

YES, VIRGINIA

FADE IN:

EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

Blinding snow swirls with fury in gusty HOWLS.

REVEAL

Santa's timeless stone-built home and expansive workshop complex. Windows glow. Smoke wafts from the tops of chimneys.

SUPER: Christmas Eve, 2012

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

The room is a cocoon of warm wood tones lined with crammed bookcases and stacks of letters and ledgers. A fireplace CRACKLES.

SANTA

Old. Frail. Passed out in an easy chair. His head leans to one side. He SNORES in stops and starts.

An older Woman's slender hand touches his shoulder. He slumbers on. The hand nudges him harder. Santa opens one eye.

SANTA

Virginia?

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

I'm here.

He flutters back to sleep.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

C'mon, old man. It's your last time. Let's make it a good one.

Santa lifts his head and forces both eyes open. He grimaces trying to focus.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

Fix your face. You'll scare the reindeer.

Santa fusses to full alertness and winces when he attempts to sit up straight.

SANTA  
What time is it?

REVEAL

VIRGINIA

Mrs. Claus. Old, but young. Handsome. Elegant. Silver gray hair. Kindness and intelligence etched in every expression. She wears red velvet laced in white and she looks smart in it.

VIRGINIA  
It's time to go.

She helps him to a standing position and straightens his outfit.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
There are some who say there is no Santa Claus. But trust me when I tell you there is. A real one. As real as you and me.

FADE TO:

BLACK

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
My husband would tell you that Santas can come from anywhere. Indeed mine came from most humble beginnings.

FADE IN:

EXT. JEREMIAH'S FARM - DAY

Crop fields punctuated with a tiny house and barn.

Bleak.

SUPER: 1923

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
He was taken in by Gertrude and Jeremiah after Gertrude's widowed sister passed unexpectedly from pneumonia. Jeremiah hoped for a future farmhand.

INT. KITCHEN - JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

A large wood stove dominates one side of a cramped, dark space.

GERTRUDE lulls baby Santa to sleep in a rocking chair.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

Gertrude was barren. She simply longed for a bond.

Gertrude looks old before her time. Deep frown lines map a long and hard life. She HUMS to herself. Looks down at her bundle. A few of her frown lines relax.

She angles her head to watch her husband JEREMIAH at the sink swill the last of his morning coffee.

He's wiry. Gaunt. Stern.

He sets his empty cup down and glares.

INT. BEDROOM - JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Authentic rustic.

Gertrude and Jeremiah bookend baby Santa on a small bed. Gertrude relishes their new addition. Jeremiah resents the intrusion on his sleeping space.

GERTRUDE

He's a miracle. Sent to us by God.

Jeremiah frowns, uncertain.

GERTRUDE

I prayed about this. You know that. We'll call him Harold.

Jeremiah narrows his eyes.

JEREMIAH

Harold. What's that from?

GERTRUDE

Always liked it.

She adjusts Santa's blanket and pulls him closer. Her face softens.

GERTRUDE

He's what I always wanted.

INT. LIVING ROOM - JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

Christmas day. A tree adorned with popcorn strings dominates the tiny room.

SUPER: 10 YEARS LATER

10-year-old Santa claps his hands in glee as Gertrude opens a package revealing a hand-wrought wooden bird.

GERTRUDE

Oh my, Harold. It's beautiful!

Jeremiah scowls.

SANTA

Don't worry, I have something for you, too, Father.

Jeremiah points to the wooden bird in Gertrude's hands.

JEREMIAH

You didn't make that.

SANTA

Yes, I did, Father.

JEREMIAH

Boy, don't lie to me.

Santa's stung.

SANTA

I'm not lying, Father.

Santa offers up a small package to Jeremiah. Jeremiah takes it and holds it up for inspection.

JEREMIAH

Now what's in here? Something I really need? Someone to help me out around here?

Santa shakes his head.

JEREMIAH

No. Some stupid toy I bet.

Jeremiah unwraps the flimsy paper to reveal a miniature tractor.

JEREMIAH

What is this?

GERTRUDE  
It's a tractor.

JEREMIAH  
(snapping)  
I know what it is.

Jeremiah wraps the paper around the tractor and hands it back.

JEREMIAH  
Give me something I can use, boy.

Jeremiah HUFFS out.

Tears spill down Gertrude's face.

Santa puts his arms around her.

SANTA  
Don't cry.

Gertrude collects herself.

SANTA  
Did you like your present, Ma?

Gertrude's tears flush anew. Santa hugs her closer.

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM - JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Young Santa tosses and turns in bed. He senses a presence and bolts upright.

SANTA  
Who's there?

REVEAL

KRIS KRINGLE

Standing at the foot of the bed.

He must be old, but he looks young. Smart and assured with a twinkle in his eye. Well-groomed with a big brushed out beard and a full head of long white hair.

Santa jumps back.

Kris sits on the edge of Santa's bed.

Santa retreats further.

KRIS  
Hello, Harold. Or should I say  
Santa?

SANTA  
How'd you get in here? Who...who  
are you?

KRIS  
The name's Kringle. First name  
Kris.

SANTA  
Wait a minute. You're Kris  
Kringle?

Kris nods.

SANTA  
*The* Kris Kringle?

Kris nods again and LAUGHS.

KRIS  
Well, somebody has to be him.

SANTA  
So you're Santa Claus?

KRIS  
In so many words, yes. But all of  
us are. Or can be.

SANTA  
Why are you here?

KRIS  
I thought it was time to meet the  
new Santa Claus.

SANTA  
Excuse me?

KRIS  
We have a lot to talk about.

INT. KITCHEN - JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

Young Santa has everything spread out to make toys. He jams  
out creations at a feverish pace.

Gertrude washes dishes, looks over at him in admiration.

Jeremiah CLUMPS into the room and gives Santa a nasty look.  
Gertrude turns back to the dishes to avoid eye contact.

GERTRUDE  
(to Jeremiah)  
You 'bout fixin' to come in and  
eat? You been workin' hard.

JEREMIAH  
(no kidding)  
Yeah. Course it'd go a whole lot  
quicker if I had a young man that  
was helpin' around the farm instead  
of fritterin' his life away makin'  
toys for Christmas when it's July  
outside.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
My husband's early troubles  
escalated as he got older.

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM - JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

14-year-old Santa examines his jawline in a mirror mounted on a bureau. Not only is the hair on his head white, so are the hairs sprouting on his chin.

Santa reaches for a pair of scissors and fumbles. The scissors slip from his grasp and CLATTER into a cartwheel heading for the edge of the bureau.

He glares at the scissors and they freeze, perched and balanced on one blade in mid-air.

Santa offers an open hand, palm up.

The scissors tremble, then flip handle first into his waiting fingers.

Santa takes in his reflection from the mirror.

Whoa.

SANTA  
(to himself)  
It's true. I'm...I'm...oh,  
my...I'm Santa Claus.

JEREMIAH (O.S.)  
What are you doin' in here, boy?

Santa startles. Jeremiah steps in.



JEREMIAH  
Answer me, Harold.

INT. DOCTOR'S EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Teen Santa, now bearded with tufts of white hair sprouting from his chest and armpits, sits on the end of an examination table with an oversized white robe pulled around his bottom half. An old-school DOCTOR examines him.

The Doctor picks up an otoscope and peers into Santa's ears.

DOCTOR  
Hmm. Pretty hairy inside, too.  
You'll want to keep those clean.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Doctor consults with Jeremiah and Gertrude. Jeremiah glowers - Gertrude trembles at his side.

JEREMIAH  
His hair's turned totally white the last six months.

DOCTOR  
Jeremiah, many people have white hair, so that's -

JEREMIAH  
Not when they're fourteen years old, they don't.

GERTRUDE  
And what about the beard. Is that normal, too?

JEREMIAH  
Ever seen anything like that?

DOCTOR  
Well, no. Not me personally.

JEREMIAH  
So you think he's okay? Even if he has a full beard at fourteen and thinks he's Santa Claus?

DOCTOR  
Excuse me. He thinks he's who?

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Teen Santa wrestles to situate himself on a plush leather couch in a dark-toned room deadened with heavy drapes and deep carpets.

The only light source is a decorative antique floor lamp positioned beside a PSYCHIATRIST who sits with crossed legs in an overstuffed chair. He finishes a note on a clipboard he cradles in his lap and sets his pen down.

PSYCHIATRIST

Why don't you want to be called Harold? Do you think it may have something to do with your premature beard?

SANTA

Harold is the name I grew up with, but my real name is Santa.

Santa shifts forward on the couch.

SANTA

I'm supposed to be the next Santa Claus, but you don't believe me, do you?

PSYCHIATRIST

I'm not here to judge.

SANTA

Oh, I think you are.

The Psychiatrist doesn't appreciate the jab.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The Psychiatrist counsels alone with Jeremiah and Gertrude.

PSYCHIATRIST

It's a problem, what can I say?

EXT. JEREMIAH'S BARN - DAY

Jeremiah patches a hole in the roof of a building that has seen better days.

Down below, teen Santa carries two heavy buckets of water to a trough and empties them.

Jeremiah balances with uncertainty along the roof ridge.

Santa stops to watch.

SANTA  
You need help up there?

Jeremiah steadies himself.

JEREMIAH  
You just go on about your business,  
boy.

Santa lowers his head and carries the buckets to a hand-pump to refill them.

Up on the roof, Jeremiah loses his footing, slips, and RATTLES down the roof. He grabs for the ledge without success.

Jeremiah SCREAMS and falls two stories to the ground, crumpling feet first in a pile of dirt.

Santa drops his buckets and runs around the side of the barn.

Jeremiah grimaces in pain.

JEREMIAH  
I think I broke my danged leg!

Santa wedges his arms under Jeremiah.

SANTA  
I have to get you to the house.  
I'll carry you.

JEREMIAH  
Harold, you can't!

SANTA  
You're right. Harold can't.

Santa cradles Jeremiah and against all the laws of physics, picks Jeremiah up with ease and sprints him to the house.

INT. JEREMIAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Late afternoon. Jeremiah swivels in on crutches, his right leg in a cast. Gertrude follows.

Gertrude helps Jeremiah come to rest by the side of the bed and offers support as he twists to about-face. He hands her his crutches and lowers himself with care.

He looks past her out the window at their lush farm fields.

JEREMIAH

What am I gonna do? I can't get no help. Everybody's harvestin' their own. Couldn't pay 'em anyway.

GERTRUDE

I don't know. We'll figure somethin' out. The Lord'll provide. He always does.

Santa peeks from the doorway.

Jeremiah catches him.

JEREMIAH

What are you lookin' at?

Santa steps inside the room.

SANTA

Maybe I could help. Harvest.

JEREMIAH

You ain't got it in you, boy. You ain't good for nothin' but makin' toys.

Jeremiah motions to Gertrude to close the door.

Gertrude does his bidding and closes the door in Santa's face.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

SANTA

(to himself)  
I have to try...

EXT. CORN FIELD - NIGHT

Santa stands between two rows of corn stalks and grins. He looks up at the moon. Full. Bright.

SANTA

Ho-ho-ho, indeed.

EXT. JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

Bright, early morning slanted shards of light. Everything just waking up. Roosters CROW.

INT. JEREMIAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jeremiah angles into a sitting position as Gertrude enters with a mug and a pot of coffee.

JEREMIAH  
What time is it?

GERTRUDE  
Almost six.

Jeremiah adjusts his broken leg and winces.

GERTRUDE  
Still hurtin' bad?

Jeremiah nods.

GERTRUDE  
Let me help you sit up.

Gertrude steps toward a sideboard to set the coffee down. She stops in mid-stride, her eyes locked out the window.

OVER HER SHOULDER OUT THE WINDOW

The fields are harvested. Completely.

She drops the pot, the mug shakes out of her hand and she staggers back, hands to her open mouth.

GERTRUDE  
It's a miracle!

EXT. JEREMIAH'S BARN - DAY

Teen Santa SNORES sitting up, wedged in between hay bales. Exhausted. Half-smiling in a dreamy way.

Behind him, wagon loads of harvested produce.

Gertrude's shadow blots out the rays warming Santa's face.

GERTRUDE  
Harold, wake up!

Santa doesn't rouse.

Jeremiah makes his way from the house. He hitches along as fast as he can.

Gertrude kicks Santa's foot.

Santa SNORES through it.

She kicks harder.

Santa bumps to consciousness, wipes his eyes, recognizes Gertrude. He half-waves at her. YAWNS.

Jeremiah limps up, PUFFING.

GERTRUDE

Jeremiah, don't be hard on the boy.

Eyes raging, Jeremiah gestures to the harvested fields behind him and shakes a fist at Santa.

JEREMIAH

What in tarnation happened here,  
boy?

Confusion clouds Santa's face.

SANTA

(meekly)

The spirits have done it all in one  
night?

Jeremiah's nostrils flare.

JEREMIAH

(to GERTRUDE)

This is not Godly.

(to SANTA)

Get up this instant.

Santa migrates to a standing position.

SANTA

I didn't think it was a bad thing.  
I'm sorry.

Jeremiah pokes Santa's chest with the end of a crutch. Santa staggers back. Jeremiah pokes him again.

From Santa - more surprise than hurt.

JEREMIAH

This is the Devil's work. You hear  
me?

Jeremiah pivots and hobbles back to the house.

Gertrude pleads with Santa.

GERTRUDE

Son, he just needs you to be  
Harold. Is that so hard?

SANTA

You know I really am who I say I  
am. Don't you, Ma?

Gertrude hugs him with fearful eyes.

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM - JEREMIAH'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

Santa sits cross-legged on the floor with his back up against  
his bed.

An argument spills over from another part of the house.

JEREMIAH (O.S.)

He goes, you understand me?  
Devil's spawn! You hear me?

Santa covers his ears with his hands.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

All that I've told you so far is  
hearsay, although I did get it from  
the man himself...

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Bright sunshine highlights a classic massive stone structure  
surrounded by mature trees and lush green grass.

Engraved above the entrance: CHARLES STERN HIGH SCHOOL

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

...but much of what I tell you from  
this point on comes from first-hand  
knowledge.

INT. FRESHMAN CLASSROOM - DAY

An elderly, beady-eyed, hair-pulled-back-tight-in-a-bun  
teacher - MISS BURKE - writes on a blackboard.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

It was my first day in a new  
school.

The room full of 15-year-old STUDENTS watch BILLY, mean and  
big for his age.

Billy torments Santa at the back of the room. He yanks on Santa's beard.

SANTA

Ouch!

The ruckus commands Miss Burke's attention.

MISS BURKE

What is going on back there?

Billy points at Santa.

BILLY

He started it, Miss Burke.

Billy nudges a nearby goofy-looking student - RICHARD - who nods in agreement.

Miss Burke drops her chalk into the blackboard tray and bristles to the back of the room. She confronts Santa with hands on hips.

MISS BURKE

You enjoy being a problem, don't you?

SANTA

I didn't do anything, Miss Burke.

MISS BURKE

You're a liar, Harold.

Young VIRGINIA swivels in her seat up front. Delicate, pretty, confident.

Santa locks eyes with her. Connection.

Virginia addresses Miss Burke.

VIRGINIA

Harold's telling the truth, Miss Burke.

Virginia points at Billy.

VIRGINIA

It was Billy who started it.

Miss Burke glares at Virginia, then turns on Santa. Miss Burke lifts Santa out of his seat by his ear and forces him up the aisle to Virginia's desk.



MISS BURKE  
Gather your things, Virginia.  
You're switching desks.

Billy narrows his eyes at Virginia.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Santa munches an apple alone under a tree.

A shadow falls over him.

VIRGINIA

Loaded up with books and a sack lunch.

Santa straightens.

SANTA  
Hi, Virginia.

VIRGINIA  
Hi.

SANTA  
Uh, thanks for stickin' up for me.

Virginia nods.

VIRGINIA  
You're a strange one, aren't you?

Santa half-grins.

VIRGINIA  
You're not like the others.  
(smiles)  
That's for sure.

Santa beams and gestures for Virginia to join him. Virginia curtseys to the ground and opens her sack lunch.

She takes out biscuits. A small jar of strawberry jam. A butter knife.

VIRGINIA  
Would you like one?

SANTA  
Oh, yes. Please.

Virginia halves the biscuit and cracks open the jam.

VIRGINIA  
I made it myself.

SANTA  
The biscuit?

VIRGINIA  
And the preserves.

SANTA  
I can't wait.

She hands him the treat.

He bites into it and savors the moment. It's everything he wants it to be. And so is she.

SANTA  
Wow, that's...really good.

Virginia admires Santa's impressive teenage beard.

VIRGINIA  
Not everyone has that.

SANTA  
Yeah.

VIRGINIA  
I like it. It's different.

Santa finishes the biscuit and dusts the crumbs off.

She reaches out to sample his beard between her fingers, but stops.

VIRGINIA  
Oh. I'm sorry. Do you mind?

Santa nods it's okay. She touches his beard.

VIRGINIA  
Soft.

Santa blushes.

VIRGINIA  
So do you prefer to be called  
Harold or Harry?

SANTA  
Neither. 'Cause it's not my name.

VIRGINIA

Oh. What then?

SANTA

You really want to know?

VIRGINIA

Of course.

SANTA

Santa.

Virginia raises a brow.

SANTA

Claus.

Virginia searches Santa's face. No, he's serious.

SANTA

It's my name. Not everybody understands.

VIRGINIA

Wait...okay...but...there's already a Santa. Claus.

SANTA

Virginia. Do you even believe in Santa Claus?

VIRGINIA

You mean, do I believe you're Santa Claus?

SANTA

No. Do you really believe there *is* a Santa Claus? Any Santa Claus. Even the idea of Santa Claus?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Santa and Virginia, each carrying an arm-load of books, walk home from school. They take their time.

Virginia eyes Santa like doubting Thomas.

VIRGINIA

*The* Kris Kringle? Came to see you?

SANTA

That's what I said.

VIRGINIA

Maybe it was just a dream.

SANTA

He was as real as you are in front  
of me right now.

Santa shrugs.

SANTA

I am going to be the next Santa  
Claus. And when you think about  
it, it makes sense, doesn't it? I  
mean, *someone* has to be him. So if  
I'm good at making toys, why  
shouldn't it be me?

Virginia laughs nervously.

VIRGINIA

Oh my, well, this is all something  
to take in, isn't it?

Virginia and Santa stroll under a canopy of trees.

VIRGINIA

So how do you build this workshop  
at the North Pole? How do you even  
get there?

SANTA

I haven't figured that out yet.  
But I'll need a lot of helpers. I  
know that much.

VIRGINIA

Like elves?

SANTA

Exactly. Elves.

VIRGINIA

Magic ones?

SANTA

Magic ones.

VIRGINIA

Good magic elves might be hard to  
find. Well. I don't know. I've  
never done it.

SANTA

But it shouldn't be impossible.

VIRGINIA  
No. Not impossible.

Santa has a light bulb moment.

SANTA  
Hey, maybe I'll be able to use the  
ones they already have.

Bushes RUSTLE off to one side.

Santa and Virginia stop.

Billy and Richard step out onto the road and block Santa and Virginia from passing.

BILLY  
Magic elves. What's the big idea  
with that?

Billy elbows Richard. The two bullies tighten their circle.

VIRGINIA  
We're not looking for any trouble,  
Billy.

BILLY  
Hmm. You were singin' a different  
tune today in school when you got  
me fingered with Miss Burke, new  
girl.

VIRGINIA  
I'm the one who had to change my  
seat, remember?

Billy slaps Virginia's books and lunch sack to the ground.

BILLY  
You tattled.

Santa puts his books down and forms fists.

SANTA  
Cut it out, Billy.

BILLY  
Or what?

Billy grabs a handful of Santa's beard and yanks Santa forward.

BILLY

There's already elves and a Santa Claus. You know that, right?

Billy releases Santa backward and LAUGHS.

Santa bounces back in a combat stance.

Richard CACKLES.

RICHARD

What are you gonna do, freak boy?

SANTA

I'd rather not do anything.  
Hopefully.

Billy doubles up a fist.

BILLY

I got some hope for you.

Billy takes a swing.

Santa eyeballs Billy's approaching fist and cringes. Surprise! Billy's punch veers off course and clocks Richard in the face. Richard SPUTTERS and reels backward.

RICHARD

Hey! What the -

Billy gawks at his misdirected fist in disbelief.

Santa puffs up. He didn't know he had it in him.

Richard shakes the cobwebs out and shifts from surprise to angry. He retaliates and shoves Billy.

RICHARD

Why'd you hit me?

BILLY

I didn't! I mean, I didn't mean to  
- I -

Santa CHUCKLES.

RICHARD

Oh, you think it's funny?

Richard lunges at Santa and launches a powerful roundhouse right.

Santa lasers in with a hard stare and Richard bounces away into a heap on the ground.

Billy's seen enough. He high-tails it. Gone.

Richard scrambles to his feet.

RICHARD  
What was that?

Richard checks himself over, then threatens Virginia.

RICHARD  
What if your Daddy knew you were  
with this freak?

VIRGINIA  
Mind your own business, Richard.

RICHARD  
You don't tell me what to do.

Santa steps up. Richard steps back.

SANTA  
Actually, I think she does.

Richard quivers.

RICHARD  
What are you gonna do about it?

An invisible force grabs hold of Richard's right hand and makes him slap himself across his own face.

RICHARD  
Why you - how are you doing that?

Santa squints and forces Richard's hand into a fist. Richard pops himself in his own eye and collapses, writhing around on the ground. He hops up and massages his swollen cheek.

Santa smiles in triumph.

RICHARD  
You wait! You just wait!

Virginia muffles a GIGGLE.

RICHARD  
I'm tellin' your Daddy, Virginia!

VIRGINIA  
Richard, don't!

Richard bolts.

Virginia looks over at Santa. She has questions.

VIRGINIA  
What...what was that?

SANTA  
Yeah, what was that?

Santa composes himself.

SANTA  
You can't tell anyone about what  
I've told you, Virginia.

Virginia nods her agreement.

SANTA  
They'll send you away. Like  
they're going to send me away.

INT. DINING ROOM - VIRGINIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A well-established home.

Virginia eats dinner with her 50-ish FATHER - a tailored, mannered patriarch.

He finishes a bite, sets his fork down, dabs the corners of his mouth, folds his napkin off to one side, and clears his throat.

Virginia glances up, then back down.

FATHER  
Tell me that it isn't true. What I  
hear.

Virginia picks at her food, afraid to make eye contact. She steers stray peas around her plate.

VIRGINIA  
I don't know what you hear, Daddy.

FATHER  
Virginia, it's not that I don't  
believe, I just don't believe that  
Harold in particular is Santa  
Claus. He's a freak. Your mother -  
may she rest in peace - would not  
approve.



VIRGINIA

He's not a freak. He's special.

FATHER

My daughter will not be the  
laughing stock of this town. I  
forbid you to see him.

INT. CLASSROOM - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Santa stares at Virginia's empty seat.

Santa lifts the lid on his wooden desk and finds a folded  
note addressed "from Virginia to Santa." He slips the note  
down into his lap and opens it.

ON THE PAPER

"They are keeping me away from you."

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Santa runs like the wind.

INT. VIRGINIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Virginia clings to her pillow and wipes a tear away.

TAPS on her window from outside.

Virginia scurries off of her bed and rushes to pull the  
curtains apart. Santa waves from outside.

She leaps to her bedroom door, locks it, then returns to open  
her window.

SANTA

(out of breath)

Look, I told you we're going to be  
separated, right? 'Cause that's  
what Kris Kringle told me.

Virginia nods.

Santa folds in half for a second to get his wind back.

SANTA

So I'm not sure how I'm going to  
find you when it's time, but I  
will. I just wanted you to know  
that.

VIRGINIA

I told you I'd wait and I meant it.

SANTA

I love you, Virginia. Even though I don't quite understand love yet, or how this is all going to work out, but...I will! You just have to believe enough and love comes to you, right?

The handle on Virginia's bedroom door JIGGLES behind her.

FATHER (O.S.)

Virginia! What are you doing in there?

VIRGINIA

Nothing, father!

Father's fist THUMPS on the door.

FATHER (O.S.)

Open this door immediately!

Virginia pulls the window down halfway.

VIRGINIA

Go. Run away.

Louder BUMPS on the door.

FATHER (O.S.)

Virginia!

Santa blows Virginia a kiss. She blows one back and SLAMS the window shut.

INT. JEREMIAH'S FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Powerful KNOCKS reverberate through the house. Jeremiah hobbles up and opens the door.

RICHARD AND HIS MOTHER

Richard has a black eye and an angry Mother as an escort.

INT. JEREMIAH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Richard and his Mother sit side-by-side on a love seat. Erect. Guarding each other.

Santa and Gertrude sit together on a couch opposite their guests. Jeremiah hangs over them.

He points to Richard's black eye.

JEREMIAH

Harold, did you do this?

Santa glares in defiance at Richard and his Mother.

Richard's Mother leans in.

MOTHER

Well? Tell him!

JEREMIAH

Harold, why ain't you answerin'?

SANTA

Because my name's not Harold, it's Santa.

Richard corkscrews off the love seat.

RICHARD

You're not Santa!

Richard's Mother jumps up to bark in solidarity.

MOTHER

I should say not! What do you have to say for yourself, you freak?

SANTA

Merrrrrry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Richard's Mother slaps Santa hard across the face.

Wow.

Santa cups his face and runs from the room.

Jeremiah gathers his crutches.

JEREMIAH

Gertrude, you see these nice people out. I'll take care of this.

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Santa massages his jaw in the mirror.

Clunky FOOTSTEPS approach and the door bumps open.

Jeremiah comes in and plants himself. He leans his crutches against a wall and unbuckles his belt, sliding it out of his pant loops. He dangles it down to one side.

JEREMIAH

Guess you know what I come in here for.

SANTA

Not to spank me.

JEREMIAH

Yeah. 'Fraid so. It's enough, boy.

SANTA

Richard's a bully who picks on girls. And besides. I never touched him. He hit himself.

JEREMIAH

Now how would he go about doin' that?

Santa squints, focuses.

Jeremiah's right hand curls into a ball and rises, poised an inch away from his own chin. Jeremiah resists with every fiber, but can't avoid forming the fist, nor can he stop it from doing a small tap against his cleft.

He flinches away from himself.

His hand releases. He GASPS and shakes it out.

JEREMIAH

I knew none of this was right from the start.

Gertrude enters, hands clasped.

GERTRUDE

Jeremiah, please, show some mercy.

JEREMIAH

I told you we shoulda told someone. All of these unnatural things happening. And now it has to be beat out of him.

Jeremiah coils the belt.

Santa zeroes in hard and the belt wrenches out of Jeremiah's grasp and SLAPS down at his feet. He bends over to retrieve it, but Santa makes it slither out of his reach.

Jeremiah recoils. Dagger eyes.

Santa makes a desperate plea.

SANTA

Why can't powers be good things,  
like miracles? Why do you always  
think it's from the devil?

JEREMIAH

Get out! Get OUT!

EXT. JEREMIAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Gertrude and Santa stand next to Jeremiah's IDLING truck.

Gertrude kneels down and hugs Santa tight.

She can't stop the tears.

GERTRUDE

I'm gonna pray about you every day.  
For the Lord to keep you.

The front door BANGS open and Jeremiah limps from the house to the truck.

JEREMIAH

Get in the truck, boy!

Gertrude squeezes with all her might, kisses Santa all over his face.

GERTRUDE

I love you, but I can't -

Jeremiah POUNDS on the side of the truck door.

JEREMIAH

Let's go!

Santa touches Gertrude's hair. Straightens a few strands. Smiles at her.

SANTA

It's okay, Ma. I'll see you again.

They break their embrace and wave to each other as Santa runs to the truck and gets in.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - DAY

Overcast skies frame an ominous, dingy, stone-cold institution enclosed by a high spiked wrought-iron fence. A sign at the entrance reads: MEADOWS HOME FOR BOYS

INT. OFFICE - ORPHANAGE - DAY

Santa sits across from a severe HEADMASTER.

HEADMASTER

Harold, and I do mean Harold -  
don't pull any of your Santa Claus  
moving things around malarkey here.  
Because if you do, I will have it  
beaten out of you. Are we  
understood?

INT. DORMITORY SLEEPING QUARTERS - ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Dilapidated. No one cares.

Santa lies awake in the dark staring at a cobwebbed ceiling.

In the BG, an awful cycle repeats itself: PLEAS, paddle  
WHACKS, echoing CRIES.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

My Father moved me away, and my  
husband spent the rest of his  
teenage years at the wretched  
Meadows Home for Boys trying to  
make a difference in that dark  
place.

Santa tucks into himself.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - ORPHANAGE - DAY

Claustrophobic, stuffy, messy. Dusty and heavy-laden with  
bric-a-brac junk piled to the ceiling. On one side of the  
room, a bench table attaches to the wall.

Santa steals into the room and inches the door shut behind  
him.

He scopes the space and comes to stand in front of the bench  
table littered with loose bits of hardware. Scraps of wood.  
Nails. Screws. Bolts. Nuts. Wires.

Santa studies the scattered objects on the table.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

He tells me he made good use of his time. He spent every spare moment practicing the art of making toys.

He scrunches his face. Concentrates for all he's worth. Pushes. His face plumps, turns beet red. He exhausts himself and exhales.

SANTA

Breathe!

Santa brings his breath under control and concentrates. A screw rolls to one side.

He squelches a yelp.

Santa moves closer - visualizing.

A nut turns up on one side. A bolt angles itself and rolls to the nut. The nut aligns and screws itself on.

Santa hops around, gleeful.

He hunches over the table and burns a look at a nail - it launches up from the table and pounds itself into a piece of wood. BANG!

Santa beams, dances with delight.

INT. ORPHANGE BAY - NIGHT

Santa tiptoes from bed to bed and deposits small toys next to sleeping heads.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

He did this secretly every Christmas for four years. He made children believe in magic in the most unlikeliest of places.

EXT. ORPHANGE GROUNDS - DAY

A cold, winter day. Boys run here and there showing off their small presents to each other.

A battle-ax MATRON walks through the yard with the Headmaster.

HEADMASTER

Where are they getting all these toys from?

The Matron snatches a toy airplane from a young BOY running by making FLYING NOISES. The Boy stops.

BOY

Hey!

MATRON

Where did you get this?

BOY

From Santa Claus! Where else?

The Matron throws the airplane to the ground and crushes it with her foot.

The Boy bursts into tears and runs away.

As the Boy runs by 17-year-old Santa, Santa snags him and pulls him back.

SANTA

It's okay. I'll make you another one.

The Boy SNIFFS and breaks away.

Santa glares at the Headmaster and Matron. They glare back, then walk on.

Santa draws into himself and stamps his feet to retain warmth. He shivers and pulls his worn coat tighter.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

Hey! Santa!

Santa whirls around - Virginia peeps through the perimeter fence.

Santa checks to see if he's being watched, then runs over.

Virginia looks like a million bucks.

They hold hands through the wrought-iron bars.

SANTA

How did you find me?

VIRGINIA

I ran away. It doesn't matter. I found you. I'm here. Merry Christmas.

SANTA

Merry Christmas, Virginia.



VIRGINIA  
I've been so worried about you.

SANTA  
I don't want you to worry.

VIRGINIA  
Your hands are cold. How are you  
ever going to survive at the North  
Pole?

He squeezes her hands.

SANTA  
No. How are we going to survive  
together at the North Pole?

Virginia's emotions betray her. She lets down for a moment,  
then catches herself.

VIRGINIA  
I'm sorry. I'm trying to be strong.

Virginia reaches into her coat pocket and takes out a small  
wrapped parcel she passes through the fence.

VIRGINIA  
Go ahead. Open it.

Santa unties the ribbon and peels the paper back. He opens  
the small box inside and takes out a biscuit.

VIRGINIA  
Hard as a rock now.

SANTA  
It's beautiful because your hands  
made it.

Santa fishes a folded piece of paper out of his pants pocket.

SANTA  
I wrote you something. A poem.

He unfolds it and passes it through.

Virginia's eyes mist.

SANTA  
You haven't even read it.

VIRGINIA  
No one ever gave me a poem before.

She wipes a tear away.

From across the yard, the Matron calls out.

MATRON

You! Harold! Who are you talking  
to? Who is that?

The slow-moving disciplinarian waddles toward them.

Virginia pulls herself together.

VIRGINIA

You better be taking me along.

SANTA

Who else would I take?

VIRGINIA

(nervous laugh)  
Who else would go?

Virginia blows Santa a kiss and he blows one in return.

The Matron closes in.

MATRON

Stop! I want to see what's in your  
hands!

Santa waves Virginia away. She runs as the Matron closes in. The Matron WHEEZES her way to Santa and grabs the nape of his neck. She tries over and over to reach around and seize the small gift box from Santa.

Santa clutches it tight out of her reach, but the Matron's persistence pays off.

She snatches the gift box from Santa, pushes him away, and pries the container open.

MATRON

Well, what do we have here?

She pulls the biscuit out of the box and stares in  
puzzlement.

Santa grabs at it, but the Matron holds it out of his reach.

SANTA

That's mine.

She attempts a bite, but the stale biscuit hurts her teeth.

MATRON  
What? An old biscuit?

SANTA  
Please. It's my Christmas present.

She crushes the brittle biscuit in her hand and sifts the crumb dust through her fingers.

MATRON  
Not anymore.

SANTA  
You get on the naughty list for mean things like that.

MATRON  
Naughty list? Mark my words, you haven't seen mean yet.

The Matron gruffly grabs Santa's arm and lifts him up onto his toes.

MATRON  
Solitary for you!

INT. HOLDING ROOM - ORPHANAGE - DAY

The Headmaster shoves Santa toward a bench against a wall.

HEADMASTER  
Sit!

Santa does as told.

The Headmaster SNIFFS in disgust and makes a show of locking the door as he leaves.

Santa looks around. *Alone alone.*

He sings softly to himself.

SANTA  
Silent night.  
Holy night.  
All is calm.  
All is bright.

Santa hangs his head.

KRIS (O.S.)  
It looks like I've arrived just in time.

Santa looks up and sees

KRIS KRINGLE, older, but still with a mischievous twinkle.

Santa's eyes go wide with recognition.

SANTA

Hey. It's you.

Kris smiles.

KRIS

I believe you've been expecting me,  
young Master Claus.

SANTA

But wait. How did you get in here?  
How do you do that?

KRIS

Take my hand and I'll show you.

Kris holds out a hand of invitation. Santa extends trembling fingers that connect with Kris's.

A white light engulfs them and they vaporize.

EXT. SANTA'S HOME - NORTH POLE - MOMENTS LATER

Soft amber light emanates from the windows.

Kris and Santa materialize at the front door.

The wind WHISTLES.

Kris turns the doorknob and cracks the door.

KRIS

Let's get inside where it's warm.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

A cozy cave-like stone enclosure with thick warm carpets and tasteful accoutrements.

Kris opens the door and ushers Santa inside.

Kris wedges the door shut behind them.

KRIS

Welcome.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
Training began immediately.

INT. TOY WORKSHOP - DAY

Kris escorts Santa inside.

Huge. Expansive. Massive multiple stone fireplaces warm endless rooms filled with tables of half-assembled toys.

ELVES hustle about everywhere.

Across the main room, Kris spots an old ELF (MUDGE) who waves and beelines his way over.

KRIS  
(whispering to Santa)  
His name is Mudge. It's short for curmudgeon.

MUDGE sidles up to introduce himself. Mudge is *old old*. Bearded. Crusty as they come.

He sticks out a gruff hand.

MUDGE  
So you're the new Santa in training? You're a young one. Welcome aboard. We're in the middle of clean up right now. You know, re-organizing, filing away last year's letters. Getting in some rest when we can. But hey. You're here. Let's get busy.

INT. TOY WORKSHOP/SANTA'S STUDY/SLEIGH BARN - NORTH POLE - DAY/NIGHT

MONTAGE - SANTA LEARNS FROM THE MASTERS

-- Mudge leads Santa through vast rooms where ELVES build toys with speed and accuracy.

-- Kris and Santa empty large mail sacks chock full of letters.

-- Mudge and Santa oversee several ELVES speed-wrapping presents fed to them on a conveyor belt.

-- Surrounded by stacks of ledgers and letters, Kris and Santa pin ribbons of Christmas present lists to giant corkboards.

-- Mudge and Santa watch ELVES stuff huge canvas bags with wrapped presents.

-- Kris and Santa roll over-sized maps out on a desk. They reference charts that detail Christmas deliveries.

-- Kris shows Santa the sleigh.

-- Mudge slaps Santa on the back.

MUDGE

Relax. You're gonna be fine.  
 (spying a slacker)  
 Hey! Back to work!

EXT. REINDEER CORRAL - DAY

Kris and Santa walk among the reindeer.

KRIS

Taxing. I think that's the word  
 you're looking for. There's a  
 reason they wanted to call him  
 Grumpy.

They share a LAUGH.

KRIS

Don't take it personal. He can be  
 really sweet when you get to know  
 him.

SANTA

Well, I'll be interested in seeing  
 how long that takes.

Kris moseys up to a sturdy DOE and fishes out a handful of sugar cubes from a coat pocket. Kris slips the Doe a treat.

KRIS

There you go.

A BUCK nuzzles his way over.

KRIS

Wait your turn.

The Buck retreats a step, holds, and Kris rewards him.

KRIS

Good man.

SANTA  
Shouldn't they be eating celery or  
apples or something?

Kris puts a hand on Santa's shoulder.

KRIS  
Everything in moderation.  
Including moderation.

Santa counts the reindeer under his breath.

SANTA  
I'll never be able to tell them  
apart.

KRIS  
No need to get wrapped up in their  
names - they understand "Hey, you!"  
just fine. You're Santa. They're  
reindeer. They know you're talking  
to them.

Kris offers his last sugar morsel to an inquisitive Reindeer.

KRIS  
And a pocketful of sugar cubes  
never hurts.

EXT. CLINIC - NORTH POLE - DAY

A sign over the entrance to the stone cottage reads:  
DOCTORING and DENTISTRY by HERB

Kris leads young Santa inside.

INT. CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

A bell rests isolated in the middle of an unmanned reception  
counter. A posted sign reads: Ring the bell!

Kris DINGS the bell.

HERB comes out of his inner office adorned in a white smock  
with "Herb" embroidered above the breast pocket. He's an  
elder balding elf with reading glasses perched on the end of  
his nose. A straight arrow of the best kind.

KRIS  
Herb, I'd like to introduce you to  
our new Santa.

Herb offers his hand. He and Santa shake.

HERB

So when was your last physical,  
young man?

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

A fire SIZZLES and POPS.

Santa sits behind an immense maple desk.

Kris plops down a stack of heavy ledgers stuffed with  
letters.

KRIS

This is just the Hs through the Js.

SANTA

So how long?

KRIS

How long what?

SANTA

How long before I'm *the* Santa  
Claus?

KRIS

Truthful answer? Might be a few  
years.

SANTA

A few *years*?

KRIS

Maybe twenty.

SANTA

Twenty?

KRIS

How long did you think it would  
take?

SANTA

Well, I knew it wouldn't be  
overnight, but...



KRIS

To tell you the truth, I thought you were asking about something else. I thought you were going to ask about Virginia again.

SANTA

I want to be with her. We belong together.

KRIS

Nothing is ever meant to come to you all at once. Think about everything you've lived through and the lessons you've learned through osmosis about love, sacrifice, empathy. And now patience - admittedly one of the tougher nuts to crack.

Kris places a healing hand on Santa's shoulder.

KRIS

We'll tackle Virginia sooner than later. How's that?

Santa shrugs reluctant acceptance.

Kris pours himself and Santa a spot of tea.

SANTA

Herb says I'll need to stay away from Santa treats.

KRIS

He always says that. But try doing it. In Australia and England, they leave you beer and sherry. Hard to turn down when you're cruising around on a cold night. But Herb's right. It just slows you down. At least, that's been my experience.

Santa raises an eyebrow. Kris confesses.

KRIS

Once in Ireland, they left me porridge and Guinness. Doesn't sound like something that goes together, does it? But it does. Quite liked that, to tell you the truth.

Santa's eyes wander to a Woman's portrait framed on the wall.

Kris catches his gaze.

KRIS  
Mrs. Kringle.

EXT. PRIVATE CEMETERY - NORTH POLE - DAY

Kris and Santa stand over a stone that reads: The Beloved Mrs. Kringle

KRIS  
I miss her this time of year.  
Well, every time of year, actually.

Kris allows his mind to drift for a second, but he snaps to.

KRIS  
Oh, well. Right now, I need to  
concentrate on making you the best  
Santa ever.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

Kris and Santa hoist arm-loads of letters and stack them against stacks of other letters.

A KNOCK on the door.

KRIS  
Come in!

An ELF wheels in a cart of fresh letters.

Kris points to the recently transferred arm-loads.

KRIS  
These can be filed now.

The Elf nods and makes quick work of swapping out the old letters for new ones.

KRIS  
Thank you.

ELF  
You're welcome, as always, Mr.  
Kringle.

The Elf backs his cart out, and closes the door behind him.

KRIS

Gotta love those guys. They're a little cranky sometimes, but you wouldn't believe how much they can do. And the best part is they practically live forever.

Santa nods at the new pile of correspondence.

SANTA

How much time total do you spend reading letters?

KRIS

I'm up all night sometimes.

Kris picks up a random letter from the heap and notes the penmanship.

KRIS

A little girl wrote this. They always have nicer handwriting.

He slits open the envelope, unfolds the letter inside, and reads it over in silence.

KRIS

They're so delightfully unselfish sometimes.

(reading)

"If all I wanted for Christmas was to have my Daddy back, could you do that?"

Kris sets the letter aside.

KRIS

Those take their toll.

Kris shakes his head in frustration.

KRIS

She'll get an extra special toy under the tree.

SANTA

(overwhelmed)

How do you do it?

Kris checks the return address on the envelope and makes a note on a sheet. He puts his pen down.

KRIS

You don't do it alone, okay? And everybody has their own style. You've got Joulupukki in Finland. Saint Nicholas annoying people tossing coins through windows. There's Odin. Sinter Klass. Father Christmas. Tomte in Norway. The spirit of Santa Claus is in all of them. It's in every parent that helps, every sidewalk volunteer who rings a bell for the Salvation Army, every department store Santa who listens patiently to kids and their wish lists. Trust me, if you try to shoulder it all yourself, you'll have a nervous breakdown.

SANTA

But the orphanage. How come you never visited?

KRIS

Oh, I did. Through you. And frankly, that freed me up to help other people.

Kris leans back in his chair and clasps his hands in front of him.

KRIS

That was a test of sorts.

Santa borders on cross.

Kris CHUCKLES.

KRIS

Don't be upset. You passed with flying colors. Look. It's not all tinsel. Just try to keep the faith and enjoy what you do.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - DAY

Santa watches Kris clear furniture from the middle of the room. Using telekinesis. Kris concentrates his focus on objects and they slide to the side.

KRIS

Been moving objects a long time?

Santa shrugs.

KRIS  
Big things?

                  SANTA  
No.

                  KRIS  
Okay. Well, we'll work on that.

They step to the open center of the room and face each other.

                  KRIS  
In the meantime, you need to master  
moving things around. Including  
yourself. Like this.

Kringle SNAPS his fingers and vanishes.

Santa cups his astonished open mouth.

                  SANTA  
Where -

Kris appears behind Santa.

                  KRIS  
Behind you.

Santa twists around.

                  SANTA  
How do you do that?

Santa GIGGLES.

                  SANTA  
This is going to be fun.

Kris can't help but grin.

INT. BATHROOM - SANTA'S HOME - DAY

Kris wipes his face dry in the mirror.

A loud CRASH comes from the adjoining room.

Kris glances over his shoulder, then back in the mirror.

                  SANTA (O.S.)  
I'm alright!

Kris furrows a brow.

INT. DINING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Kris and a worn out Santa share a modest dinner.

Santa scrunches his face, concentrates. His body flickers - fades - then reverts to normal.

Kris shakes his head and smiles.

KRIS

Nobody's expecting you to get it  
all at once.

Santa pokes at his food.

SANTA

I could disappear an hour ago.

KRIS

So you see how much energy it takes  
to project yourself across just one  
room. Next we have to work on  
reappearing. You don't want to be  
materializing willy-nilly like  
earlier today. Not to mention in  
the future when you'll be appearing  
in multiple places at the same  
time.

SANTA

Sorry about earlier. I didn't mean  
to knock your stuff over.

EXT. SLEIGH HANGAR - NIGHT

ELVES harness REINDEER and attach them to the sleigh.

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

Kris and young Santa help ELVES drag large sacks of presents  
to the back of the sleigh.

Kris puts a hand on Santa's shoulder.

KRIS

I have a surprise for you. But  
you're going to need a warmer coat.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

WHOOSH!

A blur torches by.

EXT. ORPHANAGE GROUNDS - MEADOWS HOME FOR BOYS - NIGHT

Kris in his Santa outfit, and Santa zipped up in a bulky parka, dismount from the sleigh.

Santa takes it all in.

KRIS

It's a different place now. They got rid of the awful people who worked here. There are new people now. I wanted you to meet one of them.

INT. KITCHEN - ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Volunteer candy-striper Virginia slaves away washing dishes. She mops beads of sweat from her forehead with a sleeve.

SANTA (O.S.)

Virginia?

Virginia startles and YELPS, dropping a dish to the floor.

REVEAL

Santa. Parka hood pulled back, looking radiant.

Virginia, in slow motion at first, stumbles to him. They hug tight.

VIRGINIA

How - how - how did you get in here?

SANTA

Easy.

Santa holds out a hand.

SANTA

Here. Take my hand and I'll show you.

EXT. ORPHANAGE GROUNDS - NIGHT

Kris corners Virginia off by herself while Santa checks the sleigh.

KRIS

That's not what I asked you. Do you believe he's Santa Claus? The real one.

Virginia nods.

KRIS

It's not going to be about you, Virginia. There may be passing references to Mrs. Claus, but for the most part, she's wallpaper. People push her out of the way to get to him. I'm not saying it's fair. I'm not saying it's right. I'm saying that's the way it is. However...you can get a lot done if you don't care who gets the credit. So. Strong enough?

VIRGINIA

Yes. Strong enough.

Kris looks Virginia up and down and shakes his head.

KRIS

You're going to need a warmer coat.

Virginia nods.

VIRGINIA

You're Santa Claus. Can't you just give me one?

Kris LAUGHS.

KRIS

So. Do you like elves?

INT. LIVING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - DAY

Kris weds young 20s Santa and Virginia, flanked by Herb and Mudge.

KRIS

When 8-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon wrote a letter to the New York Sun asking if Santa Claus was real, the editor replied:

(quoting)

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

(MORE)



KRIS (CONT'D)

He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist. How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence."

Kris gestures to Santa and Virginia and they each place a ring on the other's finger.

KRIS

While we don't have Virginia O'Hanlon with us today, we are blessed to have our very own Virginia who certainly makes our world less dreary.

Kris smiles at the beaming couple.

Santa squeezes Virginia's hand.

KRIS

I get the sense there will always be poetry and romance bonding the two of you together. I am proud to introduce the new Mr. And Mrs. Claus.

Kris smiles at Santa.

KRIS

You may kiss the bride.

Santa kisses Virginia. They hug each other tight.

SUPER: 1942

The small audience CLAPS and hugs are shared all around.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

Ours was an idyllic and protected existence...

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

A battleship sinks at a 45-degree angle. In flames. Smoke billows. Secondary EXPLOSIONS detonate. SURVIVORS flounder and SCREAM in the water.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
 ...even though the world was at  
 war. But the wars and worldwide  
 catastrophes never ceased. So we  
 concentrated on our job.  
 Christmas.

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. ELF FACILITIES - DAY/NIGHT

MONTAGE - VIRGINIA SQUARES THINGS AWAY

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
 I found myself married to the  
 kindest man who just happened to be  
 next in line to be *the* Santa Claus.  
 We wanted to start a family right  
 away, but first, I had work to do.

-- Virginia stands at a toilet with the seat up. A crowd of ELVES surrounds her. She points to the seat and shakes her head, then puts the seat down. Get it?

-- Virginia leads a SAFETY ELF through elf sleeping quarters. She stoops along the way to pick up elf underwear and tosses it on a nearby bed.

-- Virginia runs her finger along a window ledge and holds it up to the Safety Elf who wrinkles his nose and recoils.

-- Virginia oversees ELVES cleaning.

-- Virginia hands out freshly baked cookies to ELVES.

-- Virginia cautions an ELF to cover his mouth when he BURPS.

-- Virginia reads stories to adoring ELVES who sit in a semi-circle at her feet.

-- Virginia and Mudge shovel reindeer droppings into a cart and stop to LAUGH about it.

-- Virginia falls backwards onto virgin snow and flaps to make a snow angel. ELVES, LAUGHING, flop down around her and make their own snow angels.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
 Being the only female had its  
 challenges. But for the most part,  
 things were pretty good.

INT. NURSERY - SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Cozy warm in texture. Low light. 27-year-old Virginia rocks  
 baby WILL in his cradle and HUMS to herself.

SUPER: Christmas Eve, 1950

Husband Santa sneaks in.

SANTA

Hey.

VIRGINIA

Hello, handsome Dad. Are you and  
 Kris about to take off?

Santa nods affirmative and takes a moment to peek into the  
 cradle.

SANTA

He is absolutely beautiful, isn't  
 he?

VIRGINIA

He takes after his Father.

SANTA

Oh, I'd say he looks more like you.

Santa COOS softly at Will and lifts him up to admire him in  
 the light.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

Our son Will grew up to possess all  
 of our good qualities and none of  
 the bad. By the time he reached  
 puberty, he was the spitting image  
 of his father.

EXT. TOY WORKSHOP - DAY

Mudge, timeless in his oldness, leads lanky 13-year-old WILL,  
 who sports white hair and a beard - a chip off the old block.

SUPER: 1963

Mudge grumbles under his breath.

MUDGE

Sure. Train him. He's all yours.  
Great. He's just a kid. This is  
all I need. Child labor laws.

Mudge shoulders the door open and pushes his way inside.  
Will shrugs and follows.

INT. WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

No elves in sight.

WILL

Where is everyone?

MUDGE

Lunch. So let me ask you  
something, Will. Did you think you  
were just going to come in here and  
make up your own toys all day long?  
'Cause I got news for ya. For the  
most part, you're going to be  
making Magic Eight Balls and Etch-a-  
Sketches.

WILL

Well, I love toys and I want to  
learn. And I'm willing to work my  
way up from the bottom.

MUDGE

What makes you think you can even  
make toys let alone potentially run  
the floor someday?

WILL

Actually, it might be easier if I  
just show you.

MUDGE

Yeah, maybe we need to see what  
everyone's talking about.

Mudge guides Will to a table with tools and toy parts.

MUDGE

Observe.

Mudge picks up a small hammer and screwdriver and blitzes  
through the process of putting a toy car together in record  
time. Twist. Turn. Tighten. Spin. Done.

Mudge sets the car down in front of Will. Mudge puffs up, hands on hips. Triumphant.

MUDGE

There. Can you do that?

Will swallows hard and steps up to the plate.

WILL

I'll try.

Mudge stiffens.

MUDGE

No. There's no trying here, kid.  
Work this.

Mudge slides toy boat parts and tools in front of Will.

WILL

Oh, I won't need the tools.

MUDGE

Excuse me? How you gonna make toys  
without using tools?

WILL

I've been practicing.

Will concentrates. Hard.

Toy fragments wobble and line up into position.

And then -

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Done. Finished. Look, Ma. No hands.

Mudge stammers.

MUDGE

What...what was that?

Will shrugs.

Mudge scratches his head.

MUDGE

I knew you'd have skills 'cause of  
your old man, and it's not like we  
couldn't use the help, but you're  
Santa's kid. You're not even an  
elf. You're the SK.

WILL

I could wear some fake pointed ears.

MUDGE

Nah. Everybody'll hate you at first anyway. With or without the ears.

(rolling his eyes)

Yeesh! Everybody's gonna love this!

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

Despite Mudge's reservations, Will got along famously with everyone. Eventually to include Mudge.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

Old Kris and middle-aged Santa huddle over a radio.

SUPER: November 22, 1963

REPORTER

(ON THE RADIO)

The news of President Kennedy's death continues to ripple around the world...

The Reporter's voice morphs into a drone.

A single tear tracks its way down Kris's cheek. Something inside him gives. He breaks a little.

Santa hugs him close.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

Every Santa is touched by the loss of innocence. But some heartbreaks are so symbolic, they can crush the will to go on.

INT. CHRISTMAS DELIVERY HOME - NIGHT

Rotating colors from a projection lamp illuminate an artificial white Christmas tree. On the floor underneath, a picture perfect display of wrapped gifts.

Kris leans in a doorway and observes.

Santa pulls the drawstring tight on his bag and sets it by the fireplace.

SANTA

That's everything for them, I think. And then I think we can call it a night.

Kris nods and gestures to milk and cookies left with a note on a mantle. Santa demurs. Enough already.

KRIS

If you'd told me twenty years ago there would be white Christmas trees, I would have laughed you up the chimney.

Kris adjusts the position of a present underneath the tree.

SANTA

You're right. It does look better that way.

KRIS

I'm not throwing stones. No offense.

SANTA

No offense taken.

Kris takes a nibble off a cookie and sets it back down.

SANTA

So Kris, normally you let me help, but tonight I'm doing pretty much everything.

KRIS

Because this is it for me.

SANTA

What?

KRIS

You've got this.

SANTA

Well, you told me this day would come, but still, I...

Kris picks up the note resting on the mantle and hands it to Santa.

KRIS

These are yours now. You've earned it, Mr. Claus.

Santa reads it. His eyes mist.

KRIS

Some of them are so open, aren't they? So beautiful at heart. I never tired of that.

Santa nods in agreement and offers the note to Kris. Kris reads it and his eyes mist, too.

KRIS

I will miss all this.

Kris points to the glass of milk. Want some? Santa declines.

SANTA

I've had a lot of milk tonight.

KRIS

They have to know you were here.

Santa caves and sips some milk.

Kris surveys the room and smiles.

KRIS

Enjoy your time. And think enchantment.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A young military VETERAN lies motionless, hooked up to tubes and BEEPING monitors. Heavy bandages reveal only his lower right arm and the right side of his face.

There's a Purple Heart pinned to the edge of his pillow.

Kris stands with Santa at the side of the bed.

KRIS

Last stop of the night. Special request. I'll take this.

Santa hangs back and watches Kris.

The Veteran's face flickers. His

EYE WIDENS

KRIS

Sshhh.



The Veteran moves an index finger. It's all he can move.

Kris places a comforting hand on the soldier's forearm and radiates benevolence.

The Veteran attempts to speak, managing a whisper.

VETERAN

Are you -

KRIS

Santa Claus.

VETERAN

There is no Santa Claus.

KRIS

Well, for my sake, I hope you're wrong about that one.

The reality settles in.

VETERAN

You're really here.

Kris confirms with a smile.

KRIS

Your daughter wrote me a letter.

A tear tracks its way down the Veteran's cheek. Kris wipes it away and squeezes the Veteran's hand.

KRIS

She needs something very special this Christmas.

Another tear - another wipe away. The Veteran trembles with emotion and Kris holds his hand through the tremor.

KRIS

I can't give your daughter that gift she wants and needs most right now. So you have to fight. You have to make it your mission to get home to your family. You are the only Santa she wants.

VETERAN

But I can't get there.

Kris pauses over the Veteran, wishing he could heal him.

KRIS  
Just believe and love will get you  
where you need to be.

Kris puts a knowing finger to his temple.

KRIS  
I'll be watching.

Kris turns to Santa - they SNAP their fingers and vanish.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - NIGHT

Kris rests ensconced in a recliner by the fire with his feet propped up. He SNORES in stutters.

Santa, Virginia, and Will watch Herb check Kris's pulse.

Herb releases Kris's wrist and puts on his coat to leave.

HERB  
Keep him comfortable.

Herb leaves.

Virginia adjusts a blanket draped over Kris's shoulders.

Mudge TAPS on the door and edges it open with an index finger.

MUDGE  
Got some more lists that haven't  
been checked twice.

Santa motions to a table behind him. Mudge deposits the stack.

Santa rubs tired eyes.

MUDGE  
You okay, Santa?

Santa nods yes.

Mudge turns to Virginia and points to Kris.

MUDGE  
How's our other Santa?

Virginia shrugs "Not so good."

MUDGE  
Let me know if you need anything.

Mudge pulls the door shut behind him.

Santa buries his face in his hands.

Kris WHEEZES and rouses. Winces. Clutches his heart.

KRIS

Oh, my. That was a bad one.

(urgent)

Ready to go, I think.

Santa clasps his mentor's frail hands.

SANTA

I don't know Christmas without you.

KRIS

You'll be fine.

SANTA

As long as I have a pocket full of  
sugar cubes, right?

Kris pulls Santa in for a hug.

Kris and Will hug.

Kris and Virginia hug.

KRIS

Everyone has their time. Use it  
wisely.

Kris inches himself up in his chair as much as he can.

KRIS

Think Christmas. And may God  
bless.

Kris slumps over in his chair. Gone. Just like that.

EXT. PRIVATE CEMETERY - NORTH POLE - DAY

Virginia and Santa stand over graves.

Mr. and Mrs. Kringle are now united.

Virginia and Santa pull each other close.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - DAY

Santa squeezes into Kris's red suit and checks himself in a full-length mirror as Virginia judges.

SANTA  
I look awful in it.

VIRGINIA  
You should have seen the frumpy green one with the open neckline he had stashed in the closet.

She tugs on his sleeve.

VIRGINIA  
Okay, take it off. I just wanted to get an idea. The Coca-Cola people said they'd send in a tailor in plenty of time.

Santa angles out of the jacket with Virginia's help.

VIRGINIA  
And keep growing your hair.

Santa examines his head in the mirror and notices a bald spot. He touches it in mild disbelief.

SANTA  
Virginia, why didn't you tell me I was losing my hair back here?

Virginia comforts him with a pat on the shoulder.

SANTA  
But I'm only in my early forties.

VIRGINIA  
You're still a young man to me. Be thankful you've got a job that allows you to wear a big hat.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

Virginia rolls out geographical charts on a table. Santa annotates a chart mounted on the wall behind the desk.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
When Kris passed, I dove in immediately to help. Everyone did.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - DAY

A 1960s pop Christmas song plays low on a radio.

Santa presides over Will and the Safety Elf who addresses concerns.

Virginia pops her head in.

VIRGINIA

Mudge says we need another run of  
"I Want to Hold Your Hand" singles.

SANTA

Vinyl is heavy. Is that all anyone  
wants this Christmas?

Virginia smiles.

VIRGINIA

Think enchantment.

She pops back out.

Santa gets back to business.

SANTA

There's no reason we shouldn't be  
able to ship batteries.

SAFETY ELF

We can't store them.

WILL

They get too cold in our warehouse  
and then they don't work.

SANTA

So all the toys with batteries will  
no longer have batteries in them?

WILL

Correct.

SANTA

Well, that isn't good. What  
happens when little children open  
their gifts and they don't work  
because they don't have batteries?

WILL

They can't all be happy endings.

SANTA

Excuse me? Why not? It's  
Christmas. Anything's possible.

SAFETY ELF

All toy packages will have a  
warning posted on them that says  
batteries are not included.

SANTA

That's the compromise? That's what  
you came up with? Yeesh.

Will turns to the Safety Elf - motions him out.

WILL

Okay. Payload delivered. Back to  
work.

As the Safety Elf goes out the door -

SAFETY ELF

Don't shoot the messenger.

Will closes the door. He and Santa are alone.

WILL

Sorry.

Santa rolls his eyes.

SANTA

Don't forget. You were the one who  
was so hot on battery-operated toys  
when I wanted to stay simple.

WILL

Not everyone wants a magic eight  
ball, Dad.

The Safety Elf pops his head in the door.

SAFETY ELF

Some people love that!

Will rolls his eyes. The Safety Elf SLAMS THE DOOR shut.

SANTA

He's right you know. Some people  
love that thing.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Santa adjusts a perfectly fitted Coca-Cola classic Santa suit. He primps in the mirror. Santa is now *Santa*.

Virginia enters.

Santa twirls and models his outfit.

SANTA  
What'd'ya think?

VIRGINIA  
It's nice. I think.

She tugs on the fabric in a couple of places and frowns.

SANTA  
What? I think it looks good.

VIRGINIA  
You look like you've gained weight  
since the fitting.

Santa SIGHS.

Virginia shakes her head and smiles.

VIRGINIA  
I know. It's not going to happen  
tonight.

She LAUGHS to herself and backs up under hanging mistletoe. Santa comes in for a smooch and catches her off guard.

VIRGINIA  
Sir! My virtue!

Santa points to the mistletoe.

SANTA  
You fall for that every year.

Virginia smiles.

FADE TO:

BLACK

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
I continued to fall for it every  
year.

SUPER: 1973

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
And what a wonderful time it was.

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Virginia washes dishes. She's 50 now.

Mudge saunters in.

MUDGE  
You wanted to see me?

Virginia dries her hands.

VIRGINIA  
Hi, Mudge.

Virginia gestures to a table and chairs. They park themselves.

MUDGE  
Okay, I think I know what you want to talk to me about, so let me apologize right up front.

Virginia arches an eyebrow.

MUDGE  
When you served string beans a coupla nights back, I mighta said some things that mighta got back to ya.

Virginia shrugs it off.

VIRGINIA  
How old are you, Mudge?

MUDGE  
Two hundred forty-seven. And a half.

VIRGINIA  
So you know the difference between good days and bad days, right?

Mudge nods indeed.



VIRGINIA

Well, if this is the worst thing that happens to me today, I'm having a great day.

Mudge's face relaxes.

VIRGINIA

Actually I wanted to ask you about Will going on runs with his Father. I'm not going to lie to you. I worry.

MUDGE

Nothin' to worry about, Mrs. Claus. Mr. Claus told me Will has got the controls when it comes to the sleigh. They're fine.

VIRGINIA

How much teleporting does he have to do? He hasn't had that much practice.

MUDGE

No, they got that, Mrs. Claus. They're practicing right now in the other room.

VIRGINIA

Huh. Well, Will thinks he's good at driving the sleigh, too. Uh-uh. He's too young.

Pregnant pause. Mudge shifts from side to side.

MUDGE

Is that it? Can I go now?

VIRGINIA

Sure, Mudge.

Mudge slides down off his chair to go.

VIRGINIA

Oh, wait. What about the string beans?

MUDGE

Excuse me?

VIRGINIA

What didn't you like about the string beans?

MUDGE

I don't really wanna say because I know you grew them and I know how hard it is to grow things up here and our soil isn't great and -

VIRGINIA

Mudge.

MUDGE

Yes, ma'am.

VIRGINIA

What didn't you like about the string beans?

MUDGE

They were a little...stringy.

VIRGINIA

Okay. I get it. Too much string in the string beans. So. Suggestions?

MUDGE

I was reading about this thing called hydroponic gardening.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Virginia watches Santa guide Will through a teleporting lesson.

Will scrunches his face and POOF! Gone.

Virginia manages a hopeful smile.

But then Will doesn't reappear.

Santa and Virginia check in with each other. Both worried.

Then BLIP!

Will comes through in another part of the living room and caves into some furniture, knocking over a lamp in the process.

Santa and Virginia exchange concern.

Will hops up into a standing position, untangling himself from the lamp.

WILL  
I'm alright!

Virginia shakes her head.

VIRGINIA  
You're not ready.

WILL  
I'm ready, Mom!

SANTA  
He thinks he's ready.

VIRGINIA  
Of course, he thinks he's ready.  
All young people think they're  
ready to drive the sleigh and  
evaporate into thin air!

Virginia crosses her arms and strikes a defiant pose.

SANTA  
He'll be fine. It's time.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
His father started taking him on  
Christmas runs. And by all  
accounts, it went fine. Still, I  
worried.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS DELIVERY HOME - NIGHT

Santa's in his early 50s now. Will is mid-20s.

A meager Christmas tree lights a corner of the room.

Will fetches presents out of a large canvas bag and hands them to Santa who places them under the tree with care.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)  
Santa?

Santa and Will jerk to. Caught.

A LITTLE GIRL, all of five, stares at them wide-eyed.

LITTLE GIRL  
Santa? Are those all for me?

SANTA  
Well, no, not all of them,  
Jennifer.

LITTLE GIRL/JENNIFER  
(gasping)  
You remembered my name.

SANTA  
But of course. Now go back to bed,  
sweetie.

Jennifer obliges without argument.

JENNIFER  
Okay. Good night, Santa. Merry  
Christmas.

SANTA  
Merry Christmas, Jennifer.

Jennifer waves and toddles off.

WILL  
What was that?

SANTA  
Sleepwalking. Poor thing. Too  
keyed up. She won't even remember  
she saw us.

Tears form in Will's eyes.

SANTA  
What's the matter, Son?

WILL  
I want a family. Like all these  
people have.

SANTA  
You have a family.

WILL  
A family of my own.

SANTA  
Everything happens in its own time  
and place. That's all I can tell  
you. You don't know where love  
will find you.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Santa and Will stand over an ancient weathered shell of a  
Woman GASPING her last faint breaths. It's Gertrude.

Santa motions Will to hang back.

SANTA  
I'll take this, Son.

Will searches his bag of presents.

WILL  
I don't seem to have a present for  
her.

A single tear ripples down Santa's face.

SANTA  
That would be me.

Santa goes bedside and takes Gertrude's hand.

She drifts into consciousness and her eyes flutter with  
recognition.

GERTRUDE  
Harold?

SANTA  
Yes, Mother.

GERTRUDE  
Jeremiah's gone.

SANTA  
I know.

A tear escapes down her face. Santa wipes the tear away and  
pats her hand.

GERTRUDE  
I'm sorry.

SANTA  
Don't be sorry.

GERTRUDE  
I'm scared.

SANTA  
Everything will be fine, Mother.  
No reason to be scared.

She trembles, grips his hand tight. She reaches under her  
pillow and pulls out the wooden bird he made for her when he  
was 10 years old. She clutches it to her chest.

GERTRUDE  
I knew you was Santa. I knew it.

SANTA  
Yes, Mother, I know.

Gertrude's breathing catches. Santa caresses her face.

SANTA  
It's okay to go.

A peace settles in Gertrude's eyes.

GERTRUDE  
Alright then.

She slips away. Santa closes her eyes, wipes tears from his own, and looks back at Will.

SANTA  
Time to go home.

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

Virginia interviews

KATE

25-years-old. Poised. Chipper. Natural girl-next-door beauty with a brain in her head.

KATE  
I've interned for the last eight years at the Florida Hydroponic Research Center and I graduated third in my class.

Virginia smiles.

VIRGINIA  
I just want to know how you got here.

KATE

Oh, it wasn't easy. They dropped my bags outside. Can I bring them in?

The door BANGS open. Will clambers in with suitcases.

WILL

Oh, hey. Sorry. Anyone know whose bags these are?

Virginia stands, as does Kate.

VIRGINIA

Perfect timing. Will, I'd like you to meet Kate. She's going to be running our fresh food supply operations. Kate, meet Will.

Will is smitten. Crush at first sight.

Kate sticks out her hand.

Will takes it, but he's out to lunch - over the moon. Kate rules the shake and smiles.

KATE

Nice to meet you, Will.

WILL

Yeah. Nice.

INT. GREENHOUSE - NORTH POLE - DAY

Kate maintains lush hydroponic towers of fresh fruits and vegetables. She struggles moving a heavy table. Will walks past outside. Kate RAPS on the glass. Will turns. She motions him inside.

Will sticks his head in the door.

WILL

Uh, hi.

KATE

You're just in time. Get in here. I need your help.

WILL

Umm, I'm late for toy wrapping.

Kate puts her hands on her hips.

KATE

Excuse me?

INT. CAFETERIA - NORTH POLE - DAY

Mudge chows down with a table full of enthusiastic ELVES. He stuffs his face with green beans.

MUDGE

The green beans are exceptional!

EXT. GREENHOUSE - NORTH POLE - DAY

Kate and Will manhandle large heavy potted plants. It's hard work. Will can't take his eyes off Kate. She likes him, too.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - NIGHT

Santa goes over lists. He rubs up under his reading glasses and leans back for a moment of respite.

Virginia lets herself in and slips behind Santa. She wraps her arms around the front of his chest.

VIRGINIA

Hey. You're burning too much midnight oil. Again.

SANTA

Can't keep up. I was falling asleep going over the naughty lists and that's not like me at all.

Virginia comes around in front of Santa to face him.

SANTA

What's up, my dear Virginia?

VIRGINIA

Poor Will. He's lovesick.

SANTA

Oh, dear.

EXT. REINDEER CORRAL - DAY

Will feeds apples to the REINDEER.



WILL  
 Try it. It's an apple. Lots  
 healthier than a sugar cube. Kate  
 says.

Santa comes around the side of the barn.

WILL  
 Hey, Dad.

Santa trudges over and plants himself.

WILL  
 Anything wrong?

SANTA  
 Wrong. Hmm. Not so much wrong as -  
 how to say this -

Santa hosts an internal debate.

WILL  
 What? Just say it.

Santa hems, haws, then blurts it out.

SANTA  
 How do you feel about Kate? Where  
 do you stand with her?

Will alerts at the mere mention of her name. Santa keys off  
 the reaction.

SANTA  
 So it's safe to say you have  
 feelings for her.

Will blushes.

SANTA  
 Simple yes or no.

WILL  
 Yes. Yes I do, but -

SANTA  
 Then it's time to make your move,  
 Son.

Will GULPS.

Santa claps Will on the back, CHUCKLES.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - NIGHT

At his desk, Santa closes one ledger and opens another.

Virginia lets herself in.

SANTA

Hey.

Virginia goes to the window and motions Santa over.

He gets out from behind his desk and comes to stand beside Virginia.

OVER THEIR SHOULDERS OUT THE WINDOW

Will and Kate walk hand-in-hand in bright moonlight. They stop, gaze into each others eyes, then kiss. A peck.

Virginia slips her arm around Santa's waist. He around hers.

Will and Kate indulge in a better kiss.

Virginia pulls Santa close.

INT. CHAPEL - NORTH POLE - DAY

Will and Kate stand together in a small, but ornate stone structure.

Santa officiates.

Virginia bears witness on Will's side and a huddle of ELVES side with Kate.

SANTA

You may kiss your bride.

Will and Kate kiss. Kate's right leg pops up. The CROWD CLAPS.

FADE TO:

A FRAMED WEDDING PHOTOGRAPH OF SANTA, VIRGINIA, WILL & KATE

As Virginia speaks, the foursome in the photograph ages almost 4 decades.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

We lived Christmas. And we loved every minute of it.

(MORE)

VIRGINIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My husband did everything in his power to make wonderful memories for all who believed. But there came a time when he finally slowed down. Christmas is hard work. There were signs he was fading.

The photograph's subjects have morphed. Santa and Virginia are old like when we first met them. Will & Kate are in their early 60s.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

Santa sits behind his desk.

Mudge KNOCKS and enters.

He holds up a handful of lists.

SANTA

What is it, Mudge?

MUDGE

You were supposed to check these lists twice and you didn't. They've only been checked once.

SANTA

Nonsense. Give them here.

Mudge hands them over.

Santa looks confused.

SANTA

I thought for sure...

MUDGE

Well, you didn't, boss. What's the matter with you anyway? That's the third time this week.

EXT. SLEIGH HANGAR - DAY

Will and Santa sit side-by-side in the sleigh.

SANTA

Okay, let's fire this thing up and blow the rust out.

Santa summons his mental powers and commands the sleigh to shudder to life and rise several feet off the floor.

Santa falters. His eyelids flutter. He clutches his chest.

WILL

Dad, are you alright?

SANTA

Take over.

Will narrows his eyes and concentrates. He guides the sleigh to a gentle touchdown. Santa comes around.

WILL

You okay?

Santa waves him off.

SANTA

Good work, Son.

INT. TOY WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Shut down for the night. Quiet.

Old Santa sits on the edge of a bench surveying inventory.

He looks beat.

Virginia enters and sits next to him.

VIRGINIA

Running out of steam?

SANTA

Some days.

VIRGINIA

Will said you had some problems with the sleigh today.

SANTA

Yeah. Lost my concentration for a second.

Virginia squeezes his hand.

VIRGINIA

It's tough to be Santa.

SANTA

Anyone can be Santa, really. Can't they?

VIRGINIA  
Some are better than others.

They embrace.

INT. HERB'S DENTAL OFFICE - DAY

A sign on the wall reads: "Floss the ones you want to keep."

Herb adjusts old Santa in a dentist chair.

Herb lowers the chair almost to the floor, then swings a stool around and parks on it.

HERB  
Comfortable?

SANTA  
Not particularly.

Herb bumps Santa up a tad.

HERB  
Better?

Santa rolls his eyes. Herb frowns, abandons the exam, and elevates Santa back into an upright position.

HERB  
How are you? Really.

SANTA  
I'm fine.

HERB  
I heard about that stuff with the sleigh.

Santa doesn't take the bait. Herb persists.

HERB  
You're scaring people. I've got a record number of elves I'm treating for grinding their teeth. Elves should never grind their teeth. They're little nubs to start with.

Santa remains poker-faced.

HERB  
Let's run some tests. Couldn't hurt.

Santa nods reluctant agreement.

HERB

Deal. Okay. Let's get those teeth squared away.

Herb lowers the chair again and peers into Santa's open mouth.

HERB

Hmm. Someone's been getting into the sweets. You flossing?

SANTA

Um-hmm.

Herb arches an eyebrow.

HERB

Really.

INT. HERB'S OFFICE - DAY

Herb sits across from Mr. and Mrs. Claus with Santa's chart flipped open on his desk.

HERB

There were some things that came up in your tests that concerned me a little. Could be nothing, but -

EXT. REINDEER CORRAL - DAY

Virginia and Herb pet REINDEER.

HERB

He's a little more advanced than we first thought. I'm not going to lie to you, Virginia. It's not safe for him to go on Christmas runs anymore.

VIRGINIA

And then what?

HERB

Eventually, he'll become completely dependent. It won't be easy.

Virginia straightens.

VIRGINIA

No. It won't. But he's given the world a lot of love - time for the world to offer up some grace.

Will approaches with a bale of hay. He looks upset. He throws the bale down.

HERB

Hey, Will.

WILL

Herb.

Herb takes note of Will's demeanor and excuses himself.

Will pulls clippers from a pocket, snips the baling wire, and breaks the hay into large handfuls he scatters on the ground.

Will eyes his mother. He waits for her to open up conversation. She stares off into space.

Will clears his throat.

VIRGINIA

What?

WILL

What's wrong with Dad? He's forgetting things. Getting confused. And now the thing with the sleigh. You know something.

VIRGINIA

(choosing her words)

Your Father is ill. His situation is not going to improve.

Will freezes. Stunned.

VIRGINIA

The world can't know. Christmas goes on.

Virginia searches Will's face for acknowledgement.

VIRGINIA

You understand me?

Will half-nods, still dazed.

VIRGINIA

I'm going to need your help.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

Virginia makes annotations on large charts unraveled across a desk.

Will enters. Stands silent.

Virginia stops what she's doing.

WILL

I thought about it and I can't be him.

VIRGINIA

No one's asking you to be him.

WILL

You're asking me to be Santa Claus.

VIRGINIA

Sure. Until we can find someone else, yes. Look, you've been on more runs with him than anybody, you've inherited his magical qualities, and you love to make toys and give them to little children on Christmas. What's not to like?

FADE TO:

BLACK

VIRGINIA (V.O.)

With each passing Christmas, Santas give a part of themselves they can't get back. My husband's health was compromised. He was old. We all knew what that meant. And then, a cruel trick of fate. His loss of innocence moment.

FADE IN:

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - NIGHT

Santa reads letters and makes studious notes in an oversized ledger as he goes.

SUPER: December 14, 2012



An urgent RAP on the door.

SANTA

Come in!

Mudge pokes his head in. Tears in his eyes. Trembling.

MUDGE

Umm...sorry.

SANTA

What is it, Mudge?

MUDGE

We're not really sure. But you need to come look.

INT. CLAUS DEN - NIGHT

Santa, Virginia, Mudge, Herb, Will and Kate stare at a news report on TV.

SANTA'S FACE

Disbelief in the glow of the TV.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

...a lone gunman who apparently shot his way into the elementary school after killing...

VIRGINIA

Turn it off.

Mudge switches off the television.

SANTA

When does it stop?

INT. HERB'S THERAPY OFFICE - DAY

Santa sits on the edge of a leather couch in a warm earth-tone room with built-in floor-to-ceiling bookcases.

Herb listens from a chair three feet away.

SANTA

They've been hiding letters from me. The bad ones. They didn't want to burden me.

HERB

Maybe they sense you're under  
enough stress as it is.

SANTA

There are homes you go into and  
you're not welcome. Every year it  
gets harder. I'm not sure joy can  
coexist with overwhelming grief.

HERB

Okay, so you can't fix the whole  
world.

SANTA

I'm a one-trick pony.

HERB

If I could only do one trick and  
that was to deliver Christmas joy  
to millions of faithful children  
every year, I'd settle. Pretty  
darned good trick if you ask me.

SANTA

That's nice of you to say, Herb.

HERB

Well, it's true. Your spirit fills  
people with a desire to be nice  
even if it's only once a year for  
some of them. If you ask me, I  
think you're doing just fine.

SANTA

I wish I could be more sure about  
that.

Santa gets to his feet.

SANTA

But thanks for listening, Herb.

Santa shuffles to the door and stops.

SANTA

Herb.

HERB

Santa.

SANTA

Do you think Kris had days like  
this?

HERB

All the time. The man ground his molars like you wouldn't believe.

Santa exhales a wistful SIGH.

Herb smiles and waves as Santa exits.

EXT. SLEIGH HANGAR - DAY

Santa climbs into the sleigh. Using his telekinetic powers, he does a shaky job bringing the sleigh to life. After a few false starts, the sleigh levitates.

Santa's eyes flutter. He tries to focus.

The sleigh falters. Jerks. Tilts to one side. Then it lurches forward at an angle straight into a wall.

Santa and the sleigh CRASH to the ground.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NORTH POLE - DAY

Santa rests on a bed with his sheets pulled up chest level.

Herb takes his pulse and shakes his head.

HERB

Santa, Santa, Santa. What's going on with you?

Herb picks up Santa's chart off the end of the bed. He flips through Santa's stats.

HERB

Your blood pressure's sky high.  
Your numbers are all over the map.

Santa maintains a poker stare.

HERB

We need you to take a chill pill.  
Stay in bed for a few days.

SANTA

You know I can't do that.  
Christmas is just a week away.

Herb shrugs "What do you want from me?"

SANTA

How can we not have Christmas?

HERB

We coast for a year. See if anyone notices.

SANTA

Coast for a year and see if anyone notices? No. Not this year. *Especially* this year.

HERB

You're not in any shape - mentally or physically - to take on Christmas this year.

Santa gathers his hospital gown, throws off his covers, and swivels out of the bed. He grabs a robe hung from a hook and yanks it on.

Virginia enters.

Santa ferrets out slippers and wedges his feet into them.

HERB

I'd like you to stay another night for observation. If that's not too much trouble.

Santa bears down on Herb.

SANTA

Coast for a year and see if anyone notices? I want to shake you. And I could, too. If I wanted to.

VIRGINIA

Oh, stop. Let it go. You're not going to start throwing elves around.

Santa BLUSTERS.

SANTA

Virginia, I'm going this Christmas.

VIRGINIA

Stop with this nonsense. You heard what Herb said. You have to think what's best for everybody.

Santa pulls his robe tight.

SANTA

I thought I was.

He bristles away.

Virginia SIGHS.

Herb shakes his head in frustration.

HERB

Can you talk to him?

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Santa fumbles around trying to get his coat on.

Virginia enters the doorway, at first unseen by Santa.

She watches him struggle. He can't find the other arm of the coat.

His shoulders heave in frustration.

Virginia comes up from behind and assists. He starts to weep and she presses against his back and puts her arms around his waist. She whispers with tenderness in his ear.

VIRGINIA

I know you're lost.

Virginia adjusts the fit on Santa's suit - it hangs loose on his elderly frame.

VIRGINIA

I remember when this used to be snug on you.

Santa rolls his eyes.

VIRGINIA

I saw that.

She caresses his beard like she did as a teenager.

VIRGINIA

Soft.

He blushes.

VIRGINIA

And you still blush. That's so sweet.

She straightens his collar.

SANTA

I'm not sure I believe in me anymore. Not really.

VIRGINIA

I believe in Santa Claus. I didn't used to, but you made me.

SANTA

Huh. Really.

VIRGINIA

"He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist. How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus!"

Santa tries to recollect what comes next. It takes him a second.

SANTA

"It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence."

VIRGINIA

And we can't have that, can we?

Santa waffles.

VIRGINIA

You need to put a big smile on your face and keep it there so you don't scare people.

Santa half-CHUCKLES. Virginia notes his change in attitude.

VIRGINIA

Yes. And we need to have more of that, please. So let's talk about Christmas.

SANTA

Don't worry, I'll be ready.

Virginia guides him over and they sit on the end of the bed side-by-side. She takes his hands in hers.

VIRGINIA

There will come a time when we can't have this conversation so I want to have it now.

(MORE)

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

It's time for us to recognize our limitations. It's time to do what's best for you. And that means handing over the reins to someone else.

SANTA

You mean I can't be Santa Claus?

VIRGINIA

You'll still be my Santa Claus. Just not everyone else's.

If this were coming from anyone else but Virginia, he'd bluster. Instead, he saddens. He knows she wouldn't lie to him.

SANTA

But who will be Santa?

INT. LIVING ROOM - SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

An intervention of sorts, only without the participation of the individual of concern. Herb heads a circle consisting of Virginia, Will, Kate, and Mudge.

VIRGINIA

It took some convincing, but he's accepted the thought of Will taking over. Just not *this* Christmas. And I don't think he's going to bend on that, so let's figure a way to make this happen for him.

KATE

Will's been on enough runs. Dad can be Santa like always and Will can be there to catch him if he falls.

WILL

That won't work, Kate. There are charts he knows that I'm still not smart on.

VIRGINIA

What charts?

WILL

Huh?

VIRGINIA

Which charts? I've worked with him on a lot of them. I could make you smart.

WILL

There's not enough time.

HERB

Too bad you can't both go. That way, you'd have double protection for the Old Man.

KATE

That could work, couldn't it?

WILL

Impossible. The sleigh only seats two and that's snug as it is.

VIRGINIA

Nothing's impossible at Christmas.

Mudge jumps to his feet.

MUDGE

What if it was a 3-seater?

WILL

But it's not, Mudge.

MUDGE

But what if it was? I got guys with skills.

WILL

There's not enough time.

Mudge heads for the door.

MUDGE

You're right. Not if I stand here jawing.

Mudge SLAMS THE DOOR shut behind him.

Will shakes his head.

WILL

No, this isn't going to work.

VIRGINIA

It has to work. Or there won't be a Christmas for him this year.

(MORE)



VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

That will break his heart more than anything.

KATE

(to Will)

Why won't it work?

Will stands.

WILL

It just won't! Don't you understand?

Will stifles a SNIFFLE and runs from the room.

EXT. PATH - NORTH POLE - MOMENTS LATER

Will walks, wiping tears from his eyes.

Virginia approaches from behind. She catches up and meets his stride.

VIRGINIA

Hey.

WILL

What?

VIRGINIA

What's your biggest fear?

Will turns on her and they face off.

WILL

What's my biggest fear? Oh, I don't know, Mother. Maybe it's that everyone thinks I'm going to be the next Santa Claus. Or maybe it's that my Father isn't going to be who he is anymore. Could it be that?

(melting down)

It's not fair! He's such a sweet soul! He gives so much! I can't be Santa Claus!

VIRGINIA

Of course you can.

Will walks away. Virginia follows.

WILL

I'm a grown man and you still freak out about me teleporting and driving the sleigh, even when Dad's with me.

VIRGINIA

So you think you can't do it.

WILL

That's not what I said. I said I don't want to do it. I know I said I would, but I've changed my mind.

Will stalks off.

Virginia throws her hands up.

INT. BEDROOM - NORTH POLE - NIGHT

Will and Kate are in bed with the lights out. Moonlight through the windows illuminates the room.

Neither can sleep. Will turns away from Kate on his side and tries to situate himself.

Kate spoons him and caresses his shoulder.

KATE

Why don't you want to do it?

WILL

It's not right. That's his job. I'm not Santa. He is.

KATE

Being right isn't always enough. Sometimes you can do everything right and things still don't turn out.

WILL

It's not fair.

KATE

No, it isn't. But if anyone fits the bill, it's you. You've been on the deliveries for years now. You've worked your way up from being a toy-builder to managing every part of the operation. You know how to drive the sleigh.

WILL  
That's still a little hairy for me,  
truth be told.

KATE  
The reindeer love you.

WILL  
Only because I give them sugar when  
I shouldn't.

KATE  
No, they really love you. And so  
do your parents. And she wouldn't  
ask if they didn't think you should  
do it. Even on your worst day, you  
would make a great Santa.

EXT. OPEN BAY GARAGE - NORTH POLE - DAY

Mudge adjusts a newly constructed rumble seat on the sleigh  
while Santa sits up front playing with control knobs.

Will approaches, tries to keep it light.

WILL  
I hope you don't think you're going  
anywhere in that anytime soon.

Santa grins.

SANTA  
Not by myself, anyway.

Mudge packs up his tools.

MUDGE  
Yeah, we just got this fixed. We  
need to keep it in one piece for  
Christmas.

Mudge salutes.

Santa salutes Mudge out of the room.

SANTA  
Congratulations on being the new  
Santa in town come next year.

WILL  
Dad, I -

SANTA

You're never really *ready ready*,  
Will. Trust me. You'll make an  
amazing Santa. You've got a  
terrific beard. You drove the  
sleigh the whole way last year.

WILL

That was a little scary.

SANTA

You were great. And Kate's going  
to make a superb Mrs. Claus.

Will tears up. Santa hugs him.

WILL

I don't know Christmas without you.  
Either one of you.

SANTA

You'll be fine.

Will LAUGHS through his tears.

WILL

As long as I have a pocket full of  
sugar cubes, right?

SANTA

Exactly.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY - NIGHT

Virginia and Santa have tea.

SUPER: Christmas Eve

Virginia reaches down beside her chair and retrieves a small  
wrapped package.

VIRGINIA

I have something for you.

She hands the package to Santa. He undoes the ribbon and  
unwraps a small box. Inside is a biscuit.

Santa holds it up and smiles.

SANTA

Hard as a rock. Just like I  
remember.

Virginia LAUGHS.

Santa pockets the biscuit.

SANTA  
That will be my good luck piece  
tonight.

Virginia opens a desk drawer and pulls out a worn folded  
piece of paper. She unfolds it and reads it to herself.

She references the paper.

VIRGINIA  
This is the poem you wrote about  
me.

Santa nods.

VIRGINIA  
Do you remember what you wrote?

SANTA  
Word for word.

Virginia gives his private thoughts another once-over. She  
smiles to herself and folds it up. Back in the drawer.

VIRGINIA  
I still see you as a young man.

SANTA  
Good thing, huh?

They LAUGH.

VIRGINIA  
Do you remember what you said to me  
- before you left to go to the  
orphanage - when you came to my  
window?

SANTA  
Tell me.

VIRGINIA  
You said you loved me even though  
you didn't quite understand love at  
the time.

SANTA  
Do you think I figured it out?

VIRGINIA  
You live it every day.

SANTA  
Thank you for taking the time to  
show me the grace the world has to  
offer.

They kiss.

SANTA  
And thank you for making a safe  
place for me.

Deep hug.

EXT. SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Windy and cold.

The sleigh is parked, trailed by an endless train of large  
bags teeming with wrapped presents.

ELVES scurry about, adding last minute deposits to the loot.

The REINDEER are hitched and ready. Will adjusts a harness.

INT. SANTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Full circle from the beginning.

Santa rouses in his chair as Virginia nudges him.

SANTA  
What time is it?

VIRGINIA  
It's time to go.

Two THUDS at the door.

VIRGINIA  
Come in!

Will scoots inside with the wind at his back. He manhandles  
the door shut and shakes the outside off.

SANTA  
Everything okay, Will?

Will unravels his scarf and removes his heavy coat. He  
shakes out his bushy white beard.

WILL  
Everything's ready.

Santa nods.

Virginia retrieves Santa's classic red coat with white trim. She holds it up behind him and guides Santa's struggle as he backs into the sleeves.

He GRUNTS as she comes around in front to pull in his coat and belt.

VIRGINIA  
I never know if you're warm enough.

Santa kisses her on the top of her head.

SANTA  
And that's with no mistletoe.

She rests her palms flat on his chest and smooths out his coat - checks to make sure his collar is buttoned up. She kisses him on the cheek. Santa looks into her eyes. He moves closer. They kiss on the lips. Soft. Tender.

Mr. and Mrs. Claus release their embrace. Santa heads for the door, wedges it open and blasts their coziness with the chill wind from outside. He steps out the door and pulls it shut behind him.

Silence.

A tear tracks down Will's face.

Virginia reaches over and wipes it away.

VIRGINIA  
Enough of that. Not tonight.

Will pulls himself together as best he can.

EXT. SANTA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Santa wipes a tear of his own away. He shrugs, secures his hat, and pulls his gloves tight.

He peers up at the sky.

Santa inspects the harnesses on the REINDEER. The Reindeer SNORT and shift in place, shake themselves out.

He works up the line toward the front and stops in front of the lead Reindeer. He cups the Reindeer's graying face with concern.

SANTA

Ready?

The lead Reindeer SNORTS affirmative. Santa strides back to the sleigh.

SANTA

Well, alright, then. What are we waiting for?

Will comes out of the house, followed by Virginia and Kate.

Mudge and Herb head up a small herd of ELVES.

The Old Man climbs up on his sleigh, settles into the seat, and tests the reins. He looks behind the sleigh at a seemingly endless trail of huge sacks attached, then turns back to Virginia. He reaches out and she takes his assist up into the sleigh.

Will clambers up into the rumble seat and buckles a makeshift seat belt.

Santa raises a gloved hand and focuses on -

THE TRAIL OF SACKS

They RUSTLE. RUMBLE. Wobble back and forth.

Will squints and focuses, trying to help. Virginia pats his knee and mouths the words "Let him do it." Will nods okay.

Santa finds his mojo and "guides" the huge train of gifts until it hovers off the ground, CRACKLING with kinetic energy.

Santa amps up his focus and the sleigh RUMBLES even more.

Virginia CLAPS like a giddy child.

The Elves wave to Santa and CHEER.

Kate's eyes mist. She blows a kiss to Will and he blows one back.

KATE

You hurry back. You know I worry if you're not back by morning.



WILL  
Mrs. Claus, you are the most  
beautiful creature in the world.

Will winks.

Santa shakes the reins. The reindeer STOMP their hooves in anticipation.

The deer and the sleigh rise, RATTLING upward off the ground. Suspended.

Santa tugs the reins.

WILL  
Dad, say it!

Santa looks at the Elves' expectant faces.

Virginia LAUGHS. Santa CHORTLES and salutes the crowd.

SANTA  
Ho-ho-ho! Merry Christmas to all  
and to all a good night!

Wild APPLAUSE.

Virginia latches onto Santa's arm.

Santa kisses Virginia, oh so gentle.

Santa pulls the reins and the entire assembly shudders upward, becoming more centered and steady each second.

SANTA  
(to the Reindeer)  
What are we waiting for? On! On!  
On!

The Reindeer jut the sleigh forward, cutting through the falling snow with a force all their own.

Santa waves and blows a kiss from his gloved hand as the sleigh lifts higher.

VIRGINIA (V.O.)  
So, yes, Virginia, there is a Santa  
Claus. In our poetry. In our  
romance. In our generosity and  
devotion. Maybe even in you. All  
you have to do is believe.

Santa SNAPS the reins.

The lead reindeer's nose glows red, lighting the way.  
Up, up and away.

THE END