

EXT. SANTA'S CASTLE (NORTH POLE) - DAY

A bright warm sunny day. Everywhere, ice glistens as it melts.

A snow covered driveway stretches from ornate iron gates with "NORTH POLE" wrought in the archway to the enormous wooden front door of Santa's Castle.

The castle front door- a little "cat door" cut into it- opens and the elderly and arthritic MRS. CLAUS steps out and pours milk in a cat's bowl resting on the ground. The name "STRUDEL" is glazed onto the bowl in large letters.

STRUDEL, a cute kitten, rubs himself against Mrs. Claus' leg. Mrs. Claus straightens herself with great effort. Strudel approaches his bowl. A big drop of water lands in the bowl, making a SPLASH.

STRUDEL
(Annoyed)
Meow!

Hanging from the castle eve directly above Strudel is a giant icicle. It glistens as water runs down it and drips.

A mighty CRACKING SOUND is heard and Strudel looks up.

The icicle breaks off from the eve.

Strudel's hair puffs out in sheer terror.

The icicle hurtles toward the ground.

Strudel frozen with fear watches it come straight at him.

Strudel SHRIEKS as the icicle impales him.

Mrs. Claus looks down at the bloody mess at her feet, a pile of red stained fur from which a giant sword-like icicle sticking straight up rises over her head.

MRS. CLAUS
That does it!
(Yelling, hands on hips.)
Nicholas fucking Claus we're
moving!

The sound of Mrs. Claus' voice makes the other icicles on the eve tremble and fall. Landing in front of Mrs. Claus' toes they spread left and right forming an icy picket fence. Mrs. Claus parts two icicles with her hands, and the rest fall like dominoes in each direction, CRASHING into pieces as she storms into the castle through the front door.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The workshop is a hive of activity, humming with MECHANICAL NOISE. An old industrial space updated to serve modern needs with modern machinery that seems too big. Pipes, wires, ducting and lights are jerryrigged to old beams.

A large digital clock hangs under a sign, "Countdown to Christmas", blinks 157 Days 12 Hours 8 Mins and 25 seconds.

ELVES are busy assembling an arsenal of toys on conveyor belts; miniature AK 47s in yellow plastic, rocket propelled grenade launchers in purple; tanks and planes in vibrant colors.

SANTA, in overalls, a hard hat on top of his usual red one, stands near an overhead sign warning "hard hat zone" and the words "Plastic Extrusion". Elves operate machines squirting liquid plastic from tubes into brightly colored molds.

An angry MRS. CLAUS, without a hard hat, confronts Santa who tries to remain calm in front of his employees.

The Elves do their best to look busy but have a pointy ear turned toward the argument.

SANTA

Look, Hilda, the Pole's been here for 50 million years. So what if it melts a little? There'll still be plenty left.

MRS. CLAUS

You're in denial like the rest of 'em. Your goddamn existence is at stake but it's business as usual.

SANTA

Relocate overnight? Come on.

MRS. CLAUS

And forget the South Pole. I'm not taking my old Dutch behind anywhere cold. My arthritis is killing me. I'm tired. I've had it.

Behind Santa the floor under the plastic extrusion area begins to bulge upward. Cracks appear and radiate outward as RUMBLING and CRUNCHING sounds are heard. Overhead lights swing. Boxes fall from nearby shelves.

A submarine periscope protrudes through the floor of workshop, directly beneath BICKLES an elf working a plastics hose.

The periscope quickly rises up between Bickles' legs, punching him in the crotch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BICKLES

Ouch!

The periscope continues to extend, lifting Bickles clean off the floor. The periscope rotates, swinging Bickles around with it, like he's on a swiveling stool. The hose he's operating winds around him like a boa constrictor.

When the "eye" of the periscope faces directly at Mrs. Claus a SUBMARINE BEEPING SOUND is heard, the Russian word for "DIVE" is heard coming out of the periscope.

The periscope rapidly lowers. Bickles falls. Rapidly unrolled from the hose, he spins like a top, until dumped on the cracked floor, writhing and holding his groin.

MRS. CLAUS

You're on very thin ice, Nicholas Claus.

Mrs. Claus turns and addresses the Elves.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)

And that goes for the lot of you!

Santa watches silently as Mrs. Claus walks out, hand on hip, continuing her rant.

MRS CLAUS (CONT.)

Sell this shit for a boatload of money. Ship all our crap to the Sunbelt! But who listens to me? Men!

Santa blinks.

EXT. REINDEER STABLES - DAY

JASPER, the head elf, and BICKLES, another elf, walk along an icy path toward the reindeer stables, a small building made of stone and wood, with one side open. Both carry two buckets of reindeer feed, one in each hand.

Bickles pants are patched from the crotch in front to the seat at back. He walks with a round gait, still sore from the morning's submarine periscope incident.

BICKLES

What gets me— and y'know, I ain't askin' for flowers and a get well card— is that he doesn't give a rat's ass.

JASPER

Well, he's a busy guy, Bickles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BICKLES

Too busy to say, "Gee Bickles, you all right? Anything I can do?"

(Bickles spits)

I mean, shit. I practically lost my elfhood today!

Jasper is just about to say something when there's a loud "CRACK". Followed by "CH-CH-CH-CH-CH..."

Bickles and Jasper see the ice cracking directly down the path toward them.

The crack runs right between the two of them.

The ice under them wobbles. They look at each other horrified.

Jasper balances himself using the buckets of reindeer feed like a tightrope walker uses a pole, a little feed spilling while he does this.

Bickles isn't nimble enough. The ice under Bickles flips up and he slides into the freezing water, SCREAMING.

Jasper gets down on his belly and extends his arm out to Bickles who grasps it.

Jasper pulls Bickles out of the water. Bickles is shivering and blue.

BICKLES (CONT'D)

(Teeth chattering)

First my nuts get pulverized. Now they're frozen off!

Jasper looks around. The landscape has suddenly changed. The ice has broken in a rough circle.

They are on an island with the stables at the center surrounded by a moat.

Reindeer wander over from the stable, blinking and confused, then nibble the spilled feed.

Jasper unclips a leather pouch on his belt, and pulls out a twisted shell- like a miniature cornucopia.

He grabs a nearby reindeer by the neck and holds it in a headlock.

With the reindeer under his elbow Jasper deftly puts the wide end of the shell into his pouch, scooping out a small mound of sparkling white powder. He then sticks the wide end of the shell with the powder on it up the reindeer's nostril. He bends over and blows a hard puff through the narrow end of the shell, sending the powder up the reindeer's nose.

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The reindeer WHINNIES, pricks its ears, rolls its eyes backward and convulses momentarily, then STAMPS its hooves.

As the reindeer stamps it slowly starts to levitate, rising a few inches from the ice.

Jasper grabs Bickles and throws him over the back of the hovering reindeer.

Jasper then grabs another reindeer, puts it in a headlock.

We see Bickles on his reindeer hovering higher.

Jasper floats up on the other reindeer and takes Bickles' reindeer by an antler, then guides them airborne towards Santa's Castle.

The reindeers' noses glow red.

FADE OUT.

INT. OUTSIDE SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

JASPER stands outside the large wooden door. He hears SANTA and MRS. CLAUS arguing loudly.

MRS. CLAUS (O.S.)

You're not gambling away my retirement! I can't take this cold anymore. My arthritis is killing me.

SANTA (O.S.)

Hilda, Hilda, Hilda, listen...

MRS. CLAUS (O.S.)

Don't Hilda me, Nicholas Claus. I'm serious. You have to sell the business. Now! While it's still worth something!

Jasper is about to knock. His fist comes close to the door but stops short. Instead, he peeps in through the keyhole.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY (THROUGH KEYHOLE) - DAY

The keyhole frames the shot...

We see the walls of the office lined with pictures of Santa with famous people. From 1920's aviators, Hollywood stars of the golden years, 70's and 80's rock stars to 21st century celebrities.

Behind Santa's desk is a large poster for the Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular, and on his desk, is a picture of Santa with two Rockettes perched on his knees.

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Seated at his desk, SANTA pours himself a drink. MRS. CLAUS stands in front of the desk, hands on hips.

SANTA

Sell the business? Who's going to buy it? I don't make any money from the toys? I give them away, for Chrissakes.

Santa takes a sip.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Toys are a loss leader. I make my money from appearances, Hilda. And have for a long time. You know that - Father Christmas!

MRS. CLAUS

I have no idea where the money comes from but I sure as hell know where it goes! When it's time to settle all your gambling debts, those lousy sharks call me! From Mumbai to Melbourne, wherever there's horse race...

SANTA

I win too, y'know.

MRS. CLAUS

Well, they don't call me about that. And neither do you. I'm stuck here in this damn cold ass dump while you get to gallivant and globe trot!

She waves at the pictures on the walls.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)

Appearances, huh! Who ever sees us together? When was the last time we went out to dinner? When?

SANTA

(Mumbling...)

MRS. CLAUS

1966! That's when!

SANTA

Really? I don't remember.

MRS. CLAUS

We go out to dinner once in 50 years and you don't even remember it? Oh my dear God!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mrs. Claus puts both hands to her head in dismay.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
What is the point?

SANTA
I'll get Jasper to hook up the
reindeer; we can fly to Paris
tonight.

MRS. CLAUS
Screw Paris! I don't want to go out
tonight. I want out permanently!
I'm putting the Castle on the
market.

SANTA
You can't do that... I have the
workshop...

MRS. CLAUS
The deed's in my name. Remember? In
case the sleigh crashes, remember?

Mrs. Claus turns and walks toward the door.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)
You would if you didn't drink so
god damn much!

INT. OUTSIDE SANTA'S STUDY - DAY

JASPER quickly straightens up. MRS. CLAUS opens the door and
passes by him.

MRS. CLAUS
Don't waste your time, Jasper.

INT. SANTA'S STUDY DAY

SANTA is pouring himself another drink as JASPER approaches.

JASPER
About the reindeer stables, boss.

SANTA
Jasper, before you start.

Santa picks up an ornate silver ice bucket from the floor by
his desk and proffers it to Jasper.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Do me a favor and get me a little
more ice.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELVES DINING HALL - NIGHT

A typical cafeteria-style dining room, busy ELVES buss their trays of self-served food to long, narrow communal tables. Around one table, a group of elves- JASPER, ELTARK, ZORPE and BENJY- chow down and chew the fat.

ELTARK
She's got him by the balls.

BENJY
But the old cow is right. This is a
sinking ship.
(beat)
Poor Bickles.

All Elves shake their heads in agreement.

ZORPE
(With mouth half full)
Where does that leave us?

ELTARK
Jasper, what do you think they're
going to do?

JASPER
Beats me.

EXT. TOYZ ON DEMAND! HQ - DAY

An impossibly tall skyscraper stretches from the sidewalk up to the clouds. Its top crested by the Toyz On Demand logo, a garishly colored assemblage of letters designed to look haphazard, the way a child would stack blocks.

INT. TOYZ ON DEMAND! HQ/BOARDROOM - DAY

The boardroom walls are hung with large Andy Warhol-style portraits of toy guns and tanks, spinning tops and dolls.

The senior EXECUTIVES of Toyz On Demand, an earnest suit-clad group, mostly men of advanced middle age and a few women, sit in gleaming modern chairs around a long, dark black lacquer table.

LARRY HAVESACK, CEO, stands, silhouetted against the window, at head of the table holding a laser pointer.

LARRY
Right now, parents have other
concerns.

Larry bangs his fist on the table.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Spending on toys is in the toilet!

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Larry flashes his laser pointer at chart showing a red line headed downward on flat screen TV on the wall opposite him.

LARRY (CONT'D)
I've never seen it so bad. How
about you Claiborne?

Larry glances at CLAIBORNE ARCHER III, the chief financial officer.

CLAIBORNE
(Shaking head)
Never.

LARRY
But kids know what kids want. Toys!
(beat)
And kids know technology better
than anyone.
(beat)
Aren't we the world's largest
Internet toy company? Hello?

He reaches into his pants pocket and pulls out a children's toy, a brightly colored spinning top.

LARRY (CONT'D)
I want some creative thinking here,
folks.

He puts on the top on the boardroom table and sends it spinning.

The group of executives gaze mutely at the top as it wanders erratically, passing by each one of them randomly.

LARRY (CONT'D)
What we need is a way to get
parents out of the equation.
(beat)
We've got to get directly to the
littlest end users!

The spinning top runs down then skitters off the table.

INT. CASTLE TURRET - DAY (DUSK)

JASPER sits on a short stool carving a cubic block of wood with a small sharp knife. Nearby, MRS. CLAUS looks out the window at the multi-colored glow of the Aurora Borealis flickering and dancing across the sky.

MRS. CLAUS
Ah, they're coming!

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