

WHEN COMMON SENSE TELLS YOU NOT TO

Written by  
Lawrence Whitener

*When can you forgive, when you can't forget?*

WGA-E Reg #I-332285  
303 Fieldstone Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
(c) 540-449-6575  
(e) L\_WH@aol.com  
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by Lawrence Whitener

FADE IN:

**INT. PRINCETON FAMILY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

**CAPTION:** *'Twas two weeks before Christmas and all through the house, not a child was celebrating because of this louse.*

No Christmas tree or decorations, presents still in store-bags sit on a side-table. A fake gas-log burns in fireplace.

Outside its picture window, a light snow falls. CAROLERS, all ages and ethnics, in Christmas Sweaters and Santa Hats, *clear* their throats. CAROL LEADER *blows* on her pitch pipe. They all *hum* to it, then begin singing *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*.

Window curtains close on them.

**EXT. PRINCETON HOUSE - IMMEDIATELY**

New two-story home in a pristine suburb. All the other houses are beautifully decorated for Christmas except this one. The driveway, shoveled earlier, now has a light snow covering it.

Carolers shake their heads as they walk away on the sidewalk.

BUM, older Caucasian male, bundled in rags with long white hair and a fluffy scraggly beard, pulls his ski-cap down tight as he shuffles past the Carolers. Their *singing* fades as the Bum trip-stumbles to fall head first into a snow bank.

House's garage-door self-opens showing only one new car. CALEB FRANCIS PRINCETON, African-American, 40s, fit-for-age, in a ski-sweater, exits garage rolling garbage can to the curb. He turns to re-enter, then turns back. The Bum's legs with boots stick out of the snow drift. Caleb grabs the boots and pulls Bum free who lies on his back like a dead Frosty.

CALEB

You okay?

BUM

Do I look okay?

Bum begins swishing his arms up and down across the snow with his legs moving in and out same.

CALEB

What are you doing?

BUM

Making lemonade.

CALEB

You're making --a snow angel?

BUM

Pillsbury Doughboy.

CALEB

Where were you going?

BUM

Feels like nowhere, man.

A cold wind blows snow in their faces. Caleb *shivers*.

CALEB

There someplace I can take you?

BUM

Sure --*wherever that is?*

CALEB

Do you want the police called?

BUM

Don't you?

CALEB

You haven't done anything wrong?

BUM

Haven't done anything right, or I wouldn't be like this, right?

CALEB

I didn't say ...?

BUM

Ahhh, but you were thinking it.

CALEB

I'm taking you to a shelter.

Caleb offers his hand. Bum grabs with own wrapped in a dirty rag. Caleb pulls Bum to his feet, then smells his own hand.

CALEB

You need a bath.

BUM

You need to move on.

CALEB

What?!

BUM

Don't shoot the messenger.

The two stare at each other, then Caleb reenters the garage followed by Bum. Caleb opens house's interior door reaching in to turn inside-lock on and yells before closing it.

CALEB

Be back shortly! Don't open the doors for anyone!

Caleb pushes his key fob and his car-doors *unlock*. Both get in. Caleb backs out with Bum as the garage-door self-closes.

**INT. CALEB'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Both ride in silence as Bum looks around.

CALEB

Shelter, homeless.

GPS (FILTERED)

Lodging, hotel.

CALEB

No! Housing, vagrant.

BUM

"Vagrant?!"

GPS (FILTERED)

Fragrant dwelling.

CALEB

No!

(to Bum)

You on a vacation holiday?

GPS (FILTERED)

Vacation hideaway.

CALEB

Stop It!

BUM

*Yeah, somebody please --stop it.*

GPS (FILTERED)

Re-calculating.

Caleb sighs, then sees a police cruiser parked at a curb.

**EXT./INT. CALEB'S CAR AND POLICE CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Caleb stops next to police cruiser and lowers the Bum's passenger window leaning over him to talk out of it.

CALEB

Excuse me?!

POLICE OFFICER, African-American, 40s, in uniform, fit-for-age, in a duty cap, lowers his window, then recognizes Bum.

POLICE OFFICER

You again?

CALEB

You know him?

POLICE OFFICER

For the past week, he bothering you?

CALEB

No. Where's the nearest shelter?

GPS (FILTERED)

When possible, make a U-turn.

Caleb pounds on the dashboard above the GPS-screen.

CALEB

Shut, Up!

Police Officer's eyebrows go up watching him.

POLICE OFFICER

You okay?

Caleb looks at Police Officer with a crazed-look.

CALEB

Do I look okay?

Bum opens his door to get out.

CALEB

Where you goin', Miss Daisy?

BUM

You're wrapped --just a little too tight.

POLICE OFFICER

Need me to transport him?

Officer's kindness kills Caleb's craze.

CALEB

Would you? Thanks, I hate leaving  
my kids alone.

POLICE OFFICER

Wife out?

Awkward silence, then Caleb looks the other way.

POLICE OFFICER

Sorry. How long?

CALEB

Three Christmases ago.

Bum *beats* on Caleb's dashboard.

BUM

That's, why I'm here!

Police Officer thumb-points out his window behind him.

POLICE OFFICER

Back-seat, bub.

Bum turns to Caleb showing genuine concern.

BUM

Of what?

CALEB

What?

BUM

I said it first. What --did she die  
of?

CALEB

(looks away sad)

Death, ain't that particular.

BUM

"Death" is part of life, but it's  
how we deal with it that makes it  
important to the living. Are you?

CALEB

What?

BUM

Living?

CALEB

Those that can't, teach?

BUM

Those that can, quit? When exactly?

CALEB

Who?

BUM

(in a Jewish accent)

Me you're askin'?

CALEB

Christmas Eve.

Bum *pounds* on dash again. Police Officer gets concerned.

BUM

Yes!

Bum puts a hand on Caleb's shoulder.

BUM

Choosing to believe in Christmas,  
is a choice, even when common sense  
tells you not to.

Bum exits Caleb's car to get in police cruiser's backseat.  
Police Officer *snaps* his fingers remembering.

POLICE OFFICER

"Miracle on 34th Street!" My little  
girl loves that movie. Well, Merry  
Chris --uh, drive safely.

Police Officer raises his window and drives off with Bum.

Caleb watches them leave remembering *34th Street* fondly.

CALEB

My kids loved it, too. We watched  
it as a family every --.

(closes passenger window)

I miss you, honey.

GPS (FILTERED)

Sunny, Mississippi.

**EXT. AERIAL SHOT OF CALEB'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Car shakes as Caleb *beats* on his dashboard like a madman.

Caleb's car makes a fast U-turn, then speeds through his neighborhood suburban Winter Wonderland of decorations leaving an angry snow cloud behind him.

**INT. PRINCETON GARAGE ANTECHAMBER - LATER THAT EVENING**

House-to-garage passageway is also their laundry room with a half-bath. Caleb enters from the garage, throws two deadbolts and a chain-lock on that door, walks through it, then exits throwing a deadbolt on the second interior door.

**INT. CALEB'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

House is quiet. Caleb enters and sits on the couch, then looks around and *sighs* sad. He turns on the TV with a remote.

**TV SCREEN INSERT:** The end of *Miracle on 34th Street* is playing when Natalie Wood runs down the stairs of the "For Sale" house with her "Mommy told me to believe" dialogue until John Payne kisses Maureen O'Hara.

Caleb tears-up watching them.

**TV SCREEN INSERT:** John Payne sees Kris's cane by fireplace.

Caleb pantomime-delivers Payne's same Line, "Maybe I didn't do such a wonderful thing after all."

Caleb wipes his eyes, turns TV off, and exits.

**INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE UPSTAIRS BEDROOMS - MOMENTS LATER**

Bedroom hallway has a full bath at one end. Caleb enters up the stairs from its other end and stops at the first closed door. He opens it softly to check on his daughter.

CADENCE ALEXANDRA "ALEX" PRINCETON, precocious 8, asleep in a Beyonce-poster twin-bed. Her room is decorated all in pink.

Caleb smiles and closes her door, then moves to and opens the second bedroom door quietly to check on his son.

BRANDON "BRAD" PRINCETON, 13, tall for age, athletic, is sprawled out asleep in his double bed. His room has all types of basketball gear, posters, awards, and trophies.

Caleb smiles proud and closes the door carefully. He proceeds to a third bedroom door, hesitates, then opens it.



**INT. THIRD PRINCETON BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Set up as a nursery three years ago, it is now abandoned.

Caleb enters, *sighs*, uses a finger to draw something on the dresser's dust then exits closing door.

**BUREAU TOP INSERT:** In its dust, Caleb drew a broken heart.

**INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOMS - MOMENTS LATER**

Caleb moves to the fourth closed door. He reaches for its handle, freezes, then turns to exit back down the stairs.

**INT. PRINCETON LIVING ROOM - LATER SAME EVENING**

Interior lights are off so neighborhood's Christmas lights reflect through the bay window casting their red and green twinkling aurora borealis.

Caleb lies slovenly-asleep on the couch, dressed same.

*Knock* on front door.

Caleb stirs. Another *knock*. Caleb sits up.

CALEB

What the --?

Caleb stumbles to the door checking his wristwatch which makes him hit a shoulder on the hall archway.

CALEB

Who the -- OW!

Caleb looks out the front door's peep-hole and is surprised.

CALEB

Why the --?

Caleb opens the door rubbing his hurt shoulder.

Police Officer stands outside with snow on his shoulders and duty cap.

POLICE OFFICER

Sorry to disturb you, sir --but all the shelters are full.

Caleb looks past Officer out to his cruiser with its headlights on and engine *running*.

**CRUISER INSERT:** Bum is dead-to-the-world asleep in back seat.

CALEB

But why bring him here? Let him  
sleep it off in a cell.

POLICE OFFICER

He's not intoxicated, not under the  
influence, not a danger to himself  
or others, so that --is not an  
option.

CALEB

(hits palm on forehead)  
Chicago v Morales, 1999, of course.

They stare at each other. Police Officer *snaps* his fingers.

POLICE OFFICER

You're an attorney. Okay, so you  
know I can't ...

CALEB

"Can't," yeah, sure. -Wait! You  
can't possibly want me to ...?

POLICE OFFICER

You're the one that found him --and  
you've got a garage.

CALEB

You want him to sleep --here!?

POLICE OFFICER

He's a pretty harmless old guy.

CALEB

That smells?!

POLICE OFFICER

Look, I'm not asking to take him in  
as a roommate, just let him sleep  
here overnight until the sun comes  
out and warms everything up.

CALEB

Ran a fingerprint check on him?

POLICE OFFICER

Tried.

They stare silent.

CALEB

But I read your department bought  
those new scanner whatchamacallits?

Officer holds up a pocket-size portable fingerprint scanner.

Caleb excitedly *snap-points* at it nodding animated.

CALEB

Yeah, one of those thingies! They  
plug right into your laptop, yes?

POLICE OFFICER

Yes, and they work great, if they  
can read swirls, loops, and curves.

CALEB

It won't --?

POLICE OFFICER

He don't.

CALEB

He don't --what?

Police Officer wiggles all five fingers on one hand.

CALEB

Have any fingerprints?!

Police Officer removes cap to run same hand over bald head.

POLICE OFFICER

Smooth as a baby's behind --without  
the behind.

CALEB

But, but --?

POLICE OFFICER

That's pretty much what I said.

CALEB

No, I mean, but everyone has  
fingerprints, right?

POLICE OFFICER

Wrong. He said no one in his family  
has ever had them.

CALEB

(ader-ma-to-gly-phia)  
Adermatoglyphia?!

Caleb's mouth falls open, then he *clicks* his teeth shut.

CALEB

But that's a rare generic defect  
that has only been reported in --  
(holds up four fingers)  
four extended families worldwide?

Police Officer pulls Caleb's thumb that's tucked-in, out.

CALEB

Who's on fifth?

Police Officer thumb-points over his shoulder to patrol car.

They stare at each other like poker players. Caleb folds.

**INT. PRINCETON GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

Overhead light comes on as garage-door opens.

Caleb exits its interior door.

Garage-door opens fully revealing Bum silhouetted by the neighbor's Christmas lights giving him a colorful aura.

BUM

Ho, Ho, Ho!

CALEB

(steps back surprised)  
Santa?

BUM

I can't stay in here.

Police Officer enters from behind to hand Bum his cloth sack.

POLICE OFFICER

Why not?

BUM

No bathroom.

CALEB

You're used to that.

BUM

"You're a mean one, Mister Grinch."

POLICE OFFICER

Do you have a heater out here? It's  
supposed to go below freezing.

CALEB

Now look, Officer, this is already  
above and beyond my call to duty.

BUM

Speaking of, where is the bathroom?

Caleb looks from Bum to Police Officer, then drops his head.

CALEB

Christopher Walken said it best.  
(spot-on impersonation)  
"Whoa, Stop, uh-uh!"

BUM

Try detecting life from my side,  
Sherlock.

CALEB

Don't want to.

BUM

Makes two of us.

Police Officer's shoulder-mike goes off.

POLICE RADIO (FILTERED)

Ten, Fourteen in progress. 3, 0, 2,  
Main Street, any unit respond.

CALEB

Prowler Report?

Police Officer looks at Caleb questioning as he *keys* mike.

POLICE OFFICER

One Adam Twelve en route.

CALEB

My dad was in law enforcement.

Police Officer walks backwards *snap-pointing* his fingers.

POLICE OFFICER

Bob "The Prince" Princeton! He's a  
legend in our station-house.

Police Officer jogs to his patrol car waving back "Thanks."

CALEB

Probably because, he was never "a  
legend" --in our house-house.

BUM

Your dad was always working?

Caleb forgot Bum was there and jumps, then recovers.

CALEB

Even on holidays.

Bum *smacks* one fist into the other'd palm.

BUM

I knew it!

Bum dances a little jig. Caleb watches him concerned.

CALEB

Knew what?

BUM

(stops dancing)

You're not real quick on the up-  
take are you?

Patrol Car's red lights now rotate as Police Officer yells  
out his open window while driving away.

POLICE OFFICER

M-e-r-r-y C-h-r-i-s-t-m-a-s!

Bum gets a worried look, then crosses his ankles looking  
anxious at Caleb who shakes his head.

BUM

You, my unhappy learned friend,  
have more than a few, unsettled  
issues.

Caleb *sighs*, then hand-motions for Bum to follow into the  
house as the garage-door closes and its light goes out.

**INT. PRINCETON LIVING ROOM - NEXT MORNING**

Caleb is passed out face down in a funny position on the sofa  
still in same clothes.

ALEX (O.S.)

Aieeeeeee --!

CALEB

(rolls off sofa)

Who, what, when, where?!

Caleb recovers on the floor, then runs out.

**INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LAUNDRY ROOM DOOR - MOMENTS LATER**

Caleb runs into Alex in her PJs and picks her up.

ALEX

Daddy, Daddy! Santa's in our  
laundry room!

CALEB

What?!

Caleb regains his senses and remembers.

CALEB

No, it's okay, sweetie. He's not,  
uhhhhh--? He just needed a nap.

Brad runs into same hallway in his PJs carrying a bat.

BRAD

What?!

Caleb opens the laundry room door to show Bum is fast asleep  
on the floor with his bag as a pillow.

BRAD

(fans air coughing)  
Santa --died in our laundry room?

Alex *screams* again. Caleb covers her mouth.

ALEX

Aiee --eeeeee (*muffled*).

CALEB

Does kinda smell like it.

Bum rolls onto his side and gives a cute little baby-*fart*.

Alex now laughs pointing at Bum.

ALEX

Santa made a poopy.

CALEB

Family Time.

Caleb puts down Alex and closes door, then *clears* his throat  
like at a board meeting.

CALEB

First, he is not Santa, just a  
homeless guy with no place to go.

BRAD

"Not Santa" is not living with us?

CALEB

Yes, no, what?

(clears mental cobwebs)

Second, all the shelters were full last night and it was freezing.

BRAD

When is Santa leaving?

Caleb covers Alex's ears so she can't hear him.

CALEB

He's not Santa! The homeless guy is leaving, today.

ALEX

Why, I been good?

CALEB

(uncovers her ears)

Sweetheart, there is no ...

Bum yanks the door open with his cap off and light on inside, so his deep voice *echoes* from just his silhouette.

BUM

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Brad and Caleb jump back. Alex *screams*, but a happy one.

ALEX

Aieeeee! He is Santa! He IS!

Alex runs to Bum who picks her up.

BUM

Well "hello" little girl, and what do you want this holiday?

Alex holds her nose giving her response a nasal-tone.

ALEX

For Santa to take a bath.

Caleb reaches to take Alex back into his arms.

CALEB

He's not Santa!

(to Bum)

Look, stop making my daughter believe in useless ...



Bum puts two dirty fingers over Caleb's mouth to quiet him.

Caleb yanks his head back *dry-spitting*.

CALEB

Stop that!

BUM

You first.

CALEB

What?

BUM

You know.

Bum gives Caleb a thousand-yard stare.

CALEB

What, filling her mind with a bunch  
of useless nonsense about ...?

Bum puts same two fingers over Caleb's lips who steps back  
further *dry-spitting* more.

CALEB

Stop, That!

BUM

You first.

Caleb and Bum lean-in to glare at each other low *growling*.

BUM

Don't like having your private  
little world threatened, do you  
princess?

CALEB

Get in the car, I'll pay a shelter  
to take you.

BUM

Shower?

BRAD

They have showers there.

BUM

Then you go shower there.

BRAD

Do they serve breakfast?

CALEB

It's not a Bread and Breakfast,  
it's for people that --

BUM

What?

CALEB

You know.

BUM

Got everyone pegged, huh, big guy?

BRAD

Alex, go get dad's robe, I'll ...

CALEB

What, hold on? My robe?! Why?

BRAD

Because mine won't fit, duh-uh.

(to Bum)

Put your clothes in the washing  
machine.

CALEB

But, but, but --?

BUM

You sound like a motor boat.

Bum makes a *putt-putt* motor-sound tickling Alex who *giggles*.

BRAD

Didn't you teach us to always  
return something in better  
condition then how we got it?

CALEB

But, but, but --?

Caleb *slaps* Bum's hands away from tickling Alex.

Alex folds her arms to recite the Bible resolute.

ALEX

"Therefore, I command you to be  
open-minded to those who are in  
need!"

Alex finishes with a nod, *So there*.

BUM  
Deuteronomy 15:11, *more or less.*  
(to Caleb)  
You, are a good father.

CALEB  
Thanks. I try, but really ...

Alex runs up the stairs to get Caleb's robe.

Brad exits into the kitchen.

BRAD  
I'll make breakfast.

CALEB  
But, but, but --?

Bum tickles Caleb who at first *laughs*, then *slaps* Bum's hands away angry. Bum *slaps* Caleb's hands away and tries to tickle him again. Both have a comedic slap-fight.

**INT. PRINCETON KITCHEN - LATER SAME MORNING**

Bright clean kitchen with pots hanging over a cutting board. A small dining-table is in its bay-window sitting area.

Alex and Brad are now dressed for school. Alex puts four glasses of juice at four place-settings, then sits. Brad spatulas egg-whites onto their four plates, then sits.

Caleb enters wearing a dress shirt and tailor-made dark suit trying unsuccessfully to tie his power-tie. Alex hand-motions him over. Caleb bends down. She ties his tie for him.

Bum enters drying his hair with a plush bath towel wearing Caleb's beautiful and expensive silk robe.

BUM  
Don't remember how good clean feels  
--till you forget you were dirty.

Alex raises her nose to sniff the air.

ALEX  
Santa smell sweet.

CALEB  
He's not --!

Caleb smells Bum, smiles, then a memory makes him frown.

BUM

I'm always sweet on the inside. But  
now, I'm also on the outside.  
Thanks to that shampoo you gave me.

CALEB

"Shampoo?"

ALEX

The pretty one that's always on the  
shelf.

CALEB

(spins angry to Alex)  
That was your mother's! How dare  
you --!

Alex tears-up. Bum steps in front of her defensive.

BUM

"Lighten up, Francis."

CALEB

(points angry to door)  
Get, Out!

BUM

Yes. "Out" of all the sad-mad angry  
people I could meet in this happy  
wonderful world, I --.  
(claps hands)  
I knew it!

Bum laughs, then turns to Alex and begins singing "It Had To  
Be You." He actually sounds like *Frank Sinatra*.

BUM

"It had to be you. It had to be  
you. I wandered around, and I  
finally found, The somebody who --"  
(bends to Alex)  
But first things first. What's your  
name little girl?

CALEB

Leave my daughter alone!

BUM

(waves Caleb off)  
Don't mind him, he's a real Grinch.

CALEB

I'm not a "Grinch!"

BRAD

Gotta' admit dad, every year at  
this time you do get a little --.

Bum turns to give Caleb the once over up and down.

BUM

He does look a little green around  
the gills, doesn't he?

Bum makes his hands look like fish gills behind his ears.

Alex *laughs*. Bum spins bending down to Alex, *Well?*

ALEX

My first name is, Cadence.

BUM

(quotes its definition)  
"A sequence of chords comprising  
the close of a musical phrase."  
(puts hand behind an ear)  
Your name, is music to my ears.

Bum tweaks Alex's nose. She *giggles*. Bum turns to Brad.

BUM

And you, my good boy?

CALEB

Don't answer that, boy!

Brad is now the executive at a board meeting. He *clears* his  
throat, then counts using his fingers.

BRAD

First, guys, I'm not a boy. Second,  
"not Santa," we all call her, Alex,  
from her middle name Alexandra. And  
third, everyone calls me, Brad.

BUM

Nice to meet you, "Brad." Is that  
short for Bradley?  
(no response)  
Bradford?

No response. Bum puts a finger against his nose.

BUM

Brandon! Unusual.

BRAD

Go look in a mirror.

Bum *laughs* so hard his belly does shake like a bowl full of jelly. He offers a hand to Brad and they shake.

BUM

Ho, Ho, good one. Did you know  
Brandon means "Prince?"

CALEB

"Prince?!"  
(to self)  
*I named my son Prince Princeton?*

BRAD

I prefer its other meaning, brave.  
(to self)  
*Which I'm not.*

BUM

Why do you think that?  
(puts finger against nose)  
Because of your bully at school?

BRAD

How did you know?!

Caleb is a little slow to the party this morning.

CALEB

*Prince Princeton, after my dad.*  
*What was I thinking?*  
(catches-up)  
"Bully?" What bully? What school?

BUM

Nothing he can't handle.  
(to Brad)  
Right, Champ?

Bum *slaps* Brad on the shoulder almost knocking him over.

Caleb looks at the wall clock and is terrified.

CALEB

I have to be in Court at ten!

BUM

But first, what's your name?

CALEB

Who?!

Bum stares. Caleb points at his own chest. Bum nods, *Duh-Uh.*

CALEB

Me? Oh me, of course me. --Caleb,  
Caleb Princeton, and this is ...

BUM

I already met your kids, Einstein.

CALEB

Why do you keep calling me names?

BUM

Because you keep acting up! Do you  
have any idea how great your kids  
really are? I saw Brad sink a three-  
pointer last week. But I didn't see  
you though.

CALEB

Because I had a deposition and --  
(spins to Brad)  
You sank a basket? How far?

BUM

Far enough. His shot won the game.

CALEB

You "won the game?!"

Caleb grabs Brads shoulders like any proud father smiling ear-  
to-ear, then slow turns his head to Bum.

CALEB

Why --were you there?

BUM

Relax, CoDumbo. I was dumpster  
diving. People don't always finish  
all of their hot dogs, you know.  
(bends to Alex)  
I love their ends, don't you?

Alex nods. Bum tweaks her nose between his bent first two  
fingers so when pulls back, his thumb-tip is between them.

BUM

Just like this one!

Bum pretends to eat his thumb-tip. Alex grabs at her nose.

ALEX

Aieeeee --!

Bum gags like a cat with a fur-ball to put his thumb back  
between bent-fingers, then "puts" her nose back on.

Alex stops screaming.

ALEX

eee --?

Caleb is speechless. Bum tilts his head to him.

BUM

Caleb means "faithful." Quite an irony that your father chose that name since you resent him so much.

CALEB

I don't --?!

(reins emotions-in angry)

Look in the mirror if you want to see odd, odd-ball! And I prefer my name's other meaning, "dog."

BUM

Same thing. Caleb was sent by Moses to scout the Promised Land. Your descendant and Joshua were the only two over the age of twenty to enter it. Why won't you re-enter it now?

CALEB

Obviously you've read a lot, and I'm sure you have a sad, sad story to tell one and all, but I have to Exodus to a hearing in --?

Caleb looks at his wristwatch and almost has a heart-attack.

BUM

My clothes should be dry now. Kiss your kids on the forehead. I'll meet you at the car.

(goes to leave, turns back)

And don't forget to give them lunch money like you didn't last week!

Bum exits to laundry room. Caleb watches mimicking sarcastic.

CALEB

"Don't forget to give them lunch money."

(pulls out wallet)

*Yes dear, no dear, bite me dear.*

(concerned looks at kids)

Wait! Did I really forget to --?

Brad and Alex both nod.



BRAD

Quite a few times, dad.

Caleb hands each a \$5 bill, then pulls out his iPhone.

CALEB

Call schools, set up a lunch fund.

Caleb kisses Alex on her forehead.

CALEB

Have a great day.

Caleb moves as if to do same to Brad who holds up both hands, *Stop*, then one of them out. They shake.

BRAD

I'm good, dad.

Brad and Alex grab their back-packs and exit the house.

CALEB

Yes. Yes, you both are.

**INT. CALEB'S GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

Caleb sits in his *running* car looking at his wrist-watch.

Bum exits house in now-clean clothes with bag and gets in.

Caleb backs out as the garage-door self-closes.

**INT. CALEB'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

They ride in silence until Bum moves his head side-to-side as if talking to himself, then nods.

BUM

Why don't you wait with them?

CALEB

Look, I'm not comfortable with you getting involved with my family.

Bum imitates Caleb's GPS perfect.

BUM (FILTERED)

When possible, make a U-turn.

CALEB

Stop that!

BUM

Back atcha'. You're not comfortable  
being a single father are you?

Calebs *slams* on the brakes. Both are thrown forward.

CALEB

OUT!

BUM

Why are you so angry all the time?

CALEB

Get, Out!

BUM

(grabs his bag)  
Don't get your tighty-whities in a  
big bunch. And, thanks.

CALEB

Least I shouldn't do.

BUM

(turns back sincere)  
No, it was more, much more than  
most would have done. Thank you.

They stare at each other in silence, then Bum releases his  
seat-belt quoting the Bible.

BUM

"Train up a child in the way they  
should go, so even when old, they  
will not depart from it."

CALEB

Proverbs 22:6, *more or less*. You a  
religious nut?

BUM

(tilts head thinking)  
Don't think so.  
(tilts head other way)  
Don't rightly know?

CALEB

What's your real name?

Bum thinks hard, then shrugs shoulders.

BUM

Don't rightly know?

CALEB

You don't know your own name?!  
What, you have amnesia?

BUM

How would I know, "House!"  
(opens car door)  
Why, you an anti-religious nut?

They stare. Caleb starts the car, then drives off before Bum can exit causing Bum's door to self-close, but not latch.

CALEB

Don't rightly know.

Bum hurries to open-close the door and put on his seat-belt.

**EXT. MUNICIPAL COURT - MOMENTS LATER**

Multi-story building with large steps.

Caleb parks his car at the front curb marked, *Attorneys Only*.  
He and Bum exit. Caleb hands a wad of cash to Bum.

CALEB

Cafeteria is in the basement.

Caleb locks his car with key-fob as he jogs up the stairs.

CALEB

Have a great day!

Caleb disappears into building. Bum feigns as a perfect Brad.

BUM

"I'm good, Dad!"  
(looks at money excited)  
I knew it!

**INT. COURTROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

No spectators.

PROSECUTOR, in three-piece suit, sits behind his table  
twirling his thumbs.

BAILIFF, in full Deputy's uniform, and BENCH CLERK in skirt-suit, stand talking.

JUDGE, in judicial robe, sits behind his bench watching the  
wall clock.

Caleb rushes in. Judge holds out a flat palm.

JUDGE  
Put it here.

CALEB  
Put what where, your Honor?

JUDGE  
The Late Pass. You were excused  
from showing up on time, right?

Caleb is embarrassed and sits by his DEFENDANT, 30s, beard-stubble Caucasian male who wears a cheap wrinkled suit.

CALEB  
Sorry, your Honor. I'm prepared ...

JUDGE  
We were alllll prepared, counselor  
-- fifteen minutes ago!  
(threatens with gavel)  
Don't ever be late to my courtroom  
again.

Caleb is more than embarrassed, now he's flustered.

BUM  
Don't yell at my friend!

ALL look. Bum is sitting in the last pew eating something.

JUDGE  
Why --are you eating in my  
courtroom?

Bum jams the rest of his breakfast sandwich in his mouth,  
then swallows it all, *gags*, and *coughs*.

JUDGE  
Bailiff, escort the ...

Bum stands tucking in his shirt.

BUM  
May it please the Court?

JUDGE  
Yes, it would very much please this  
Court --if you were not in it.

BUM

Your Honor, I apologize for my earlier outburst, I was not being disrespectful or showing contempt.

(pulls off his cap)

I was merely trying to deflect your anger towards me, since it was I, a humble servant of all Law, that caused him to be so tardy.

JUDGE

(intrigued)

How "so?"

Judge sees Bum has ketchup in a corner of his mouth and gives hand-motions for him to wipe it off throughout Bum's speech.

BUM

Sir, because of circumstances beyond my control, I found myself without an abode in last night's freezing cold, and since all the shelters were full, this man --

Bum points to Caleb who has been watching the Judge's hand-motions. Caleb gets out his handkerchief and goes to Bum.

BUM

this good good man --

Caleb wets corner of his handkerchief to wipe off Bum's mouth-corner. He and Bum have another quick funny slap-fight, then Caleb goes back to his table.

Judge tries to hide his smile.

BUM

let me sleep in his house, shower with his deceased wife's shampoo, then almost fed me.

JUDGE

Almost?

Bum reenacts his eating, Caleb's wiping, and the slap-fight.

Judge nods while looking down to hide his grin.

BUM

So as you can see your Honor --

Bum waits. Judge looks up serious again.

BUM

I am very grateful to him, and would therefore be as grateful to you if you could see your way to not hold ill will towards this, kind man, especially at this time of year. I will now sit quietly throughout these proceedings. Thank you for your time.

Bum sits down ramrod straight.

Bailiff looks at Judge. Judge shrugs his shoulders.

JUDGE

Proceed.

Bailiff stands back against his wall.

Caleb and his Defendant stand.

Bench Clerk reads aloud from Defendant's case file.

CLERK

Defendant is charged with one count of Shop Lifting, your Honor.

JUDGE

How does the Defendant plead?

BUM

(stands again)

Permission to now speak at the Court as amicus curiae?

JUDGE

You, a friend, of this Court?

BUM

Of any court, your Honor.

Bum tries to straighten his disheveled appearance.

BUM

I am someone who is not a party to the case and was not solicited by any party, but can assist this court by offering information and insight that has a direct bearing on the issue at hand.

Judge is open-mouth surprised at Bum's legal eloquence.

JUDGE

Nice recitation of its full and correct definition. Do you have a Brief?

BUM

No your Honor, but I will be brief.

JUDGE

If nothing else, you'll make for an interesting story on the ninth tee. Proceed.

Bum strides to the Bench with learned authority.

BUM

Your Honor, I happened to be begging, uh, standing in front of the involved merchant's location, when I over-heard the Defendant --  
(nods to Defendant)  
talking to himself about why he didn't want to, but had to, "borrow" two items from the said aggrieved merchant.

Bum grabs his coats lapels like *Clarence Darrow*.

JUDGE

Don't stop now, it just getting interesting.

BUM

You see, your Honor, the Defendant recently lost his job and used all their savings to pay rent and utilities in advance.

Bum smiles most charming. His brushed-teeth star-gleam.

BUM

But he didn't know where he was going to get food to feed his family Christmas dinner, let alone buy them any yuletide presents.

JUDGE

(to Caleb)

Is the Defense's argument that your Client stole --Christmas presents?

Caleb rustles through his papers open-mouth stuttering.

BUM

He leased them, your Honor. If you  
look in the case file --

Bum hand-circles to Clerk, *Look*.

BUM

you'll find the Defendant left a  
promissory note at the scene with  
his contact information.

Judge looks at Clerk who looks in the file, is surprised,  
then hands a note to Judge who reads and is also surprised.

JUDGE

"Shoes and glasses?"

BUM

The shoes were for his daughter to  
wear to school because her current  
pair tore, and the reading glasses  
were for his wife who broke her old  
ones. He took nothing for himself.

JUDGE

(to Defendant)

Is that true?

Defendant hangs his head embarrassed, and nods.

Judge holds up same note to him.

JUDGE

So you left an I.O.U. promising to  
pay when you got a new job?

Defendant nods again still embarrassed.

Caleb looks at Bum, *How did --?*

BUM

Under these specific circumstances,  
having now shown both remorse for  
and acceptance of, his behavior,  
while having no priors, I am sure  
that if this Court were willing to  
dismiss the charge, his attorney  
would be willing to reimburse the  
merchant and pay any and all Court  
Costs.

Caleb is deer-in-the headlights, then snaps his mouth closed.



CALEB

He would?  
(to Judge)  
He would!

Judge reads I.O.U. again, studies Defendant, then *hits* gavel.

JUDGE

Case dismissed pending payment to  
the Cashier, then you are free to  
leave.  
(to Caleb)  
You know the way.

Bailiff looks at Judge who nods, then hands the I.O.U.  
"evidence" to Caleb.

Defendant shakes Caleb's hand two-on-one, then Bum's, and  
skips out of court.

DEFENDANT

Merry Christmas to all!

Judge *chuckles*, shakes his head, and talks to himself.

JUDGE

*Reading glasses and shoes, huh?*  
(snaps fingers)  
Of course, my wife lost her last  
pair and needs a new pair! Both are  
perfect gifts!

Judge smiles at Bum, then exits *humming* a Christmas Carol.

Bum slides a pointer-finger off side of his nose at Judge.

**INT. COURTHOUSE CASHIER WINDOW - MOMENTS LATER**

Caleb slides a credit card under the pass-through window to  
COURT CASHIER, 50s, bouffant hairdo, wearing reading glasses  
down on the tip of her nose with a lanyard around her neck.

CALEB

Where did you learn to speak in  
court like that?

BUM

Don't rightly know.

CALEB

What --do you know?

BUM

I woke up in the snow, a week ago.

CALEB

You're a poet and don't know it.  
That's it? And you've been living  
on the street ever since?

BUM

I wouldn't call it --"living."

CALEB

With no memories, none at all?

BUM

I get flashes of insight, but no  
clear recollections.

Court Cashier passes receipt to Caleb, but lingers to listen.

CALEB

But you can speak cultured. You  
must have gone to college?

BUM

Now that, I do know. --No.

CALEB

"No?" Then where did you learn Law?

BUM

Law --of the jungle.  
(pats his round belly)  
Pontificating gives me an appetite.  
I could go for a donut about now.

Defendant skips by waving.

Bum gives a loud two-finger *whistle* causing all PASSERBYS to  
freeze. Defendant turns. Bum hand-motions Defendant to come  
back as Bum turns to Caleb demanding.

BUM

Give him all your cash.

CALEB

Do, What?!

BUM

You've got two hundred dollars in  
your wallet. Give it to him.

Caleb puts his credit card back in his wallet, then counts  
the cash in it, and once again, is surprised.

CALEB

How did you ...?

BUM

You can write it off as a client expense. He needs it for food more than you do.

(to Cashier)

May I have pen and paper, please.

Court Cashier is fascinated and gives Bum paper and a pen.

Bum writes on the paper and gives the pen back to her.

BUM

Yes.

COURT CASHIER

"Yes" --what?

BUM

Yes, you will be able to visit your brother for the Holidays.

Court Clerk comes up behind Cashier Clerk.

COURT CLERK

Judge is in a great mood, he just approved your Holiday Leave.

All, except Bum, look at the Court Clerk.

COURT CASHIER

What, when?

COURT CLERK

Just now, never seen him so jolly.

Bum takes Caleb's Court receipt and hands it, his \$200 cash, and the paper I.O.U. to Defendant, then holds out his folded note. Defendant hesitates, then takes it.

BUM

Take these to that merchant, then ask for a job. He needs seasonal help. Tell him why you did it.

Defendant shakes Bum's hand animated, then Caleb's, and runs down the hall into the arms of his WIFE who is crying happy.

Bum tongue-whistles *loud*. Defendant looks back.

BUM

They have a sale on spiral hams!

Court Clerk, Court Cashier, and Caleb, all look at Bum.

BUM

What?

**INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER THAT DAY**

Upscale bistro. Caleb and Bum sit at a small table enjoying coffee and donuts. Caleb munches while Bum devours.

CALEB

You appear to be very --intuitive.

BUM

(quotes definition)

"Instinct based on what one feels  
to be true without conscious  
reasoning."

Caleb nods. Bum now extends his pinky to sip his coffee.

BUM

Kinda' like believing in Christmas?

Caleb *chokes* on his coffee, then wipes chin with a napkin.

Police Officer enters to place an order, and sees them.

POLICE OFFICER

You two hitting it off, I see.

Caleb was taking another sip and *chokes* more on his coffee.

Bum stuffs the rest of his jelly donut into his mouth so jelly squirts out of his mouth-corner again.

Police Officer hand-motions for Bum to wipe it off.

BUM

He doesn't want to, those pesky  
morays keep getting in the way.

Caleb sees Police Officer's hand-motions and gets out same handkerchief to wet and wipe off Bum's mouth-corner again.

BUM

See?

Caleb looks at his ketchup and jelly stained handkerchief, then hands it to Bum.

CALEB

Just trying to be civilized.

POLICE OFFICER

That's because you're a civilian.

Caleb and Bum stare at Police Officer. Crickets. He *coughs*.

POLICE OFFICER

Shelters are still full with  
another freeze-warning. What are  
you going to do with him tonight?

Bum stuffs in another donut to now talk with his mouth full.

BUM

Yeah? So "what are you going to do  
with him tonight?"

Caleb looks out the window shaking his head, then shrugs his  
shoulders and goes to say something, but nothing comes out.  
He drops his head, *sighs*, then acquiesces.

**EXT. PRINCETON HOUSE - THAT NIGHT**

Their car pulls into the garage with Bum and Caleb who turns  
off the engine. Garage door closes and its light goes out.  
Both sit in silent darkness staring ahead, then Caleb opens  
his door slightly. Car's interior light comes on.

BUM

You always get home this late?

CALEB

Brad's an adult, he handles things.

BUM

But why should he have to? What are  
you really teaching him?

CALEB

Self-reliance.

BUM

More like, self-detachment.

CALEB

You don't know your name, or your  
past, but do know the law, which is  
apparently all you do know because  
(leans in threatening)  
you, don't, know, me.

BUM

Benjamin Franklin said the best thing any parent can give their child is a good example. Are you?

CALEB

What?! But you said earlier ...?

BUM

You were a "good parent?" Not the same thing.

CALEB

You can sleep in the laundry room again, but this is the last time.

BUM

Hard for you to trust again, huh?

CALEB

Yes, because --.  
(angry realization)  
Hey! I don't know me!

BUM

I think you meant to say, "you" don't know you.

Caleb replays both statements in his head confused.

CALEB

That's what I said?

BUM

But not what you meant. Carol often pointed that out to you.

Caleb jumps out of the car like shot from a cannon.

**INT. OUTSIDE OF CALEB'S CAR IN GARAGE - CONTINUOUS**

Caleb hit his head on the door frame of the car getting out and holds onto the top of his head.

CALEB

How dare you say her name!

Bum exits car giving the definition of that word.

BUM

"Dare is to have the courage to admit something" --which you won't.

Caleb grabs his head in pain.

CALEB

Please go away. Ever since you got here ...

BUM

What? I make you think about things you don't want to?

Caleb nods in more pain.

BUM

It's okay to live Life again. Carol wants you to.

Caleb throws his keys at Bum who catches them one-handed.

CALEB

Stop saying her name! Get out!

BUM

Yes. Out of all the people you could meet at that symposium --you met her.

Too much, Caleb sits on an old stool by his workbench.

Bum turns on the garage overhead light and closes car doors.

CALEB

How did you --I don't understand?

BUM

I don't understand either, and yet I do. Just like I understand the pain you're still in, and that you're sharing it with your children. She wouldn't want that.

Caleb jumps up like electrocuted.

CALEB

What are you talking about?!

Bum clicks wall-switch and garage door opens. Bum points to the outside.

BUM

See --for yourself. Go on.

Caleb walks to the opening and stares. Bum stands beside him.

BUM

What do you see?

CALEB

My, neighborhood?

BUM

What does your heart see?

Caleb now sees his street's Christmas decorations for the first time in three years. He clutches at his heart.

CALEB

Their decorations, they're --  
*beautiful.*

Bum turns Caleb by the shoulders to him.

BUM

That's not what your children see.

CALEB

Why? --I, I did that to them?

BUM

Didn't meant to, but yeah, you did.

Caleb collapses. Bum has to catch him.

BUM

But it's not too late.

Caleb pushes Bum away to recompose.

CALEB

For what?! Silly decorations that  
don't mean anything?

BUM

There "It" is.

CALEB

What is?

BUM

Your dispassionate detachment. The  
same blessing that made you such a  
successful attorney, is also the  
curse that keeps you living in the  
past.

(steps back)

And yes --your father loved you.

Caleb jumps away angry with fists clenched.



CALEB

Almost had me, old man! --Almost.  
So now I really mean it, get out!

BUM

So many angry memories cloud your  
true remembrance. They both loved  
you --in their own way.

Caleb *slaps* Bum.

CALEB

"They both" left me!

BUM

There "IT" is!

Caleb stumbles back across the garage to sit on stool again.

Bum rubs his reddening cheek.

BUM

Nice right hook, Muhammad. Want me  
to turn the other so they match?

Caleb doesn't know what to feel, so he goes on automatic.

CALEB

Sorry.

BUM

I'm not.

Caleb doesn't understand. Bum goes to him.

BUM

What did you just say?

CALEB

I'm --"sorry?"

Bum *slaps* Caleb who is shocked.

BUM

Not to me, dummy --to yourself!

CALEB

"Almost --had me?"

Bum *slaps* Caleb's other cheek who stands to *slap* Bum's other  
cheek.

BUM

Okay, now that we match. What did you just say about "they?"

CALEB

"They --left me?"

BUM

There IT Is!

CALEB

What is?

Bum raises a hand to slap again. Caleb ducks. Bum kneels to tap the side of Caleb's head.

BUM

Think! Reason it out.

Caleb stands to pace as a first-year law student.

CALEB

"They left me?" How --by dying?  
(shakes head)  
No, she did. But he was never there, so he couldn't leave.

BUM

You sure about that?

Caleb becomes Sherlock Holmes grabbing his old pipe off the workbench to now pace with it between his teeth postulating.

CALEB

Aristotle said Science aims at the ascertainment of truth. Patterson says a proposition of law is true if it accords with certain institutional facts.

BUM

That's the Positivists. What do contemporary Natural Lawyers say?

CALEB

Truth is consistent with principals of morality.

BUM

There IT IS!

CALEB

You've read, "Law and Truth?"

BUM  
Hasn't everyone?

Caleb doesn't understand, doesn't want to, so continues to pace thinking, but not really wanting to.

BUM  
What did you find every Christmas morning taped to your present?

CALEB  
A bow?

Bum *kicks* Caleb in a shin who grabs it hopping on good leg.

BUM  
Come on, it's in there. Remember!  
Caleb furrows his brow, this is a toughie, then remembers.

CALEB  
A picture of me. --Asleep.  
(drops hurt leg)  
So?

Bum *kicks* Caleb's other shin who now grabs its knee.

CALEB  
Stop that!

BUM  
You first.  
(no response)  
"So" --who took, the picture?

CALEB  
(drops second leg)  
I always assumed, mom?

Bum draws back a haymaker. Caleb crouches. Bum crouches.

BUM  
What happens when you assume?

CALEB  
Make an ass out of you and me?

BUM  
THERE IT IS!

Christmas memories flood over Caleb who drops to his knees looking at Bum with pleading eyes. Bum drops to own knees.

BUM  
It's okay, let them out.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. YOUNG CALEB'S BEDROOM - MANY YEARS AGO**

YOUNG CALEB, who looks like Brad's twin, is sound asleep under his sheets with "police cars" printed on them.

Suddenly a bright flash is followed by the unmistakable "crinkling" sound of a vintage flash-bulb cooling down.

Young Caleb opens one eye that adjusts to the dark and he sees a SILHOUETTE standing in the doorway holding a camera.

The camera moves, and Young Caleb now sees that his mystery Silhouette is his FATHER, in full police uniform, who smiles.

Young Caleb half-waves, then goes back to sleep smiling.

RETURN TO.

**INT. PRINCETON GARAGE - PRESENT NIGHT**

Caleb springs to standing.

CALEB  
I remember the flash and that --  
sound!

Bum rubs his thumb and two fingertips together recreating the exact same sound of an old flash-bulb "crinkling."

CALEB  
Yes, that! I remember that now!  
(covers mouth with hands)  
My father took my picture. But why?

BUM  
He worked every Christmas to give one of his officers the day off to be with their family. But no matter where he was or what he was doing, he would make the time to come home, and take your picture.

CALEB  
"Why?"

BUM

So his picture would prove he was  
there because, he loved you.

This is too much, Caleb begins to tear-up.

CALEB

Why didn't he say something?!  
Anything, later, to remind me?

BUM

He tried to on his death-bed.  
Remember?

Bum makes hand-movement of holding an antique camera and  
pushing down on its lens release-lever, *click*.

FLASHBACK TO:

**INT. CALEB FATHER'S HOSPITAL ROOM - ON HIS DEATH BED**

Caleb's Father, older, balding, looking frail and haggard, is  
in a dual hospital room with second bed empty. He has an I.V.  
in his wrist and his heart monitor is beeping irregular.

YOUNGER CALEB, looking the same as now, but without the grey  
hair on his temples, is standing by his Father's bedside.

Caleb's Father does Bum's same camera hand-motions, *click*, as  
his monitor goes to that dreaded straight-line *hum*.

RETURN TO.

**INT. CALEB'S GARAGE - SAME PRESENT NIGHT**

Caleb is overwhelmed by all his pent-up feelings and *slams* a  
fist on the workbench-top. The hanging wall-tools *jangle*.

CALEB

But he never said "it!"

BUM

But he showed it! Police officers  
have to keep their emotions in  
check or they can't do their job  
objectively. His coming home and  
taking your picture was the only  
way he knew how to tell you.

Caleb tries to stand but his knees buckle. Bum catches him.

BUM

Come on, I'll help you to bed. Your  
real bed. You've just had a major  
breakthrough.

Bum helps Caleb to the interior door, then reaches for the  
garage door switch.

CALEB

Wait.  
(looks out at lights)  
They really are --quite beautiful.

BUM

None are so blind --.

CALEB

As those that choose not see?

BUM

Not any more. You have just seen --  
The Light.

Bum flicks the switch. Overhead light turns off and garage  
door self-closes as both enter the house. The outside  
Christmas lights sparkle bright through garage windows.

**INT. PRINCETON HOUSE, FOURTH BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING**

The Master Bedroom. Caleb is asleep on top of its bedspread  
still in same clothes with a blanket overtop him. He awakes,  
does a full stretch, then smacks his lips scratching. He  
becomes aware he is being stared at and opens his eyes full.

Brad is standing over him looking down stern.

BRAD

Thought you said "not Santa" didn't  
stay here no more?

CALEB

What, who? Oh, him --.  
(yawns big)  
The shelters were still full.

BRAD

(dry sarcasm)  
Oh, really?

CALEB

(snort-chuckles)  
You sound like your mother.

BRAD

What about her?

CALEB

Just that you remind me of her  
sometimes.

BRAD

Is that why you don't like me?

Caleb was stretching again, but is caught off guard and tries to get out of bed too fast, gets tangled in his blanket, and falls onto the floor.

BRAD

Now I know what to get you for  
Christmas.

CALEB

What?

BRAD

"Help! I've fallen and I can't get  
it up!"

Caleb grabs Brad's ankle to wrestle.

CALEB

I'll show you who can't get it up.

Brad yanks his ankle away angry.

BRAD

Stop pretending! We don't have the  
time. We'll both be late for work.

CALEB

Work?

BRAD

You think getting straight A's is  
easy? And then having to go to  
practice everyday?

CALEB

But I thought you liked playing?

BRAD

How would you know, you never come  
to my games.

Brad exits angry yelling back over his shoulder.

BRAD

I only do it so you can boast to  
your Partners!

Brad's words sting of truth. Caleb reflects to himself.

CALEB

*Sins of the fathers.*

Caleb tries to get up, can't, and throws a little-kid tantrum  
in his wrapped-in-a-blanket trying to kick it off.

Bum walks in dressed in his clean rags and chuckles.

BUM

Aww, is the iddy-biddy baby having  
a temperest tantrum?

**INT. CALEB'S CAR - LATER THAT MORNING**

Caleb, now in a three-piece suit, and Bum, still in his rags  
and cap clutching his red bag, ride along in silence.

CALEB

This shelter finally had an  
opening.

BUM

Fan-freakin'-tastic.

CALEB

There a problem?

BUM

Ever stayed in one?

They ride in silence until Caleb *snaps* his fingers.

CALEB

Got a call from my client. You  
know, the one you helped in court?  
That merchant did give him a job --  
(nods to Bum)  
good job.

BUM

Must be nice to have one.

CALEB

Did you ever have "one?"



BUM

Think so. I get flashes of people  
smiling and kids laughing.

This is the first time we hear Caleb truly *laugh*.

CALEB

You'd make a great Santa!

BUM

Thought you didn't believe in  
Christmas?

CALEB

No, you know, as a job.  
(*snaps fingers again*)  
We had a department store as a  
client last year.

Caleb pushes a button on his dash-cell.

CALEB

Dial --Sturgis, Personnel.

PHONE (FILTERED)

Calling --Regis Philbin.

CALEB

What?!

Phone *rings* on other end and Regis Philbin picks up.

REGIS (FILTERED)

Merry Christmas!

Caleb reaches to disconnect, but Bum *slaps* his hand away.

BUM

Ho, Ho, Ho. MERRY, CHRISTMAS!

REGIS (FILTERED)

Santa?

Bum pushes on Caleb's shoulder motioning, *Say something*.

CALEB

Hey Regis, this is Caleb Princeton.

REGIS (FILTERED)

Oh hey, Caleb. Who was that?

Caleb is deer-in-the-headlights again.

BUM

A store Santa. Caleb thought you might like a "Happy Holidays" from one!

REGIS (FILTERED)

Well thank you Santa, and the same to you. And thank you Caleb, that was very thoughtful. Hey, next time you're in New York, call me.

CALEB

Will do. Take care, Regis.

REGIS (FILTERED)

Wait!

CALEB

What?

REGIS (FILTERED)

I wanna' hear "you" say it.

CALEB

Say what?

REGIS (FILTERED)

Come on, I know what you've been going through. I thought you had finally turned the corner with this call. Say it. It'll make you feel better. Slways does me.

Bum stares at Caleb, *Go on.* Caleb *grumbles* shaking his head.

CALEB

*Merry Christmas.*

REGIS (FILTERED)

Oh come on Caleb. That was your Scrooge speaking. Try it again.

CALEB

Merry --Christmas?

REGIS (FILTERED)

I'm not hanging up till you say it right.

Caleb resists. Bum pushes on his shoulder. Caleb pushes back. It escalates into their usual silly slap-fight.

REGIS (FILTERED)

I'm waiting. And at my age --

Bum now has Caleb in a headlock squeezing him to yell.

CALEB  
Merry Christmas!

REGIS (FILTERED)  
There "it" is! Now don't you feel better? My love to the kids. Take care. Merry Christmas.

Phone disconnects. Bum releases Caleb who is angry.

CALEB  
What is wrong with you?!

BUM  
"What is wrong with you?!" Don't you know how much joy you just brought to a man who has brought joy to millions!  
(tilts head to self)  
*Boy that sounds familiar?*

Car-phone *rings*. Bum pushes its Receive button.

BUM  
Merry Christmas!

REGIS (FILTERED)  
Oh hey. Santa. Is Caleb there?

CALEB  
I'm here.

REGIS (FILTERED)  
Good, listen. I'm working on a deal that will need an attorney, so call me first of the year.

CALEB  
Oh, well, thank you, will do.

REGIS (FILTERED)  
And thank you! You have no idea how much your call cheered me up.

Caleb looks at Bum who mimes, *See*, then gets stern, *Go on*.

CALEB  
Uh --Merry Christmas.

Regis is heard *Ho-Ho*-laughing, then phone disconnects.

BUM

Everything happens for a reason. I believe that. And now you should too. Especially since you just got a deal out of it for the new year.

CALEB

Oh, okay, fine, so maybe you're right --*maybe*.

Caleb thinks, *snaps* his fingers, then counts on them.

CALEB

First, we stop and get you new interview clothes. Second, we stop at Sturgis department store.

BUM

Only if you do me a favor first.

CALEB

Haven't dI one enough?!

BUM

No. None of us can ever do enough, for each other.

CALEB

(*sighs exasperated*)  
What now?

BUM

Enough with the onesie-tvosie dictums. Don't you hear your own son emulating you? Try and talk like a normal person, Norman.

CALEB

"Normal?!" And it's Caleb. Look who's calling the kettle black.

BUM

Nice metaphor.

Caleb has to *laugh*, and he does have a nice one at that.

BUM

There "it" is!

**INT. HIGH-END MEN'S CLOTHING STORE - MOMENTS LATER**

**MUSIC-MONTAGE:** Bum tries on different Santa suits with Caleb judging them. Suggested score, Z.Z. Top's *Sharp Dressed Man*.

**INT. STURGIS PERSONNEL WAITING ROOM - LATER SAME MORNING**

Small outer waiting area with chairs and a magazine table.

Caleb sits reading a magazine, then tosses it on the table. He checks his wristwatch as the inner door opens and Bum comes out in a tailored Santa Suit. Caleb stands, *Well?*

BUM

Manager said I can start today.

CALEB

"Today?!" That's great. Now you've got a place to stay and a job!

Caleb rubs his hands, then extends one. Bum stares at it.

BUM

*There it is.*

CALEB

What?

BUM

Your trademark "Don't call me, I'll never call you" --never, handshake.

CALEB

Sounds guuuud!

Caleb raises eyebrows happy and vibrates his hand wanting to shake. Bum nods resigned and shakes it. Caleb turns to exit.

BUM

No good-bye kiss?

CALEB

How about a kiss-off?

Caleb throws an exaggerated palm-kiss. Bum just stares back.

BUM

Not even a good-bye "Merry Christmas?"

CALEB

"Good-bye, Merry Christmas!"

Caleb exits smiling big.

BUM

*There it is.*

Caleb is now gone. Bum looks sad. Inner office door opens.

**INT. PRINCETON DINING ROOM - THAT NIGHT**

Brad and Alex are sitting at their place settings listening to Caleb in the kitchen *whistling*.

BRAD  
Is dad --?

ALEX  
Yep. He's *whistling*.

Alex tries to *whistle*. She can't.

Caleb enters carrying a serving tray with different bowls of Chinese food and sits.

BRAD  
Chinese New Year?

CALEB  
Might as well be. I'm home, in time to have dinner with my kids.

BRAD  
Were you fired?

Caleb was sipping some wine and *chokes*.

CALEB  
What?! No?

Caleb dishes some food on his plate and goes to eat.

Alex *slaps* Caleb's fork hand making him drop it.

CALEB  
What?

ALEX  
We haven't said grace.

CALEB  
"We" don't do that.  
(to Alex)  
Do, "we?"

BRAD  
We, do.

CALEB  
Since when?

ALEX

Since mommy died and you stopped coming home.

Caleb spit-takes his wine, then wipes his mouth with napkin.

CALEB

I've never seen you guys do it?

BRAD

That's because you're never here.

CALEB

I've had dinner with you before.  
(no response, thinks)  
Haven't I?

BRAD

Dad, this is the first time you've been home early since her funeral.

CALEB

Noooo? What? That can't be true?

Caleb looks at Alex who nods her head. He thinks more.

BRAD

It's okay, dad. You can tell us. Do we have to move?

CALEB

What? No? I'm not fired! I just felt like --celebrating.

BRAD

What?

CALEB

That I got that guy ...

BRAD

"Not Santa?"

CALEB

Yeah, him, a job today.

BRAD

Doing what?

Caleb goes back to eating and *mumbles* unintelligible.

ALEX

Not polite to mumble, daddy.

CALEB  
*Store Santa.*

BRAD  
Wait. You got "not Santa," a job  
as, "We Got Santa?"

Alex *screams* high enough to summon canines.

ALEX  
Aieeee! I wanna' go! I wanna' go! I  
wanna' go see Santa!

CALEB  
(winces recovering)  
Calm down, sweetie. I don't even  
know when he works.

BRAD  
Dad, it's Christmas. He works every  
night. Probably up to and including  
Christmas Eve.

Alex goes ballistic again *screaming* to break glass.

ALEX  
AIEEEE! I wanna' go! I wanna' go ..!

Caleb puts his hand over her mouth. She keeps repeating her  
command *mumbling*.

CALEB  
Okay, okay, calm down. I'll find  
out his schedule tomorrow.

BRAD  
I'm not going.

CALEB  
You have to go. I can't leave you  
home alone.

BRAD  
What do you think you've been doing  
all these years?

CALEB  
That's different. Aand it hasn't  
been years.

Alex holds up three fingers.

Caleb removes his hand from Alex to look at Brad.



CALEB

That can't be true? --Is it?

BRAD

You do realize, we would not even be having this conversation, if it were not for that "Not Santa" guy staying here.

CALEB

(counting on fingers)

How many double-negatives is ...?

Alex stands in her chair to reach across the table and take Brad's hand, then she takes Caleb's hand who stares at Brad. Awkward moment, then Brad takes Caleb's hand.

ALEX

Bow your heads.

Brad and Alex do. Caleb doesn't. Alex's *blessing* fades in his ears as he watches them.

**FRAME INSERT:** A car's headlights pass by their bay window flashing off the glass of his wife's picture frame.

He looks at it, then his children. All the time he lost not watching them grow up catches up with him. He gets misty.

**INT. STURGIS DEPARTMENT STORE SANTA LAND - NEXT NIGHT**

Bum, in Santa suit, sits on a high-back throne with Christmas tree and decorations around him. One-by-one, a CHILD is led by STORE ELF, a teen girl in costume, to sit on Bum's lap.

Caleb, now in a different suit, enters and watches Bum.

STURGIS MANAGER comes up to Caleb and grabs his hand shaking.

MANAGER

Had my doubts when you called. But our regular Santa came down with the flu, so --.

(rubs hands as King Midas)

Everything happens for a reason.

They watch Bum working with the CHILDREN.

CALEB

I take it, he's working out?

Manager points to the long waiting line.

MANAGER

"Working out?!" Why, he doesn't even take breaks. He says no child should be ignored by Santa even for a moment! Can you believe that? Our sales have doubled since he started Ho-Hoing for us.

Manager *slaps* the back of Caleb hard knocking him forward.

MANAGER

Yep! Gonna' be a very Merry Christmas indeedy-weedy.

DANISH CHILD is put on Bum's lap and begins speaking sad in her native tongue. Bum has a fluid conversation with her in Danish. Her eyes light up.

CALEB

He speaks --Danish?

MANAGER

And about twelve other languages I've heard. He even speaks Farsi. Who the heck speaks Farsi?

CALEB

Hundred and ten million Persians.

Manager's eyebrows go up like cash-register dollar signs.

MANAGER

I'm taking out an ad tomorrow.  
(hands widen to horizon)  
"Multi-Lingual Santa!"  
(*slaps* Caleb's back again)  
Yes sir, owe you big-time, sir!

CALEB

Uh, my kids want to come see him.

MANAGER

Absolutely, of course, I'll give them the grand tour, and they won't even have to stand in line.

CALEB

What are his hours?

MANAGER

Are you kidding? The man won't go home. He's here when I get here.

Manager *claps* hands in epiphany, then clasps them happier.

MANAGER

There "it" is!  
(hands spread wide apart)  
Open till midnight, except on  
Christmas Eve!  
(elbows Caleb)  
*Have to close by six, you know.*  
*Union Elves.*

Manager *slaps* Caleb on the back again so hard Caleb stumbles forward. Manager dance-exits so happy, if this were Oz, the Sturgis yellow-brick road just turned to gold.

**INT. STUGIS SANTA LAND - NEXT EVENING**

The line of MORE CHILDREN is now longer.

Caleb, holding Alex's hand, and Brad enter.

Bum sees and waves to them.

BUM

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

More Children *scream* in excitement.

MORE CHILDREN

Santa!

Alex runs to Bum who puts on his lap. Caleb and Brad walk up.

BUM

And what do you want for Christmas,  
little girl?

Alex starts kicking her legs happy.

Caleb feels someone *tapping* his shoulder. He turns to BRIANNA WILLIAMS, 40's, African-American, in a business suit, who stands with arms-folded and is not in a very merry mood.

BRIANNA

Wait your turn, mister.

CALEB

Excuse me?

BRIANNA

No, don't think I will. My daughter  
and I have been standing in line  
for two hours. We're next.

Brianna points to DESIREE WILLIAMS, 8, who is dressed same and stands arms-folded like her mother with same stern look.

CALEB

Oh, well, he's a friend of ours.

BUM

I'm --"a friend?!"

(to Alex)

When did that happen?

If looks could kill, Brianna just murdered Caleb, twice.

More Children's MORE PARENTS nearby have been listening.

MORE PARENTS

Back a' the line, buddy ...Come on  
... We've been waiting too you know  
...Yeah buddy, etc.

BUM

Alex, sweetheart, would you mind  
waiting with the rest? I promise  
I'll make it worth your while.

Alex hugs Bum's neck, then slides off to take Caleb's hand.

ALEX

Come on, daddy.

Alex leads Caleb to the back of the line to *applause* from  
More Parents. Brad is mortified.

BRAD

I'm going shopping.

CALEB

Have your phone?

Brad has already started walking away and nods.

CALEB

Keep it on. --And check in!

**INT. STUGIS SANTA LAND - MOMENTS LATER**

Alex and Caleb stand at the back of the long Children's line.

Alex is jumping up and down waiting. Caleb checks his watch.

BRIANNA

Excuse me.

Caleb looks up to see its Brianna again and makes a face.

CALEB  
No, don't think I will.

BRIANNA  
Touché.

CALEB  
Only in horseshoes and hand-  
grenades.

BRIANNA  
Excuse me?

CALEB  
Already answered.

BRIANNA  
You're not making this easy.

CALEB  
Am I supposed to?

BRIANNA  
Who took a dump in your crib?

CALEB  
Excuse me?

BRIANNA  
Now we're even.

Brianna goes to leave holding Desiree's hand who stands firm.

DESIREE  
You promised, Santa.

CALEB  
Which Santa?

Desiree points to Bum.

CALEB  
Promised what?

Brianna doesn't answer. Desiree stomps her own foot. Brianna  
*mumbles.*

BRIANNA  
*He said, you were a good man.*

DESIREE  
Not polite to mumble mommy. And --?

Brianna *stomps* her own foot.

Caleb grins huge. Brianna sees his reaction.

BRIANNA

What?!

CALEB

It's just, the way you just stomped  
your foot. It reminded me --of  
someone very special to me.

BRIANNA

Who?

Caleb doesn't answer.

ALEX

Mommy.

BRIANNA

You're married?

Caleb doesn't answer.

ALEX

She went away.

Brianna is taken aback, her armor cracks.

BRIANNA

I'm sorry.

ALEX

You married?

CALEB

Alex!

(to Brianna)

I'm sorry, we don't get out that  
often.

BRIANNA

Why not?

ALEX

He misses mommy.

CALEB

ALEX!

BRIANNA

How long?

Alex holds up three fingers.

BRIANNA  
Months?

CALEB  
*Feels like it.*

DESIREE  
Our daddy died last year.

BRIANNA  
Desi!

DESIREE  
Mommy's sad, too.

BRIANNA  
DESI!

ALEX  
They should go out.

DESIREE  
Do them good.

Brianna and Caleb are speechless.

ALEX  
Okay, when?

DESIREE  
This week-end.

Brianna and Caleb now have to hold onto store-shelving to steady themselves.

BRIANNA  
Sorry.

CALEB  
I'm not. It's --funny.

BRIANNA  
What's "funny?"

CALEB  
That our daughters are trying to hook us up.

DESIREE  
Shake hands.

ALEX

Introduce yourselves.

Brianna and Caleb now have to sit down on their shelving.

Desiree and Alex look at each other shaking heads disgusted.

ALEX

This is my dad, Caleb Princeton.  
He's an attorney.

DESIREE

This is my mom, Brianna Williams.  
She's a crazy-doctor.

BRIANNA

DESI!

CALEB

"Crazy doctor?"

BRIANNA

Psychologist. What kind of law?

CALEB

Corporate. What field of  
psychology?

BRIANNA

Retrograde Amnesia.

Caleb springs to his feet. Brianna stands wondering.

CALEB

Can I talk to you in private for a  
moment, please?

BRIANNA

Uh, you two girls get to know each  
other. We'll be right over there.

Caleb and Brianna step over for Caleb to tell her about Bum.

ALEX

What do you think?

DESIREE

Maybe, maybe not. I don't know? My  
mom can be real fussy.

ALEX

My dad's no pumpkin.



DESIREE

Peach. Your dad is no "peach."

ALEX

You know my daddy?

Desiree is confused, then understands Alex is playing with her. They both *squeal*, then watch Caleb and Brianna talk.

**INT. STUGIS SANTA LAND - LATER THAT NIGHT**

Brianna and Desiree are now talking to Caleb and Alex who are the only ones left in line. The store is getting ready to close as its overhead announcement comes on. Brad walks up.

MANAGER (FILTERED)

Our store is now closed. Please  
bring all final purchases to the  
front registers.

(*clicks off then on*)

And Happy Holidays to all!

Bum hand-motions Brad over who goes. Bum motions him to sit in the Elf chair beside him. They have a long private talk.

BRIANNA

What's that about?

CALEB

Don't know?

Bum and Brad shakes hands, then Brad comes over to them.

CALEB

What was that about?

BRAD

Don't know.

Bum two-finger *whistles* hurting everyone's ears, then hand-motions for Alex to come over who does running. He puts her on his knee and they have a long private talk. She hugs his neck tight as he pats her back, then she hand-motions Desiree to come over who does. Bum puts her on his other knee. They all have a private conversation, then she hugs his neck. Both girls hold hands and skip back to their parents happy.

BRIANNA

What was that about?

ALEX/DESIREE

Don't know.

Elf turns the SantaLand sign around to *Santa Will Be Right Back*, then waves to Bum who waves back as she leaves.

STORE ELF

Night Santa, Merry Christmas!

Bum stands to stretch, but his back catches, so he cries out.

Caleb rushes to him.

CALEB

Are you okay?

BUM

Do I look okay?

Caleb and Bum *chuckle*.

Brianna and the Three Children come over.

BRIANNA

What's the trouble?

BUM

My back. It's that bed I slept on.

CALEB

You mean "in" at the shelter?

BUM

Don't know.

BRIANNA

Where are you sleeping --exactly?

Bum has one hand on his back, so points with the other.

BUM

In "Bedding."

All Four turn around to see at the other end of the store a huge banner-sign, *Bedding Sale*.

CALEB

You sleep --in here?

BUM

*Shhhh! I make them think I'm leaving, then hide, and go to sleep in Bedding after everyone leaves.*

BRIANNA

You won't stay in a shelter?

BUM

You ever stayed in one?

Bum goes back to his throne to get his red bag.

The Two Girls cross-arms in sync to glare at Caleb.

CALEB

What? --No! Oh no, he is not,  
moving back in with us!

BRIANNA

Why not? Would make it very  
convenient for what you and I just  
talked about.

The Two Girls smile like Cheshire Cats.

Bum returns with his bag, then furrows his brow.

BUM

What'd you all talk about?

CALEB/BRIANNA

Don't know!

Everyone *laughs*.

**INT. PRINCETON HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT**

Brad, Alex, Caleb, then Bum, enter the living room from the laundry room. Brad heads upstairs.

BRAD

Night.

BUM

Remember!

Brad goes up the stairs giving a big, *Thumbs Up*.

CALEB

Remember what?

BUM

Don't know.

Alex motions both to bend over. They do. She kisses each on the cheek, then heads up the stairs.

ALEX

Night, daddy. Night, Santa.

CALEB

I'll be up to tuck you in.

ALEX

That's okay, Brad does it.

Bum *clears* his throat, loud. Alex turns back.

ALEX

But you can if you want.

Caleb watches Alex run up the stairs.

CALEB

*I always want?*

BUM

"You may delay, but time will not."

CALEB

Benjamin Franklin?

BUM

Great guy. And a funny one! He told this story once ...

CALEB

What?! Who did? What story?

BUM

(tilts head)

Don't know?

(shakes head to clear)

Guest room?

CALEB

What? No! Uh, we don't have one.

BUM

But this is a four bed-roomer?

(no response)

Okay, I'll sleep on the couch.

CALEB

What?! No! That's where I sleep.

BUM

Not any more, buttercup.

(smacks lips)

Speaking of. Got any Butterscotch Schnapps?

CALEB

What? No. Why would I?

Bum smiles. Oh my, his eyes how they twinkle, as he pulls a bottle of Schnapps out of his ever-present flat red bag.

BUM

How about --hot chocolate?

Caleb nods staring at Bum's flat red bag.

**INT. PRINCETON LIVING ROOM - NEXT MORNING**

Place looks like a cyclone hit it. The now empty bottle of Schnapps is on the floor surrounded by two empty mugs with brownish whipped cream residue around their edges.

Caleb and Bum are passed out on couch in each other's arms. First one stirs, then the other, then both grab their backs.

CALEB/BUM

My back!

They part company to wake up, then grab their heads in pain.

CALEB

Never again.

BUM

Think I would have learned.

Both freeze realizing they are being stared at by Alex and Brad now dressed for school.

ALEX

Forgot to tuck me in, daddy.

BRAD

I didn't.

CALEB

Hey kids, we got to talking about --  
(to Bum)  
What did we talk about?

BUM

Beats me. Which is what my head is doing.

Alex and Brad hold out their hands for money.

Caleb *slaps* his forehead, then regrets doing that.

CALEB

Sorry, no cash. And I forgot to go to the bank. Do school cafeterias take credit cards?

BRAD

Thought you were setting up lunch accounts for us?

Caleb *slaps* his forehead again, then falls backwards on the couch in pain. Bum pats Caleb's head with slurred speech.

BUM

He did.

CALEB

"Did" what?

BUM

You called their schools this morning with your credit card info.  
(hiccups)  
Because you remembered you forgot to remember, remember?

BRAD

So we're good to go?

BUM

Yep, just don't use nicknames.

Alex kisses Caleb's cheek then goes to Bum who holds her off.

BUM

Only daddies get kissies from their daughters.

Alex holds out a flat palm. Bum high-fives her. Alex takes Brad's hand and they exit the house.

BUM

And don't forget what I said!

Brad waves a big, Thumbs Up, as front door closes behind.

CALEB

What'd you say?

BUM

Don't know.

Pendulum wall clock *strikes*. Caleb looks at it and panics, he stands too fast, gets woozy, and falls back onto couch.

BUM

I called your office and told them  
you'd be late.

CALEB

How long have you been up?

Bum feigns looking at his non-existent wristwatch.

BUM

Is this Tuesday?  
(snort-laugh)  
Long enough to make them breakfast,  
and "your" two phone calls.

CALEB

(holding head)  
I don't remember calling their  
schools?

BUM

You didn't.

CALEB

(astonished, clears head)  
I really don't remember what we  
talked about last night?

Bum pats Caleb's head again.

BUM

You will. Breakfast?

CALEB

Sure, what are we having?

BUM

Eggs Benedict.

CALEB

(sarcastic)  
That it?

BUM

With roasted asparagus, stuffed  
tomatoes, potato rösti, and fresh  
squeezed orange juice, of course!

Bum exits into kitchen.

CALEB

"Of course."  
(listens to pans rattling)  
*What are we, married?*

BUM (O.S.)  
Might as well be!

Caleb clamps both hands over his mouth.

**INT. PRINCETON LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT MORNING**

Room is now clean and neat with no one in it.

Caleb *screams* upstairs, then sounds of him tripping, and running down the stairs still dressed same.

Bum runs out of kitchen now wearing Caleb's way-too-tight sweat clothes.

BUM  
What?!

CALEB  
You let me fall back asleep!

BUM  
You needed it.

CALEB  
But it's after noon?!

BUM  
Which is why I called your office and told them you were taking the day off. Hurry up and get dressed.

CALEB  
What, you did what?! Wait. Why do I have to get dressed then?

Bum shoos Caleb back up the stairs with the back of hands.

BUM  
It's a surprise.

Caleb *mumbles* something unpleasant going back up the stairs.

BUM  
I heard that!

**INT. CALEB'S CAR - LATER THAT DAY**

Caleb drives now in casual clothes while Bum, still in sweat suit, plays with the radio stations. Caleb *slaps* Bum's hand turning the radio off.



CALEB

Where are we going?

Bum *tch-tch's* scraping one pointer-finger down the other.

BUM

You don't know? Good thing I  
programmed your GPS.

GPS (FILTERED)

Make a right turn at the traffic  
light.

CALEB

What did you tell my office?

BUM

That you had a more important place  
to be.

**EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF CALEB'S CAR - IMMEDIATELY**

Their car veers across the lanes, then turns right.

CALEB

You said what?!

**INT. CALEB'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

CALEB

Who did you tell?

BUM

Whom. Uh, a Morgan-something?

**EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF CALEB'S CAR AGAIN - IMMEDIATELY**

Their car swerves again. Car behind them *blows* its horn.

**INT. CALEB'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

CALEB

Morgan Phillips, Senior Partner?!

BUM

Yeah, nice guy. When I told him  
why, he was all for it.

CALEB

What did you tell him?

Bum pulls at his too-tight clothes.

BUM  
Thank goodness for spandex.

GPS announces as they pull in front of an elementary school.

GPS (FILTERED)  
You have arrived.

CALEB  
(looks around)  
Where?

BUM  
You're kidding?

Alex opens rear passenger door and gets in the back seat.

ALEX  
Hi daddy, let's go.

The car behind beeps. Caleb drives. GPS gives directions.

GPS (FILTERED)  
Continue to final destination.

CALEB  
Where?!

Bum turns to wink at Alex who winks back.

ALEX  
Then it wouldn't be a surprise --  
daddy.

Bum and Alex high-five.

Caleb's forehead wrinkles like a topography map.

**INT. CALEB'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

GPS announces as they pull up in front of a secondary school.

GPS (FILTERED)  
Arriving.

CALEB  
WHERE?!

ALEX  
You're kidding?

Alex and Bum exit the car as Caleb remains inside with engine running talking to himself.

CALEB  
*No, actually?*

GPS (FILTERED)  
Nome, Alaska.

**EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF CALEB'S CAR - IMMEDIATELY**

The car shakes back and forth like having a seizure as Caleb hits its dash. Silence, then he turns off engine and exits.

**EXT. SECONDARY SCHOOL GYM - MOMENTS LATER**

Caleb catches up to Alex and Bum entering its gym doors, then tilts his head at sounds of *cheers* emanating from inside.

CALEB  
What are we doing here?

BUM  
You are here to watch your son win his last game before Winter Break.

CALEB  
Statistically speaking, the odds of that happening are two in five.

Alex spins hands-on-hips as only a little girl can.

ALEX  
Seriously, daddy?

BUM  
And that, is your daddy's big problem. He's always taking things too --"seriously."

CALEB  
Am not.

ALEX  
Are, too.

Bum opens a door. CROWD noise inside is deafening.

**INT. SECONDARY SCHOOL GYM - CONTINUOUS**

Caleb and Alex continue their back-and-forth "*Am not, Are too*" as All Three sit in the bleachers.

Bum tickles Caleb's sides who *giggles*, then both have their usual funny slap-fight.

SURROUNDING PARENTS stare. Caleb and Bum *clear* their throats embarrassed and stop.

Caleb smiles, then tickles Alex who *laughs*.

BUM

There IT is!

**EXT. BRADS SECONDARY SCHOOL GYM - LATER THAT DAY**

It's late in the fourth quarter. Caleb now wears a school cap turned backwards with a school sweatshirt holding a school pennant. All Three are eating hotdogs. Caleb looks up.

**SCOREBOARD INSERT:** Score is tied.

BUM

Gonna' eat that?

CALEB

What?

Bum points. Caleb looks to see only the end of his hot dog is left. Caleb picks it out of the bun, drops it into his open bird-mouth, and chews loud grinning. Bum chagrins, *Nice*.

**BRAD INSERT:** Brad plays Guard and takes his position, then sees Caleb who waves his school pennant high. Bum throws Brad an animated *Thumps Up*. Brad returns a half-hearted *Okay* sign.

Bum starts *stomping* his feet. Rest of STADIUM CROWD joins in vibrating the stands. Caleb has to yell over the din.

CALEB

What's "okay?!"

BUM

Life!

Caleb looks around taking in everything, then smiles and starts *stomping* his feet in time with the Stadium Crowd.

CALEB

There it is!

**COURT PLAY:** TWO REFEREES in uniforms, take their positions. Their CREW CHIEF *blows* his whistle. The Two Teams play. Caleb is fouled, but it isn't called.

Caleb explodes jumping up.

CALEB

What?! That was a Foul, I can call  
that from up here! Can You?!

Bum pulls Caleb back down as Crowd around them stares.

**COURT PLAY CONTINUES:** Brad is fouled again. Whistle is *blown*, but no foul awarded.

Caleb jumps up to stand up on his bleacher's seat.

CALEB

Get new glasses or something! Or  
better yet, go back to Umpire  
School! And finish this time!

**INT. COURT'S FOUL LINE - IMMEDIATELY**

Crew Chief and Brad watch Caleb going berserk in the stands.

CREW CHIEF

That your dad?

BRAD

(dry-spits to the side)  
Nevvvvver saw him.

Crew Chief *blows* whistle. Playing resumes.

**INT. SECONDARY SCHOOL STADIUM - MOMENTS LATER**

Caleb continues his tirade in animated pantomime.

Alex covers her face in shame. Bum apologizes to all.

BUM

Sorry. He doesn't get out much.

Bum pulls Caleb down who is having the time of his life.

**COURT PLAY CONTINUES:** Caleb is fouled again, but is now awarded two Free Throws.

CALEB

(jumps back up)  
TWO?! That was Flagrant!

Bum yanks Caleb down and puts his arm around Caleb's shoulders holding him down. Caleb pleads his case to Bum.

CALEB

My son should have gotten three,  
right, you saw that, three right?

BUM

(pats Caleb's knee)  
It's alright, dad, you'll see.

Caleb turns to his NEIGHBOR SPECTATOR to plead further.

Neighbor Spectator holds up a palm, *Talk to the hand.*

**COURT PLAY CONTINUES:** Brad bounces ball once, then shoots, and misses.

Caleb tries to stand, but Bum gets him in a headlock imitating a perfect Lee Marvin from *The Dirty Dozen*.

BUM

"I always thought you were cold,  
unimaginative, and tight-lipped.  
But you're really quite emotional,  
aren't you?"

**COURT PLAY:** Brad shoots and scores.

Stadium Crowd *explodes*. Caleb jumps up.

**COURT PLAY:** Brad's Team recovers the ball as the buzzer sounds. Brad's Team wins. His TEAMMATES swarm him.

Caleb goes ballistic both in the air and in tone.

CALEB

That's my son! Did you see that?!  
My son did that! That's my son!

Stadium Crowd gives Brad a standing ovation.

Caleb picks up Alex and hugs her while grabbing Bum's sweatshirt to pull him up to standing and shout over the din.

CALEB

Did you see that?! My son did that!

BUM

That's why I brought you!

CALEB

Had one of your feelings?!

Bum nods. Caleb smiles back.

CALEB

Thank, you!

(hugs Alex tighter)

Did you see that?! Your brother did that!

ALEX

I saw, I saw, because you brought me, daddy!

Caleb looks at Stadium Crowd cheering, then nods to Bum.

BUM

Yes. Yes "we" did.

A single tear trickles down Bum's cheek as he smiles back.

**INT. PRINCETON LIVING ROOM - NOW CHRISTMAS EVE**

A pre-decorated artificial well-used and dusty Christmas tree now stands in the corner. The tree's lights are not on, but same earlier presents are now wrapped in boxes under it.

The fireplace gas log burns with red candles now lit on its mantle. Artificial garland hangs on and down same mantle.

Doorbell *rings*.

BUM (O.S.)

I'll get it.

Bum, now in his Santa Suit, exits kitchen to answer door.

BUM

Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry, Christmas!

Brianna and Desiree stand with coats over matching Christmas sweaters each with a wrapped present. They hand both to Bum.

BRIANNA

Sorry, didn't know what to get Brad.

BUM

Ho, Ho, Ho. Noooooo promlema.

(leans-in to whisper)

Trust me, you're giving him a big one.

Bum takes their coats, opens a closet, tosses coats onto a pile already in there on floor, and *pushes* its door closed.

Brianna and Desiree watch Bum concerned.

Bum takes their two presents to put under the tree.

BUM  
Everyone's in the dining room, go  
on in, go on.

Brianna and Desiree exit into next room.

Bum scans the room, smiles, then exits into the dining room  
*whistling* Seven Dwarf's *Hi-Ho Hi-Ho, It's off to work we go.*

**INT. PRINCETON DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Dining table is set for six with both a spiral ham and a turkey. Caleb, Brad, and Alex, wear the same sweaters as Brianna and Desiree. All Five are sitting and *laughing*.

Bum enters, then smiles big.

BUM  
Now that's --a Hallmark moment.

Bum sits and tucks his napkin in under his front collar.

Caleb holds up a pointer finger.

CALEB  
But first --!

Brad, Alex, and Bum, all *cough* loud simultaneous.

Caleb nods, then pulls down his executive gesture to hold out a hand to Brianna sitting next to him who takes it. She holds out her hand to Desiree who takes it. The Others join hands.

CALEB  
Saw a movie once where its grandpa  
said "Doesn't matter how long you  
say grace, just a long as you mean  
it when you say it," so --thanks.

Caleb breaks hands to pick up his water glass. The Others break hands, *That's it?*, then pick up their glasses.

CALEB  
And a very special thank you for  
bringing all these special people  
into my life to remind me of the  
true meaning of Christmas.

Caleb raises his glass. The Others raise theirs.



CALEB

To my children, through whose eyes,  
I again see the joy of Life.  
(Others go to toast)  
And --

The Others put down their glasses.

CALEB

to Brianna and Desiree, whose  
smiles brighten any home.

Brianna, Awww's. ALL raise their glasses to toast again.

CALEB

And of course --

The Others put down their glasses again, Jeez.

CALEB

to this punny funny fun-guy.

Caleb pushes on Bum's shoulder. Bum pushes Caleb's harder.  
Caleb pushes Bum's harder. Bum pushes Caleb's even harder  
until, of course, they're having their typical slap-fight.

BRIANNA

Oh boys --?

Caleb and Bum stop, then Bum pushes on Caleb one last time.

CALEB

Who taught me to look into my  
soul's mirror and see --

Bum starts fake-*snoring*. Caleb stops to glare at him.

BUM

Michelangelo.

Bum raises his glass. The Others raise theirs and all toast  
except Caleb who sits not understanding.

ALL

Michelangelo!

Caleb drinks late, still looking confused.

BRAD

Come on Dad. You know about  
Michelangelo? About his only  
chipping away the pieces of the  
statue that were already there.

Caleb nods now understanding, then turns to Bum.

CALEB

Sorry your sessions with Brianna  
didn't reveal anything.

BUM

Au contraire mon ami, they did chip  
away her pieces to reveal she was --

Bum kisses the back of Brianna's hand and holds it.

BUM

Always a work of art.

Bum takes Caleb's hand with his other.

BUM

And as you both know, I have a  
feeling for things. So guess what?  
(joins their hands)  
You both --are a perfect match.

Brianna and Caleb raise their eyebrows, then smile at each  
other, squeeze hands, and release.

Alex and Desiree nod knowingly to each other.

BUM

Alex, show your dad "my" Christmas  
present.

Alex learned to *whistle* and does so perfectly with the  
beginning of a Christmas carol.

CALEB

Impressive.

BUM

That's not all.

Alex continues the same carol again. Desiree joins in.

They are simpatico, in perfect pitch, perfect harmony. They  
finish the Carol. The Others sit mesmerized, then *clap*.

BRIANNA

I didn't know you could whistle?

BRIANNA

Didn't, couldn't. Alex taught me.

CALEB/BRIANNA

When?

ALEX

During your sessions with Santa.

CALEB

Honey, he's not really ...

BRAD

Never know dad. He did get you to come to my game.

Bum gives Brad the *Okay* hand-sign.

BRAD

And that other thing.

CALEB

What other thing?

BUM

A football player at school was picking on him for being so tall.

BRIANNA

(to Brad)

How did you resolve that?

BRAD

I followed some sage advice and challenged him to a pick-up game.

BUM

Had him completely winded after ten minutes.

BRIANNA

That it?

BRAD

Well, it also helped that almost the entire school was watching us.

CALEB

How'd you manage that?

Brad winks at Bum.

BRAD

I had a good P.R. agent.

BUM

Which reminds me --

(to Brianna)

Give Brad your Christmas present.

Brianna doesn't understand, then looks under her plate to pull out a Christmas card. Bum head-motions to Brad and she gives it to him wondering.

Brad opens card and a business card falls out.

BRAD

A business card? Gee, thanks.

BUM

Read the back, Einstein Junior.

Brad does, is shocked, then reads the front. He's speechless.

CALEB

What?

Brad hands the business card to Caleb who is also shocked.

CALEB

Who, who, who --?

BUM

You an owl?

Bum imitates an owl perfectly which makes Two Girls *giggle*.

BRIANNA

What's the card say?

CALEB

You don't know?

Caleb hands the business card back to Brad who turns to Bum.

BRAD

How, how, how --?

BUM

You two go to the same speech therapist?

Brianna *stomps* a foot angry. All turn to her.

BUM

One of the store's children let it slip her daddy was an NBA Umpire who happened to be at Brad's game, so we talked and ...

BRAD

I've been invited to practice with our franchise team.

CALEB

You --did that, for my son?

Bum becomes an old Jewish man shrugging with accent.

BUM

'Ey, I talked, he listened.

(waves both hands)

Don't make such a fuss.

CALEB

I should meet him.

BUM

You did.

BRAD

He was my Ref you yelled at.

Caleb is flustered as Bum raises his glass.

BUM

To --

(toasts)

"Don't make such a fuss."

EVERYONE

(all except Caleb)

"Don't make such a fuss!"

Caleb *laughs* finishing their toast. All eat, talk, and make merry.

**INT. PRINCETON LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVE**

Everyone enters from the dining room satiated and sits.

BUM

Who wants cocoa?

Brianna and Brad *groan*. The Two Girls hands go up.

CALEB

No Schnapps!

Brianna looks at him.

CALEB

He makes cocoa with Butterscotch  
Schnapps. It's actually quite good.

Brianna and Brad's hands go up. Bum's hand goes up.

CALEB

Only just a taste for the kids.

The Two Girls fold arms angry as Bum exits into kitchen.

ALEX

When are you going to turn on the lights, daddy?

CALEB

Soon as San --uh, as soon as "he" comes back in.

Bum enters with a tray of cocoa cups and hands them out. He holds his up to toast as Tiny Tim.

BUM

"God bless us --

EVERYONE

Everyone."

They all drink *mmm*-ing, then *laugh*.

ALEX

Now, daddy?

BUM

I'm up, let me to do it!

CALEB

Sure, seems fitting.

Bum exits through the laundry room.

Brianna *stomps* a foot wanting to know what is going on.

CALEB

(chuckles)

Had a special circuit breaker put in the garage to handle the load.

BRIANNA

For just the tree?

BRAD

For the whole house. Dad brought in a lighting company. Wait till you see the amperage.

All interior lights suddenly go out. Silence. Caleb grabs a flashlight and heads for the garage. The Others follow him.

**INT. PRINCETON GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

Garage is pitch black. Caleb enters and stops, so Others bump into him making him drop his flashlight. It rolls away.

ALEX

What's that?

Everyone looks to where she is pointing.

**FLASHING INSERT:** A small red, then green, light flashes.

Caleb reboots the Master Breaker. The lights came back on.

Bum now lays unconscious on the floor with the red and green light coming from the inside of one of his wrists.

Everyone rushes to Bum.

BRAD

What is that?

All look at Bum's wrist.

**WRIST INSERT:** The red-green light flashes under his skin.

Caleb is confused, then pulls Bum's other arm off his face to Reveal; Bum is now African-American. Caleb jumps up and back.

CALEB

He's --Black?!

Bum *moans*, then stirs.

BRIANNA

Just blacked-out.

CALEB

No. I mean he is Black. He looks like --us?

BRAD

Think you've had too much Schnapps, dad. He's always looked like "us."

CALEB

What?! No? He was Caucasian.  
(to Brianna)  
Wasn't he?

Brianna shakes her head concerned.

Bum gets up on his elbows groggy.

BUM

Uuuuu, anyone get the number of  
that sleigh?

Caleb announces to Bum.

CALEB

You're BLACK!

BUM

(in Jewish accent again)

"You were expecting maybe, Cecil B.  
Schlemiel."

CALEB

But, I, I always saw you as white?

BUM

Sometimes, people see --

Bum slides an index finger off the side of his nose.

BUM

only what they want to.

Garage door light comes on as the garage door self-opens.

WUNORSE OPENSLAE, older dwarf, long hair in a ponytail with  
jingle-bells in it and a long beard, stands outside in a  
three-piece pine-green suit. He sees Bum on the floor.

WUNORSE

What did you do to Him?!

Wunorse rushes to examine Bum's blinking light, then taps his  
wrist. The light goes out.

WUNORSE

Yeah, we thought it might be the  
battery.

CALEB

Do you know who he is?

WUNORSE

Don't you?

EVERYONE

No.

WUNORSE

Good.

Bum recovers to recognize Wunorse.



BUM  
Norsey-Baby!  
(looks around)  
Where am I?

BRIANNA  
Don't you remember?

BUM  
I remember falling out of the  
sleigh, then --nada.

WUNORSE  
That was a two weeks ago. You've  
had us worried sick.

CALEB  
"Us?"

Bum looks at his wrist's non-flashing area.

BUM  
GPS didn't come on?

WUNORSE  
Not until a few moments ago, you  
okay?

Wunorse helps Bum stand.

BUM  
Think so, wait.  
(points to Caleb)  
Caleb, right?

CALEB  
Last I checked?

Brianna has a professional epiphany and *snaps* her fingers.

BRIANNA  
Electroconvulsive therapy!

WUNORSE  
E.C.T?

Wunorse taps Bum's wrist again, flashing-light flashes once.

WUNORSE  
Just enough for a jump-start.  
(to Bum)  
Let's go, we've got a lot of work  
tonight and we're already two weeks  
behind.

BUM

What day is it?

WUNORSE

Tis the night before, so T-minus  
four hours, in this time-zone.

BUM

Well jingle my bells, we've got to  
go, go, go!

Bum makes a fast round of hand-shakes with everyone, but each is personal, meaningful, and sincere.

BUM

Nice to meet you ...Take care  
...Can I have a hug ...Good luck,  
etc.

Bum goes to exit with Wunorse when there's an ear-piercing *whistle*. Everyone turns to Alex who stands holding Bum's bag.

ALEX

Will we ever see you again?

Bum comes over to pick her up and take his bag.

BUM

Every Christmas Eve.

Bum kisses her on the cheek and puts her down.

BUM

Good-bye everyone, and remember --.  
(goes to exit, turns back)  
Everything happens for a reason.

Bum touches the side of his nose, then reaches into his bag and tosses Caleb a very small wrapped package.

BUM

Just remembered what you told me  
that night we had too much cocoa.

CALEB

What?

BUM

You'll remember, when the time is  
right.  
(points to the inner door)  
ELVIS!

Everyone looks, nothing, then turn back to where Bum was. He and Wunorse are now gone.

BRIANNA

Where'd they go?

Then out on the roof there arose such a clatter, they all sprang outside to see what might be the matter.

**EXT. PRINCETON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Exterior of entire house is now so bright, airplanes are circling it on final approach.

All Five in their matching Christmas sweaters walk out of the garage to the sidewalk and turn around. Their house is a living advertisement for every Christmas light and lawn decoration currently sold by Home Depot.

ALEX AND DESI

Wow --.

NEIGHBOR ONE

Didn't know you had it in you,  
Caleb.

All Five turn to see NEIGHBORS from across and up and down the street staring at Caleb's house in awe.

NEIGHBOR TWO

If it was lost, glad you found it!

NEIGHBOR THREE

(in Irish accent)  
It's magically delicious.

All Five turn back to look at their house. It is beautiful.

BRIANNA

What's in the box he gave you?

CALEB

(remembers now)  
It's not mine. --It's yours.

Caleb hands her the wrapped package. She opens it and gasps.

Inside the box is a diamond engagement ring. Its diamond reflects the surrounding Christmas lights in all its facets.

Caleb takes the ring out.

FEMALE NEIGHBORS gawk, then elbow their HUSBANDS hard.

Caleb gets down on one knee.

Female Neighbors swoon, then elbow their Husbands harder.

Caleb puts the ring on Brianna's finger. She nods. He stands. They kiss. In the history of kisses, many stand out, but this one, just went to the top of the list.

Female Neighbors *sigh*, then kiss their Husbands.

And all heard the Bum exclaim *'ere he was out of sight ...*

BUM (O.S.)  
"Happy Christmas to all, and to  
all, a good night!"

A light snow begins falling.

The Princeton group-smiles.

Old-style camera-bulb flash-pops with that wonderful  
*crinkling* sound.

**STILL CUT:** The Princeton family's next year's Christmas Card.

FADE OUT.