor doesn't respond as he takes small bites of the food.

CONNOR
Maybe next year.

MICHAEL
It wasn't that bad. How do you think I
got stuck with your mother?

KRISTEN
Is that how you feel?

Michael shakes his head, back tracking a bit.

MICHAEL
Okay, maybe not stuck. I meant, that's
how I won you over, right?

KRISTEN
I fell in love with who you were, not
some cheesy pick up lines.

MICHAEL
It's not too bad. After all, Jesus
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
forgives, right?

Connor doesn't respond.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael sits in bed, jotting down notes on a notepad from the days events while Kristen gets ready for bed in the other room.

He skims through what he wrote a few times. He places the notepad on the nightstand next to him.

He takes a look at the closet door cracked open.

He gets out of bed and opens the closet door in full and comes across two wrapped gifts.

He rubs the back of his neck for a beat. He slides the closet door closed while Kristen hops into bed.

He joins her, still fixated on the wrapped gifts in the closet. Kristen tilts away from him.

KRISTEN
Something wrong?

MICHAEL
Did I...order a package or anything?

KRISTEN
Don't know. Why?

Michael scoots his body closer to her.

MICHAEL
Just curious.

He turns off the light. Faint jingle bells sound, just as the clock reaches 11:59. The carolers walk down the street aligned in a row.

CAROLERS
(singing)
On the tenth day of Christmas my true
love gave to me ten lords a leaping,
nine ladies dancing, eight maids a
milking, seven swans a swimming...

Michael bolts awake, turning on his light. He nudges Kristen,

but she doesn't respond.

MICHAEL
You hear that?

He opens the window.

CAROLERS
(singing)
Six geese a laying, five
golden rings, four calling
birds, three French hens,
two turtle doves, and a
partridge in a pear tree.

MICHAEL
Stop! Stop! Quit it! For the
love of God stop! Stop it!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael SCREAMS and closes the door.

Connor and Lucy hurry down the stairs, just as Michael heads
over to the Christmas tree.

CONNOR
Merry Christmas!

LUCY
Merry Christmas!

Before Kristen gets a chance to speak, Michael guides her
away from the kids.

KRISTEN
What was--

MICHAEL
Fucking carolers. That's who it was!

KRISTEN
Aww how--

Michael places his finger on her lips.

MICHAEL
I don't want to hear it. Okay? I'll
admit my gifts suck. It's my fault.

Connor and Lucy exchange a concerned look.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(to Lucy)
Luce, you're brilliant and have
talent, don't let anyone take it away
from you.

He kneels in front of Connor.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Love is a complicated thing, but the main thing to remember is who you are on the inside.

CONNOR

Have you been reading my blog?

Michael heads over to the kitchen. Connor faces Kristen.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Should we pray for him?

KRISTEN

He'll need more than that.

Lucy nods in agreement.

LUCY

Like psychiatric help.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael pats Connor's shoulder then gives him two thumbs up, just before he takes his place at the piano.

Connor walks up to Noelle and extends his hands.

CONNOR

H-h-hey Noelle.

Noelle notices his sweaty hands. She shakes his hand.

NOELLE

Hey. Merry Christmas. Do I know you?

CONNOR

Connor. We've been in the same church for at least four years.

NOELLE

Oh yeah. What's up?

Connor rocks back and forth on his feet.

CONNOR

Would you like to--

PASTOR RICHARD
(whispering loud to Connor)
Connor! You're on!

Connor takes his position at the piano. Noelle tilts her head, puzzled.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family sits in their normal seats, eating.

MICHAEL
(to Barbra and Hank)
I know I've made mistakes. We all
have. But I'm asking, can you find it
in your heart to forgive me?

HANK
We've been there too, Michael. It's
not easy.

Barbra exchanges a glance with Hank, then turns to Michael.

BARBRA
It's not about being perfect. It's
about trying. We forgive you.

Hank turns to Lucy.

HANK
How'd the thing go?

LUCY
It was great, thanks to dad's
motivational support.

MICHAEL
You did great kiddo.

Connor gives her a thumbs up, still chewing his food.

KRISTEN
She was incredible!

CONNOR
(to Michael)
Where's my confidence boost?

MICHAEL
Remember what I said earlier?

CONNOR

Oh. Right.

Michael raises his glass to him.

MICHAEL

You'll get her next time, champ.

CONNOR

I guess.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Michael scrolls through different articles on the computer.
Kristen, dressed in her pajamas, rubs his shoulders.

KRISTEN

Coming to bed?

MICHAEL

In a minute.

Kristen takes a peek at the article on the computer.

She spins Michael's chair around.

KRISTEN

Are you sure you're okay?

MICHAEL

It's...complicated.

She places her hand on his knee.

KRISTEN

How so?

MICHAEL

I'll have to figure it out myself.

Kristen pecks his cheek.

KRISTEN

Come to bed, okay?

She leaves him alone.

Michael places his head on the desk, closing his eyes.

A pop up video appears on the computer screen.

INSERT -CLOSE ANGLE- COMPUTER

A video shows the carolers gathered together.

CAROLERS

(on computer)

On the eleventh day of Christmas my
true love gave to me eleven pipers
piping, ten lords a leaping, nine
ladies dancing...

Michael groans, struggling to lift his head up.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)

(on computer)

Eight maids a milking, seven swans a
swimming, six geese a laying, five
golden rings, four calling birds,
three French hens...

Michael moves the mouse to the exit button on the video.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)

(on computer)

Two turtle doves, and a partridge in a
pear tree!

He clicks the button.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael stands motionless at the door while Connor and Lucy
run down stairs. He closes the door and turns to them, slow.

CONNOR

Merry Christmas!

LUCY

Merry Christmas!

Michael drifts to them, just as Kristen comes into full view
with her usual cup of coffee in hand.

His body trembles while he hugs Connor and Lucy close.

MICHAEL

Merry Christmas.

KRISTEN

What was that about?

Michael keeps to himself, wiping his eyes with his sleeve.

MICHAEL
Nothing. Nothing at all.

Connor and Lucy get a good look at their wrapped gifts.

CONNOR
Can we open them now?

Kristen turns to Michael. He places both hands on each of their shoulders.

MICHAEL
Okay, but before you do, just know I
did the best I could. I'll make it up.

Connor, as per usual, shreds the wrapping paper off and stares at the box of condom.

He covers his mouth, hiding his confusion, and hugs Michael's waist.

CONNOR
Aww! Thanks dad! It's...just my size.

Lucy unwraps her gift and lets out a high pitched SQUEAL at the sight of the tampons.

LUCY
Wow. Thanks.

Kristen turns her head.

MICHAEL
It's exactly what it looks like. Next
year's gifts will be much better.

KRISTEN
Okay, but I'm supervising.

They laugh.

MICHAEL
Anyone hungry?

CONNOR
But we're on a roll!

MICHAEL
We can't keep opening gifts on an
empty stomach, right?

Lucy rubs her stomach.

LUCY
Right. Just hope there's not a
pregnancy test!

MICHAEL
Not until you're in college.

Connor and Lucy scurry to the dining room.

INT. CONNOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

Michael and Connor sit on the bed.

MICHAEL
Seems like yesterday you were just a
young boy who brought a little more
joy into our lives.

CONNOR
Is this one of those "birds and the
bees" types of talks?

MICHAEL
Kind of. Anyways, women love a man who
is confident with themselves.

Connor leans an inch away from Michael.

CONNOR
How'd you know?

MICHAEL
You're becoming a man and it's
beautiful to see! When I was your age,
I had my first crush, then a few more
before I met your mother.

Michael reminisces to himself.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Even if she rejects you, don't take it
personally, okay?

CONNOR
Okay. Good talk.

Kristen enters with her purse over her shoulder.

KRISTEN

Now this is a Hallmark moment, except
without the cheesy story lines.

Michael nudges Connor's arm, playful.

MICHAEL

You got this champ.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael, seated in the usual front row, observes Connor start
to take his position at the piano.

Connor spots Noelle, closes his eyes, and takes a final deep
breath. He extends his hand to her.

CONNOR

Hey Noelle. What's shaking?

Noelle takes a quick look at him. She shakes his hand.

NOELLE

Not much. What's up?

Connor takes a quick peek at Michael then back to Noelle.

CONNOR

You look...clean.

NOELLE

Thank you?

Connor backs up, giving his collar a light tug.

CONNOR

I meant nice. Stunning. Beautiful.
Take your pick. What's your secret?

NOELLE

Soap mostly.

They look away from each other for a moment.

Pastor Richard signals to Connor.

He takes his position at the piano, just like before.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family holds each others hands with their heads bowed.

MICHAEL

And thank you Lord for guiding Lucy during her performance and giving Connor a chance to break out of his shell. Amen.

Everyone places food on their plates.

HANK

So, it was that good?

MICHAEL

Oh yes. Talent runs in the genes.

LUCY

Couldn't have done it without you.

Everyone CLINKS their glasses.

BARBRA

(to Michael)

I underestimated you.

MICHAEL

Eh, nobody's perfect, but growth is important for change.

HANK

Amen to that.

Kristen pecks Michael's cheek.

KRISTEN

Guess you needed some tough love.

MICHAEL

Give a little love. Get a little love.

An idea pops into his head. Michael takes a good look at the surrounding family members.

He chuckles to himself as he takes a moment to reflect.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What do you guys think of this jingle?
"Give a little love. Spread a little
love. Love makes the world go round."

The room falls silent for a moment as they exchange looks.

LUCY
What was that for?

MICHAEL
The other day Evan had an idea for an
upcoming pitch for Fizz Cola and he
figured a good tagline would be--

KRISTEN
Uh, Michael?

Michael rises from his seat, now in work mode.

MICHAEL
Spread the joy. Doesn't that sound
wonderful? Man I should...

He pauses as the realization occurs to him. He's screwed.

Kristen guides him out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kristin faces Michael with her hands on her waist.

KRISTEN
What was that about?

MICHAEL
It slipped! I swear.

KRISTEN
For once day, you couldn't be fully
present with your family?

Michael reaches for her hand, but gets swiped off.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
How much time have you been thinking
about your "pitch" while being with
us? Tell the truth!

MICHAEL
Forty percent?

She doesn't believe him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Kristen, it was an accident.

KRISTEN

Accident, huh? Like how you
"accidentally" gave the kids
inappropriate gifts or accidentally
went out drinking last night?

MICHAEL

I already apologized! What else do you
people want from me?

She points to the door.

KRISTEN

Just go. I'll figure everything out in
the morning.

Michael begs on his knees.

MICHAEL

Don't do this to me! Think of the
kids! Think of the family!

KRISTEN

Now!

Michael drags his feet out the door, defeated.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

Michael walks down the sidewalk, hands shoved deep into his
pockets. His hood is pulled low, shielding his face as he
moves through the night.

He pauses for a moment, looking up at the sky. It's clear,
but no stars are visible.

He lets out a breath and continues walking.

As he passes by homes, he catches glimpses of families
inside, gathered together, sharing laughter and warmth.

He watches them for a moment before turning away, his
expression hard to read.

The street ahead of him is long and empty. Michael keeps
walking, the sounds of distant cars and muffled voices fading
as he goes further into the night.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

It's so quiet, there's barely any sounds of cars or festive

music anywhere. Moonlight reflects in the river below.

Michael faces the river, hands gripped to the railing.

He faces the sky, arms folded.

MICHAEL

(looking up, voice trembling)

What do you want from me? I'm trying
here, okay? Just...just tell me what
you want, and I'll do it!

His fists clench at his sides, his voice rising with each
word.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I've been through this over and over.
How am i supposed to know what's
right? Just give me something,
anything, to go on!

He pauses, searching the sky for an answer that never comes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(breaking down)

I don't know how much more I can take.
Just one more chance, that's all I'm
asking. I'll do better this time, I
swear. Just...please.

His voice cracks, the weight of his desperation pulling him
down.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(whispering, almost defeated)

Please...help me make this right.

A bright streetlight shines on him, almost angelic. Then it
comes to him.

He takes another look at the sky, now seeing a lone star
glimmering. His legs tremble as he clasps his hands in prayer
position. He takes a final deep breath.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Please. One more chance.

The carolers appear behind him in the middle of the empty
road. Michael faces them.

CAROLERS

(singing)

On the twelfth day of Christmas my
true love gave to me...twelve drummers
drumming.

In that exact moment, a row of twelve drummers start marching
down the road, like a start of a parade route. It's magical.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)

(singing)

Eleven pipers piping, ten Lords a
leaping, nine ladies dancing, eight
maids a milking, seven swans a
swimming, six geese a laying...

The pipers, lords, ladies, maids, swan and geese floats
follow the drummers. Michael can't believe it.

CAROLERS (CONT'D)

(singing)

Five golden rings! Four calling birds,
three French hens, two turtle doves,
and a partridge in a pear tree.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael stands in the doorway and closes it.

He collides with Lucy and Connor at the tree. Before they get
a chance to say anything, he hugs them close.

MICHAEL

Merry Christmas.

CONNOR

Merry Christmas!

LUCY

Merry Christmas!

Michael squeezes Kristen tight, she almost spills her coffee.

KRISTEN

Somebody's got the Christmas spirit.

Then it occurs to him. Michael dashes up the stairs, leaving
Kristen and the kids alone.

CONNOR

Is he going to be okay?

KRISTEN

One could only hope.

Michael trots down the stairs with his "Secret Santa gifts" and places them under the tree.

CONNOR

Cool! What are they?

MICHAEL

You'll have to find out! Go ahead and rip 'em open.

Connor shreds the wrapping paper all over the floor, and GASPS at the pair of shoes.

CONNOR

No way!

MICHAEL

Yes way! Come on Luce, you're up.

Lucy unwraps her gift and covers her mouth as excitement takes over her entire body.

KRISTEN

What ya got there?

Lucy showcases her new acting book. Kristin gives Michael an approving look.

Lucy hugs Michael, still holding the book.

LUCY

It's perfect.

MICHAEL

See? Maybe it'll come in handy.

Michael turns to his other wrapped gifts. He starts to reach for them, then recoils.

He nods to Connor and Lucy. They take the gifts and unwrap them in unison. Like before, Connor and Lucy stare at their "gifts" confused.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

My mind wasn't in the right place last night, but aren't we forgetting the true meaning of Christmas?

He wraps his arms around them.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

There's more to life than gifts. It's about being with the people you love like family.

CONNOR

Right. This is great!

While Connor, Kristen, and Lucy continue opening gifts, Michael sneaks away and dials a number on his cell phone.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Lucy stands on stage with the cast, taking their final bows. It's a success. As the churchgoers start to exit, Connor taps Noelle's shoulder. She faces him.

CONNOR

Hey Noelle. Enjoy the show?

NOELLE

It was great! Both of you were so talented. You sure know how to use your fingers.

CONNOR

Yeah. I've been meaning to tell you something for a while.

They exchange an intimate gaze for a moment.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I've caught some feelings over the past few months and wanted to know...if you felt the same?

Noelle takes a moment to process Connor's words. She smiles.

NOELLE

I do, but maybe we could start off as friends first?

CONNOR

Sure! Or if you want, we could just be acquaintances or whatever.

Noelle giggles.

NOELLE

Want to do something before New Years?

Michael gives Connor a thumbs up from the distance.

CONNOR

I'd like that.

They leave the church holding hands.

Michael checks his watch and whispers something to Kristen.
He dashes out of the church, leaving Kristen and Lucy behind.

LUCY

Where's he going?

KRISTEN

Think he said something about running
an errand.

INT. SOUP KITCHEN - DUSK

The place is filled with HOMELESS PEOPLE. Various types of
soup are displayed on a lunch line counter.

Michael, wearing an apron, dishes out some soup to the men
and women. He spots Evan and his CHILDREN entering through
the doors and waves.

Evan approaches him while Michael pours another bowl of soup.

EVAN

Michael?

MICHAEL

Evan! Merry Christmas!

EVAN

Yeah. Merry Christmas. I didn't know
you volunteered.

Michael places the ladle down.

MICHAEL

Never hurts to give back.

A homeless man walks up to Michael with his bowl of soup.

HOMELESS MAN

There's a fly in my soup.

Michael empties his bowl into the sink and hands over the
fresh soup. The homeless man returns to his table.

Evan's phone PINGS. He checks it, revealing four plane tickets to the Bahamas.

MICHAEL
You're welcome.

EVAN
Michael, I don't--

MICHAEL
Evan, you deserve it. Enjoy yourself!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael and the others mingle as they eat food on their plate. Everything seems to be at peace.

HANK
Mmmm! This is delicious!

KRISTEN
I couldn't have done it alone.

Michael smiles.

MICHAEL
I pitched in a little bit.

BARBRA
You cook?

MICHAEL
I'm working on it. Besides, she gets her cooking talents from you.

Barbra gives an approving nod.

BARBRA
Well, I'm no Julia Child! After what's happened over the last few years, I've missed this side of you.

MICHAEL
I just had to hear some hard truths.

Hank raises his glass.

HANK
I'd like to make a toast to Michael, the best son-in-law I could have ever asked for.

They go around CLINKING their glasses.

MICHAEL

We're so happy you've come down this year despite the heavy traffic.

HANK

It wasn't too bad.

MICHAEL

If you'd like to stick around a little longer, we could catch up.

Kristen's eyes widen.

BARBRA

We'd hate to intrude.

MICHAEL

I'd be honored! What do you say?

LUCY

Yeah. The guest room is all set whenever you want.

Barbra and Hank look at each other.

BARBRA

That'd be lovely.

CONNOR

And maybe you can stay through New Years or Valentines Day.

MICHAEL

Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Michael carries some drinks with the others as they approach the Christmas tree.

Santa strides up to them with candy canes. Michael takes a handful. Just before the kid gets a chance to throw his snowball, Michael hands him a candy cane.

The kid drops the snowball.

KID

Gee, thanks mister.

Michael heads over to the others at the Christmas tree and passes out the candy canes.

He and Kristen take in the sight of the tree, arms wrapped around each other.

He and Connor head over to the snowman building contest while Lucy buys some cotton candy.

Michael and Connor laugh as they work on their snowman. For a minor moment, they look at each other. All seems to be right in the world.

The judge examines each snowman, and just like before, awards Connor and Michael a first place ribbon.

Michael places the ribbon on Connor's jacket as they rejoin the other family members.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The fireplace roars under the empty stockings. Connor sits at the piano playing "Joy to the World" while Michael, Kristen, Lucy, Hank, and Barbra skim through different Christmas movies on television.

Michael takes a sip of his drink, kicking his feet up.

Connor joins them on the couch, reaching for snacks on the table in front of them.

Michael takes a good look at his family, finally at peace where things are. Michael presses the button and wraps his arms around Kristen and the kids.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Snow falls on the ground as the man in white watches Michael's family from outside the window. Wings grow on his back as a bell CHIMES in the distance.

A bright light surrounds the area as the man in white vanishes, just as the clock strikes 12:02.

FADE OUT