

THE NAUGHTY BOY

Original screenplay

by

Suzanne E. Gillis and Kyle Watson

WGAW Reg. No. 1569679
Copyright USA
Suzanne E. Gillis
34 Capen Street
Medford, MA 02155
sgillis771@verizon.net
Cell: 781-654-1418

FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTH WEYMOUTH CENTER, MASSACHUSETTS - MORNING

A light snow falls on an SUV stopped at a RED light. JAMES WATSON JR, 10, long wavy hair with designer eyewear, stares out at a Nativity scene in the town square.

A light above baby Jesus' head pops, fizzles, and dies out as the traffic light turns GREEN. The SUV enters traffic.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

James stands in a lunch line with fellow STUDENTS, including SCOTT PEARSON, 10, a stout snub-nosed kid.

SCOTT
(to Lunch Lady)
More mashed! Great lunch, hey
Watson?

The LUNCH LADY serves Scott potatoes as he saunters off and joins a mixed race group of BOYS, 10-12, at a table.

James sits near two pimple-faced BOYS who immediately move to another table. ABBY WATSON, 7, in a pink dress, sees this. She leaves two girls at her own table to go sit with James.

JAMES
You want to get me creamed? Don't
sit here.

ABBY
(eats fries)
Wanna play Zooreka later?

JAMES
No. Why can't you just play games
on your phone like everyone else?

ABBY
Cause I like to play with people
not machines. It's nicer.

JAMES
Nicer for who?

SELMA MARTIN, 10, a pretty yet unkempt Latin girl, sits at a table with a gorgeous blonde, SAMANTHA COEN, 11, and her two GIRLFRIENDS. The girls shift away from her. James notices.

ABBY

(opens juice box)

It's nearly Christmas, James. You said you'd have Dad moved home by now and he's still in that smelly apartment with no tree.

JAMES

What do you think I'm working on? You think it's easy getting Mom and Dad down here every week? My life is nothing but detention.

A wad of paper lands on the back of James' neck. James removes it and turns around.

He sees Scott hide his straw as his BUDDIES laugh. James reaches into his plate and scoops up some mash potatoes.

ABBY

James. You promised Mom you'd be nice for Christmas.

James hurls the potatoes which land in Scott's hair. Scott rises and grabs his soda can. He shakes it, rips the tab open and lets the soda fly covering Abby's dress.

ABBY (CONT'D)

James! My new dress.

An all out food fight begins as Abby crawls under the table. Selma gets up and approaches the lunch counter. She shoves some chips, pretzels, and apples into her backpack.

She zips it up and exits the cafeteria as MRS. REARDON, mid-30s, enters in a beige pantsuit.

A wad of red mush splatters across her jacket as she sees James standing on top of a table holding red beets. She blows a WHISTLE and everyone stops fighting and sits down.

MRS. REARDON

James Watson Jr! Get off that table and into my office this instant!

James steps off the table. Abby watches.

ABBY

This is going to be some Christmas.

INT. SANTA CLAUS' OFFICE, NORTH POLE - CONTINUOUS

We see the back of SANTA CLAUS, dressed in blue overalls, standing in front of a large screen. On the screen, we see Mrs. Reardon escort James down the hall.

SANTA

Indeed.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL HALLWAY, MASSACHUSETTS - LATER

James sits on a bench outside Mrs. Reardon's office and plays a game on his iPhone, jabbing his fingers into the keys.

JAMES

Kamikaze, over and out!

MARY-ELLEN, 30s, dressed in tailored business attire, enters in a huff. JIM WATSON, 30s, in a suit, enters a moment later and nearly crashes into Mary-ElLEN. They exchange looks.

MARY-ELLEN

She called you too? Why does she need both of us?

JIM

And why is it always right before a big meeting?

They hurry down the hallway as James sees them and rises.

JAMES

DNA. What took so--

The adults enter MRS. REARDON'S office and close the door, completely ignoring James, who smiles and resumes his game.

JAMES (CONT'D)

My work is done here.

INT. MRS. REARDON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mary-ElLEN and Jim sit across from Mrs. Reardon who dabs her suit with club soda. The stain grows larger.

MRS. REARDON

That's the second food fight this week. I have parents who are threatening to remove their children from this school based on the cleaning bills alone.

MARY-ELLEN
Naturally, we'll pay for any
damages. Won't we, Jim?

Jim replies to a text message as Mary-ellen kicks him with
her shoe. Jim gazes up and mouths 'what'?

MRS. REARDON
(opens James folder)
Unfortunately, our job here isn't
to discipline children but to
educate them. Which is why I'm
recommending transferring James to
the Plight School in Boston after
Christmas break. They're better
equipped to handle children with
such behavioral problems.

MARY-ELLEN
Behavioral...im, did you hear that?

JIM
(glances up from phone)
Boston? That's nearly an hour away.

Who's going to pick him up and drop him off every day?

SANTA (V.O.)
Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum.

Mary-ellen's phone vibrates. It's a text message from JAMES.

TEXT: OMG! Major Pee Break. BRB! James.

Mary-ellen sighs.

MRS. REARDON
I've seen this a thousand times.
Right after a divorce, the children
do all sorts of things to gain
their parents' attention.

MARY-ELLEN
We are not divorced. This is just a
trial separation.

MRS. REARDON
Perhaps spending more time together
as a family again would help.

SANTA (V.O.)
Now we're getting somewhere.

JIM

When? I already work seventy hours as it is. Then there are the bills to pay, errands to run, house repairs to manage. Not to mention the things I have to do with Sarah and her kids now.

MRS. REARDON

Who's Sarah?

MARY-ELLEN

I hardly think she's interested in hearing about your women problems.

SANTA (V.O.)

Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A TOILET FLUSHES as James exits the Boy's room. The SCHOOL BELL RINGS as KIDS flood the hallways, including Abby.

She spots James and runs towards him as Scott Pearson opens his locker. Abby's face smashes against the door as Scott's books go crashing to the floor. Scott grabs Abby's arm.

SCOTT

Watson tadpole! Look what you did!

Now pick 'em up before I--

James eyes Scott down as he let's go of Abby.

JAMES

Touch my sister again, Pearson, and you'll be eating mashed-tatoes for life. On account of NO teeth!

James kicks Scott's books across the floor. KIDS LAUGH. Abby and James walk off as Abby gives Scott a raspberry.

Mrs. Reardon exits her office followed by Jim and Mary-ellen as James and Abby approach them.

MRS. REARDON

Like I said, he has until Christmas to--

JAMES

To what?

ABBY
Mommy! When did you get here?

MARY-ELLEN
James! Her new dress?

MRS. REARDON
Now if you'll excuse me, I have
some parents waiting whose child is
on the honor list.

Mrs. Reardon saunters off as the BELL RINGS. KIDS scramble
into their classrooms, including Abby.

JAMES
So am I grounded or what?

Jim's blackberry vibrates as he reads a TEXT.

JIM
They've started without me.

MARY-ELLEN
(glancing at her iPhone)
And I'm late for my presentation.

Mary-Ellen and Jim hurry down the hallway. James looks on.

JAMES
Hello? What about ME!? Who's
picking us up today?

MARY-ELLEN
I'll text you!

Jim and Mary-Ellen exit the building as James scowls.

JAMES
So much for family reunions.

James sits on the bench and resumes his iPhone game. He's
interrupted by a THROAT CLEARING.

James sees Mrs. Reardon down the hall and freaks. He pockets
his phone, enters a classroom and shuts the door behind him.

Mrs. Reardon joins two ASIAN PARENTS who eye her stained suit
with concern.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE, NORTH POLE - CONTINUOUS

Santa turns the screen OFF and walks over to a large desk.

SANTA

Indeed.

His desk is covered with stacks of papers all stamped "Naughty" in red letters. At the top of the stack sits JAMES WATSON'S name which Santa eyes curiously while rubbing his beard.

BREEZY, a MALE ELF dressed in Elf attire, enters covered in snow, dragging a large wet MAIL bag.

BREEZY

Sorry I'm late. The mail sleigh got stuck in an abandoned igloo. It took six reindeers to pull it out.

Breezy dumps more NAUGHTY names onto the already overloaded desk as Santa sifts.

SANTA

This can't be right, can it?

Breezy reaches into the bag, pulls one NICE name stamped in green for ABBY WATSON and puts it on the desk.

BREEZY

Oh, yes. And one "nice."

SANTA

Just one? We'd better check on that toy progress report.

Santa rises and opens a large cabinet. A huge pile of old fashioned hand-made Santa toys falls onto the floor. Santa steps on a doll's head which CRIES "MAMA."

SANTA (CONT'D)

We're using my office for storage now too?

BREEZY

We already filled every outhouse, mail house, elf attic, and coal mine for fifty miles. Not to mention that igloo.

Breezy sees an iPod near the doll and picks it up.

BREEZY (CONT'D)

So that's where that was? I've been looking everywhere for this.

(puts head phones
on/dances around)

(MORE)

BREEZY (CONT'D)

It's one of those new toys the kids like. It's great for exercise and even plays Christmas--

Santa pulls the iPod off Breezy's head and throws it into a huge crate marked: RETURNS. The crate includes: MP3 players, iBooks, iPads, iPhones, laptops, Gameboys, and other such devices.

SANTA

You know how I feel about those toys. They distract children from learning the four Cs.

BREEZY

Communication, compassion, compromise and confidence. I know. But it's fun!

MRS. CLAUS, a beautiful plus-sized woman, enters with a tray full of hot cocoa and sweets. She sees Santa's toys on the floor as she steps on the same doll, who again cries "MAMA."

MRS. CLAUS

How did those get in here?

SANTA

(returns to desk)
We've been checking them for-- durability.

MRS. CLAUS

How durable do they need to be? They outlasted eight recessions.

Mrs. Claus searches for a place to put the tray down on Santa's desk and notices all the stacks of 'NAUGHTY'S'.

MRS. CLAUS (CONT'D)

What happened to all the Nices'?

Breezy looks up, concerned. Santa takes the tray.

SANTA

I see you've been baking again.

Mrs. Claus samples her own frosted Christmas muffins.

MRS. CLAUS

You know how I get this time of year. I can't seem to keep still. And that new electric oven practically bakes the food itself.

SANTA
 (takes muffin from her)
 Perhaps you can help with something
 healthier, such as the dolls?

Breezy frantically waves his hands at Santa and shows him a doll with an overly made-up face like a transvestite.

SANTA (CONT'D)
 On second thought, we have enough.

He hands the muffin back to Mrs. Claus as she eats it with a smile.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Special delivery!

An OLDER ELF enters holding a golden sealed envelope. He hands the letter to Santa, salutes, and leaves.

BREEZY
 That's from the Elf Elders. I hope
 they haven't heard about the toys.

MRS. CLAUS
 (licks fingers)
 What about the toys?

SANTA
 Apparently they did. That igloo
 collapsed again and they're asking
 about the toys.

MRS. CLAUS
 What toys?

BREEZY
 I knew it. They know we're no
 longer making all the deliveries!

Breezy slaps his hand over his mouth and walks away as Mrs. Claus' eyes widen.

MRS. CLAUS
 But that's against the rules. Elves
 are only allowed to make exactly
 what's been requested by each girl
 and boy!

SANTA
 Yes, well that becomes a bit of a
 challenge when there are no longer
 enough nice girls and boys who want
 our toys.

He looks at the doll on the floor and picks it up.

MRS. CLAUS
(eats faster)
Since when has that happened?

BREEZY
Since the invention of all the new
electrical toys. Each year our
Naughty list grows and our Nice
list shrinks. We've been forced to
store the toys we're making for
children who don't even want them,
just to keep all the elves happy!

Breezy slaps his hand over his mouth again and walks away as
Santa angrily eyes him. Mrs. Claus gasps and sits down.

MRS. CLAUS
How long as this been going on?
This storing of toys?

BREEZY
Twenty years! Ever since the first
laptop.

Breezy slaps his hand over his mouth yet again and walks off.
Santa folds the letter and puts his coat and scarf on.

SANTA
Don't worry. It'll only be a matter
of time before children start to
miss learning about the four Cs and
begin to request our toys again.

A different closet bursts open as more old toys spill out.

BREEZY
Meanwhile, we need to find some
more abandoned igloos!

Breezy picks up a teddy bear and shoves it back into the
overstuffed closet. He and Santa leave as Mrs. Claus stuffs a
whole muffin in her mouth and reaches for another.

EXT. FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

Rain pours down as Abby and Mrs. Reardon stand in front of
the school. Abby opens her Barbie umbrella and holds it
above Mrs. Reardon's head. James exits the school.

JAMES
 (spots Abby)
 What? Again?

Abby nods "yes" as James pulls out his cell phone and speed dials his mother. Mrs. Reardon angrily holds out her hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 What?

MRS. REARDON
 You know the rules. No cell phone on school property during school hours.

JAMES
 But it's after school. Besides, it's an emergency.

MRS. REARDON
 Would you like more detention?

JAMES
 You just gave me ten hours!

MRS. REARDON
 Would you like to make it eleven?

James hands over his cell phone and scowls. Mrs. Reardon retrieves her own phone from her jacket and dials. The phone RINGS and RINGS as she finally hangs up, annoyed.

MRS. REARDON (CONT'D)
 I don't have time for this. I have my own kids to pick up.

JAMES
 I can walk her. It's only three blocks and I have the keys right here. See?

James dangles the house keys in front of Mrs. Reardon's eyes as more rain falls on her drooping hair.

MRS. REARDON
 Fine! Have your mother call me the second she gets in or I'll expect to see both her and your father back in my office tomorrow morning!

She goes inside and slams the door as James smiles. He walks down the sidewalk with Abby as other MOMS pick up KIDS.

JAMES

See? What'd I tell you? I told you my plan is working.

ABBY

Your plan is stupid. It only makes things worse. Being nice would be much easier. Don't you think?

JAMES

What does that ever get you? If you want to get something you need a plan. How many times do I gotta tell you that?

They stop at an intersection as the FEMALE CROSSING GUARD, 30s, sees James and scowls at him. She turns away, letting cars pass while ignoring James and Abby.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's her problem?

ABBY

You wrote, "honk if you're single" on her sign last year. Remember?

JAMES

That was two years ago. Can't she take a joke?

The Crossing Guard finally gives in and lets James and Abby cross the street. An impatient driver HONKS at her.

FEMALE CROSSING GUARD

I'm engaged now!

James shakes his head as the car drives on. Abby frowns as they walk in the rain.

ABBY

What if Dad doesn't move back? This could be our last Christmas together ever.

JAMES

That's not gonna happen, okay? Sooner or later they'll both see that newer isn't always better.

ABBY

What?

JAMES

That old isn't... that new can't...
Oh, I don't know. Why do you always
got to ask so many questions? I'm
just trying to be nice, okay?

Abby stops as her eyes water.

ABBY

That's just it, James. You're never
nice! If you were, they'd still be
together.

James, floored, stops walking and looks at her.

JAMES

I can't believe you just said that.

ABBY

Just try to be nice for this
Christmas. Okay? For me? Okay?

She bites her lip. James turns away with his glasses all wet.

JAMES

Stop it. I hate that. I don't care
what you do. I really don't!

He sees her still biting her lips and throws up his hands.

JAMES (CONT'D)

All right, I'll try. But being nice
isn't gonna help. If you wanna fix
something you need a plan!

A car HONKS as Mary-Ellen stops beside them in her SUV.

ABBY

Mommy!

Abby runs over to the car as James follows.

MARY-ELLEN

Why weren't you at school?

JAMES

Why weren't you?

Mary-Ellen lowers the window as James sees BILL HARRIS, late-
30s, in the front seat, and his two sons, HENRY, 9, and
THOMAS, 11, in the back playing Gameboys. James groans.

MARY-ELLEN

(under breath to James)

Now be nice.

(louder)

You remember Bill Harris and his boys from school? They're coming to the mall with us.

JAMES

So much for that plan.

ABBY

James, you promised!

MARY-ELLEN

Promised what, honey?

James climbs in after Abby and shoves the boys over.

JAMES

Move!

BOYS

You move!

The SUV drives off. Abby looks out the window biting her lip.

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE, NORTH POLE - DAY

Santa and Breezy exit Santa's house and head down the snowy hill which leads towards the small village.

SANTA

Maybe it was a misprint. Maybe they didn't actually find the toys.

BREEZY

You really are living in a fantasy world, aren't you?

They enter a huge colorful building which reads: TOY SHOP.

INT. TOY SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Thousands of ELVES make handmade toys of all kinds with old-fashioned machinery. They work very fast as Santa looks on.

SANTA

Simply marvelous. Keep up the good work.

BREEZY

Shouldn't we be saying, "slow it down?"

Santa gives Breezy a look as they climb up some stairs leading to a second floor landing.

Santa peers inside an office window and sees THREE ELF ELDERS seated at three small wooden desks. They are each dressed in elaborate elf suits with golden shoulder tassels. Santa hesitates at the door.

BREEZY (CONT'D)

Should I come with?

SANTA

No. We don't want to appear anxious.

BREEZY

Right. Denial is always best.

Santa and Breezy enter the office. Complete silence. Santa notices the elves staring up at him.

BREEZY (CONT'D)

Well? Work!

The elves work faster and smile happily as Breezy sighs.

BREEZY (CONT'D)

Yep. We're doomed all right.

INT. ELF ELDERS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Santa stands before the three ELF ELDERS as they examine some elaborate blueprints of electronic toys.

SANTA

You wanted to see me, gentlemen?

They spot Santa and immediately shove the blueprints under their desks and rise. They circle Santa as he wipes his forehead with a handkerchief.

ELF ELDER ONE

Yes. It has come to our attention that a number of toys have been stored around the village.

ELF ELDER TWO

TOYS, in fact, that have not been requested by any nice girls or boys for years!

ELF ELDER THREE

We've found nearly a million toys that have no record of having been requested by any nice children in the past ten years alone. Can you explain how this is even happening?

Santa looks sickened.

SANTA

I'll admit there has been a slight problem with the number of toys being made in conjunction with the number of toys being requested, which has required us to store some of the toys.

ELF ELDERS THREE

But that's against the rules! No exceptions are allowed.

SANTA

Yes, but you see, the problem lies in the fact that fewer children have been requesting our toys. You don't want me to alarm the elves by making them think our toys are no longer valued by children? Do you?

Elf Elder Three slams his hand on his desk.

ELF ELDER THREE

I knew it. They want the newer toys, don't they! That's why you've been storing the toys! Because nobody wants our toys anymore!

SANTA

It's not as simple as that. Life today is very complicated for these children. In time they will see--

ELF ELDER THREE

We've been warning you about this for years. You have to make the newer toys, or Christmas is going to go out of business!

ELF ELDER TWO

That's right! Who ever heard of elves storing toys because kids' don't want them anymore?

Santa paces the office, sweating.

SANTA

It's not our toys that are the problem. Our toys teach them the four Cs which is exactly what they need to be both happy and nice.

ELF ELDER TWO

So what are you saying? It's the newer toys that are making them unhappy and affecting the Nice list?

SANTA

Exactly! No longer do they enjoy the simple things in life - the games and toys that help them develop their mental skills, athletic skills, or nurturing or communication skills. No longer do these toys help them learn how to socialize with humans and foster skills in compromising and sharing.

He looks out the window at the working elves. Breezy watches him, worried.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Instead they are focused on toys that replace these skills with tasks that promote information about things that aren't even child appropriate. Full of advertising, with goals such as killing things, or accumulating things, or replacing things! No wonder children aren't happy. For all we know, there is no such thing as a naughty child, only an unhappy one!

Elf Elders sit at their desks holding the toy reports.

ELF ELDERS ONE AND TWO

I have no idea what he's talking about? Do you know what he's talking about? No!

ELF ELDER THREE

The point is, either you have to find another way to increase the Nice list or the old toys must go!

SANTA

If there was some way to increase the nice list, I would. But I've always relied on the toys to teach the children about the four Cs. These were the memories that lasted them a lifetime and led to happier children and healthier adults. I will not replace that with a bunch of wires and technology. No! Did you know the average four year old today knows more about how to use a computer than to ride a bike?

He resumes pacing and wipes his brow.

SANTA (CONT'D)

What kind of memories can a child have with a machine? No, the four Cs are still needed and I will not take them away from the children. Or have their childhoods compromised. It is essential to their happiness as well as their understanding of the importance of being nice!

Elf Elder Three's eyes widen. He looks up and gets an idea.

ELF ELDER THREE

Excuse us a moment, will you?

The Elf Elders huddle together and whisper as Santa wipes his brow with his handkerchief.

SANTA

(to Breezy)

Was I too hard on them?

BREEZY

I thought you said that perfectly.

They break their huddle and sit at their desks again.

ELF ELDER THREE

Fine. If you don't want to change the toys, then you'll have to prove you still have what it takes to make nice children.

(MORE)

ELF ELDER THREE (CONT'D)

If you can change one child from naughty to nice by Christmas, then we'll consider not changing any of the toys. But if you can't, then you give us full control of toy production. Agreed?

BREEZY

What are you talking about? They toys have always been Santa's responsibility. If it wasn't for him, there would be no Christmas!

ELF ELDER ONE

What good is making toys that nobody wants anymore? Would you rather be making coal for the naughty kids instead?

SANTA

I suppose you're right. If the toys aren't enough to convince the children to be nice anymore, then maybe I do need to rethink how to help them. And teach them about the importance of the four Cs in other ways, instead of relying on just the toys.

The Elf Elders grab the Naughty list report and read it.

ELF ELDER ONE

Then it's settled! It appears as if James Watson is the boy we're looking for.

Santa looks out the window at all the elves making his toys.

BREEZY

James Watson Junior, of 435 Brier Road, South Weymouth Massachusetts?

ELF ELDER TWO

That's right. He's been on the Naughty list for three years, ever since he wrote that--

BREEZY

--horrible letter saying he no longer believed in Christmas?

Santa looks at the elves with worry as Breezy faints.

ELF ELDER THREE

What's wrong with him? Doesn't he have any confidence you can make James nice by Christmas? Without the use of any of your toys?

Santa picks him up off the floor and carries him to the door.

SANTA

I'd be happy to accept the challenge. For the sake of the children and the elves. Good day, gentlemen.

He exits with Breezy in his arms and puts him down outside. Elf Elder Three GIGGLES.

ELF ELDER THREE

It worked. He's going to accept the challenge. Do you believe it?

ELF ELDER ONE AND TWO

Where did you come up with that idea of turning a Naughty to a Nice by Christmas?

ELF ELDER THREE

How else can I show he's a dinosaur in the toy-making business. Besides, everyone knows, once a Naughty, always a Naughty, and Never a Nice Twice.

ELF ELDER TWO

That's right! Once a Naughty, always a Naughty, and never a Nice Twice!

ELF ELDER THREE

Finally we'll be able to make our own super smart toys and prove that Santa and his toys are useless.

They remove the blueprint of the elaborate toys and GIGGLE.

INT. SANTA'S BEDROOM, NORTH POLE - NIGHT

An ELF DOCTOR hovers over Breezy who lies in Santa's bed. The Elf Doctor sticks a tongue depressor in Breezy's mouth.

ELF DOCTOR

Say, ah!

BREEZY

AHHH!

The Elf Doctor puts his tongue depressor away and rises.

ELF DOCTOR

You'll live. Now get some rest.
I'll be back to check on you later.

BREEZY

(jumps out of bed)
How can anyone rest in the middle
of an elf crisis?

ELF DOCTOR

What elf crisis?

Breezy looks at Santa.

BREEZY

Elf flu! You know how the elves are
this time of year? Busy, busy,
busy! Not even a bomb can slow them
down.

ELF DOCTOR (O.S.)

Elf flu? That is urgent! Why didn't
anyone tell me about this before?

The Elf Doctor exits as Santa eyes Breezy.

SANTA

You're lying now?

BREEZY

What did you want me say? That
Christmas is going out of business?

Mrs. Claus enters with more cocoa and treats on a tray.

MRS. CLAUS

What's going out of business? What
did the Elf Elders have to say?

BREEZY

Don't ask.

SANTA

Perhaps the Elf Elders are right.
Maybe I really don't know what the
children need anymore.

Santa takes off his robe and lies in his bed.

MRS. CLAUS

Nonsense. If there is anyone who knows what a child needs it's you, dear. You've devoted your entire life to it. Why just look at the love you put into all your--

BREEZY

Toys? Good Lord. Since when did making a few presents suddenly become so complicated?

Breezy eats some cookies from the tray.

SANTA (O.S.)

Ever since I started giving them away, I think.

Breezy heads for the door.

BREEZY

Well, good luck tomorrow. I'll let the stables know you'll need the sleigh and reindeer.

SANTA

(sits up concerned)
You're not coming with me?

BREEZY

What do I know about turning a Naughty into a Nice? That's your department!

MRS. CLAUS

(eats cookie)
What's all this about turning a Naughty into a Nice?

BREEZY

By Christmas no less. That's five days. And James Watson is no normal kid, I'll tell you that.

SANTA

But it's been a hundred years since I spoke to a child. Ever since they started putting all those fake Santas in the stores and told me I was taking too long to talk to the children. Remember?

BREEZY

All right. I'll go. But only for moral support. Frankly, I don't see how the Elf Elders put you up to this. They don't know any more about what kids want than I do. They're only elves. You're Santa!

Breezy exits the room and closes the door.

MRS. CLAUS

Did they really say that? That they'd take over making the toys?

She takes off her robe and gets into bed with Santa.

SANTA

I don't want to talk about it. All I care about right now is being able to still help the children. And if that means changing the toys, then maybe that is what I should be doing.

MRS. CLAUS

I don't believe it. The four Cs have been working for hundreds of years, now and are still working as far as I'm concerned. Just look at all those letters you get from all the children around the world every year?

SANTA

The letters are dwindling and the toys are mounting up. I hope you're right dear, and it's not that the children have forgotten about me.

He turns over and goes to sleep as the snow falls outside the window. We hear SLEIGH BELLS in the distance.

INT. APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANT, MASSACHUSETTS - NIGHT

Jim and Mary-Ellen sit in a table with James and Abby. The WAITRESS stands beside James, taking his order.

JAMES

I'll have a double-double, extra fries, a mac and cheese, and...

MARY-ELLEN

You're ordering too much food.

JAMES

It's called take-out, Mom. Besides,
you hate to cook. Thank me later.

James continues ordering as Mary-Ellen frowns.

MARY-ELLEN

He always does that.

JIM

What?

MARY-ELLEN

Makes me feel like I'm doing a
horrible job as a mother.

JIM

When is the last time you made
dinner?

Mary-Ellen gapes as SARAH MARSHALL, 30s, an attractive blonde, enters the restaurant with her twin daughters, EMILY and RACHEL, 11. She waves to Jim and sits at another table.

MARY-ELLEN

What's Sarah Marshall doing here?

JIM

I told her I'd help her pick out a
tree later.

MARY-ELLEN

You told James you'd help him with
his homework.

JIM

I thought you were going to do
that?

BILL (O.S.)

Hi, there.

Mary-Ellen looks up and sees Bill behind them. He waves as he sits at a nearby table with his two sons who play Game-boys.

JIM

What's Bill Harris doing here?

BILL

(to Mary-Ellen)

Can't wait to see the lights later.

Mary-Ellen looks away as Jim's eyes widen.

JIM
You're dating him?

MARY-ELLEN
We're friends. And what difference does it make? You're seeing Sarah, aren't you?

JIM
Only because you told me to get used to finding out what other women want. Frankly, I don't care!

MARY-ELLEN
Let's not talk about it.

JIM
In fact, I have no idea what you want from me anymore. You make me take that stupid apartment I hate, and then drag me out with you and the kids every chance you get. I don't know if I'm coming or going.

Abby looks at her parents and bites her lip. James is fixated on his iPhone game.

MARY-ELLEN
Do we have to talk about it now? We're having a nice night out with the kids.

ABBY
They're doing it again. They're arguing. Make them stop, James.

JAMES
Hold on! I gotta score this point!

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, Mrs. W. Sorry I'm late! We just beat the pants off Wesley.

PHILLIP BARTON, 16, a huge kid with acne, arrives at their table. He is dressed in a high school wrestling jacket which reads: CAPTAIN.

JIM
Who's this? Another date?

MARY-ELLEN
This is Phillip. Our new baby-sitter.

JIM

What happened to the old one?

MARY-ELLEN

Would you like to explain, James?

JAMES

How did I know it was paint instead of food color? Besides, they were hair extensions, not real braids.

The Waitress approaches Phillip as he eats from James' fries.

PHILLIP

I'll have what he's having.

The waitress walks off as Phillip keeps eating fries.

JAMES

You want some ketchup with those?

James unscrews the ketchup bottle as Phillip eyes Abby.

PHILLIP

So sweetpea, I hear you're a real Zooreka fan. What do you say we play a game later?

ABBY

Really? You wanna play with me?

PHILLIP

Heck, yeah. I love that game!

ABBY

He's nice.

James hears this as he hands Phillip the ketchup bottle. Phillip tries to squeeze it and nothing happens.

James takes it back and squeezes it. The cap pops off and ketchup splatters all over his blue shirt.

JAMES

Butters!

MARY-ELLEN

James! That's your school shirt.

PHILLIP

No sweat, Mrs. W! I got it.

Phillip grabs James and drags him towards the men's room.

JAMES

Mom, Dad! Do something!

(to Phillip)

Let go, you clammy gorilla!

James tries to free his hand as Phillip drags him into the men's room. Mary-Ellen glances at Bill who smiles. Jim glances at Sarah who also smiles. Mary-Ellen and Jim exchange sad glances with each other and go back to eating.

EXT. SOUTH BRAINTREE MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Snow falls on the car-filled parking lot. Santa and Breezy land on the mall roof in a sleigh with eight reindeer. TWO WOMEN DRIVERS fight for the same parking spot below.