NATIONAL LAMPOON'S

CHRISTMAS VACATION

April 14, 1989
HOW VACATION III
THE GRISWOLD FAMILY CHRISTMAS

A MALE VOICE singing "Oh, Come All Ye Faithful" FADES UP.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Currier and Ives Country. Rolling hills, firm stands of pine and hardwood, barns and bridges. Into this timeless beauty ROARS a new, aerodynamically-styled Road Queen family TAURUS with simulated wood panels hugging the sleek curves. The SONG CONTINUES. The voice belongs to CLARK W. GRISWOLD, JR.

CLARK (V.O.)
Joyful and tri-uuuuuuuum-phant,
Oh, come ye...

INT. CAR

Clark's driving. His wife, ELLEN, is next to him. His fourteen-year-old daughter, AUDREY and twelve-year-old son, RUSTY, are in the backseat. Ellen's looking out the window. Rusty and Audrey are looking out their windows. Clark clears his throat and half-closes his eyes. He finishes with a deep, majestic voice.

CLARK
Oh, co-o-o-me ye to Be-e-ethlehem.

A moment of reverent silence.

RUSTY
(after a pause)
Dad? Can you explain again what we're doing?

CLARK
We're kicking off our fun, old-fashioned family Christmas by heading out into the country in the old front wheel drive sleigh to embrace the frosty majesty of the winter landscape and select that most important of Christmas symbols.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

The Taurus drives THROUGH FRAME. An old, battered pickup truck pulls out on the road.

INT. CAR

Audrey leans forward in her seat.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

AUDREY
We're not driving all the way out here so you can get one of those stupid ties with Santa Clauses on it are we?

CLARK
Nope. I have one of those at home. What we're looking for today is the Griswold family Christmas tree.

Clark smiles proudly.

EXT. ROAD
The pickup truck pulls up behind the Taurus.

INT. CAR

ELLEN
Is it much further, Clark?

CLARK
Nah. Three maybe four more songs and we'll be there.

Audrey looks at Rusty and groans.

AUDREY
Oh, no.

Clark breaks into song once again.

CLARK
We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas...

EXT. ROAD - CLOSEUP - TAURUS
The bent and rust-pitted front bumper of the pickup truck pulls up within a few inches of the rear bumper of the Taurus.

INT. TAURUS
Clark continues singing.

CLARK
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy new year...

He glances in the rearview mirror. He stops singing.
The pickup truck crowds the mirror.

Clark speeds up.

**ELLEN**

What's the matter?

**CLARK**

Some jackass is riding my tail.

Ellen and the kids look around behind. The PICKUP HORN blows.

**ELLEN**

Slow down and let him pass.

Clark slows down and the pickup pulls around him.

Clark BLASTS his HORN and sneers as the pickup pulls past him.

**ELLEN**

Clark? Don't provoke them.

Clark flashes his lights and BEEPS his HORN.

**CLARK**

Hey, kids! Look! A deer!

He points out the window. As the kids look, Clark flips the pickup a double bird.

**CLOSEUP CLARK**

He looks at Ellen and chuckles, proud of himself. He turns back from Ellen and gasps. He stomps on the brakes.

**HIS POV**

The pickup has jammed on its brakes. The Taurus rides up close.

**INT. CAR**

The kids jerk forward. Ellen is hurled forward. Clark grits his teeth and nearly bends the wheel over.
15 EXT. PICKUP - TRUCK

The farm boys look out the rear window, laughing. They pull away.

16 CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's angry and committed to escalating the conflict. He hits the gas.

17 EXT. HIGHWAY

The TAURUS SQUEALS out, hot after the truck.

18 INT. CAR

Ellen barks at Clark.

ELLEN

Slow down!

CLARK

You want to ride behind somebody who does something like that? I'm gonna get around him and leave him safely behind us.

(to Rusty)

I'm gonna burn some dust here.

(out the window)

Eat my rubber!

He floors it.

RUSTY

Dad? I believe the expression is 'burn rubber' and 'eat my dust.'

CLARK

Yup. And I hope they're hungry!

19 EXT. HIGHWAY

The Taurus pulls around the pickup and passes it.

20 INT. CAR

Clark smiles. He waves to the pickup.

CLARK

Eat my road grit, liver lips.

21 INT. PICKUP

A pair of in-bred, red-cheeked, young, sheep-bangers and a gnarled, old man at the wheel watch as the Taurus passes. They are dressed in flannel shirts and dirty, quilted nylon hunting jackets.
22 THEIR POV
Ellen shrinks down in her seat. Clark waves arrogantly.

23 EXT. HIGHWAY
The Taurus pulls around in front of the pickup.

24 EXT. HIGHWAY - FROM PICKUP TRUCK BED
A semi hauling a load of timber has pulled behind the pickup truck.

25 INT. TAURUS
Clark smiles with satisfaction.

CLARK
That's enough of that. Anyway. Kids, speaking of Christmas trees, can one of you tell me what kind of tree was first used displayed at the White House?

The pickup has pulled alongside Clark. Ellen and the kids notice. Clark doesn't.

RUSTY
Dad? They're back.

Clark glances out his window.

26 EXT. HIGHWAY
The pickup pulls in front of the Taurus. The semi is behind the Taurus. The semi pulls out to pass the Taurus.

27 INT. TAURUS
Clark watches as the pickup passes him again.

ELLEN
Clark! Stop it! I don't want to spend the holidays dead!

CLOSEUP - CLARK - CROSS ANGLE
He looks at Ellen as the semi pulls up alongside the Taurus.

CLARK
Don't worry about it, honey.

Clark returns his eyes to the road, hits his signal and pulls out.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

INT. CAR

Ellen, Rusty and Audrey scream.

EXT. TAURUS - CLARK

He sees that he's pulling into the truck. His eyes pop and he shrieks!

INT. PICKUP TRUCK

The old man looks in his rearview mirror and does a take. He whips around. His two boys whip around and look out the back window.

THEIR POV

The semi returns to the proper lane. There's no Taurus.

EXT. PICKUP - CLOSEUP - BACK WINDOW

The two boys exchange bewildered looks.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SEMI

The Taurus is trapped between the front and back wheels of the high-clearance trailer running at high-speed. Mud and road salt from the front trailer wheels is peppering the car.

INT. TAURUS

The family's silent with shock. Clark's in a full sweat as he struggles to maintain the exact speed of the truck to avoid being caught in the rear wheels.

CLARK

We're alright! Thank God, we're alright!

ELLEN

Clark? We're stuck under a truck.

CLARK

Do you honestly think I don't know that?

AUDREY

Come on, you guys, don't fight!

CLARK

Well, for Christ's sake, I didn't do this on purpose!
EXT. ROAD

The truck barrels along with the Taurus beneath it.

INT. TAURUS

Clark is maniacally focused on controlling the car. Ellen and the kids are praying.

ELLEN
Forgive us our sins...

AUDREY
Is lying about why you got home so late a sin?

ELLEN
Just keep praying!

AUDREY
Is it? I have to know!

CLARK
Yes!

AUDREY
Forgive me for saying I was at Cassandra Reed's when I was really with Sean Marley under the railroad bridge in town.

CLARK
Did you know about that, Ellen?

ELLEN
Obviously not!

CLARK
(to Audrey)
Isn't that the kid who got picked up for sacrificing June bugs in the cemetery?

AUDREY
This was before that.

RUSTY
What religion are we again?

CLARK
Our Lady of Jesus, we're about to get crushed by a truck!!

Clark takes a deep breath, clutches the wheel tightly and jerks it sharply to the right.
36 EXT. ROAD - AHEAD OF SEMI

The Taurus pops out from beneath the semi onto the opposing lane.

37 INT. TAURUS

Clark breathes a sigh of relief and turns on his wipers.

38 thru 41

OMITTED

42 HIS POV

Just ahead, a snow plough is pulled over on the shoulder, directly in line with the on-coming Taurus.

43 EXT. ROAD

The Taurus hurtles off the road and disappears. It's silent.

44 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE

Peace and tranquility. A virgin snowfield, a long beat and the Taurus bursts out of snowbank INTO CAMERA.

45 EXT. ROAD

The Taurus returns to the road, crossing the left lane, then the right and off the road.

46 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

A large, permanent wood sign festooned with colored lights reads -- JOLLY JERRY'S SAW 'N' SAVE CHRISTMAS TREE RANCH. The Taurus blasts past the sign and into a make-shift parking lot, sliding sideways into a parking space.

47 INT. CAR

The family is frozen in horror. Clark puts the Taurus in park and turns OFF the ENGINE. He looks at his watch.

CLARK

Hey! We made pretty good time.

48 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

Families stumble across the frozen earth between the rows of fir trees, shivering, cursing, grousing. We FIND Clark, Ellen, Audrey and Rusty trudging through the snow. The family has a very hard go of the deep snow. Clark pays it no mind.

(CONTINUED)
CLARK
Is this air fresh or what? Take a
deep breath! Notice that smell?

RUSTY
It smells like Pinesol.

CLARK
And isn't that a Christmasy smell?

ELLEN
Clark, can we pick out a tree
while we smell? It's awfully cold.

AUDREY
My toes are numb.

Ellen points out a tree.

ELLEN
There's a nice one over there.

Clark considers the tree briefly and rejects it.

CLARK
The bottom's all dead, hon. A
deer probably lifted his leg on it.

They continue their march through the snow.

RUSTY
Dad? Didn't they invent Christmas
tree lots so people wouldn't have
to drive all the way out to nowhere
and waste a whole Saturday?

CLARK
They invented them, Russ, because
people forgot how to have a fun,
old-fashioned family Christmas and
are satisfied with scrawny, dead,
over-priced trees that have no
special meaning. You know, kids.
This is what our forefathers did.

AUDREY
I can't feel my legs.

CLARK
They went out in the woods, picked
out that special tree and cut it
down with their bare hands.

(Continued)
CONTINUED: (2)

AUDREY
Mom? I can't feel my hips.

ELLEN
Clark?

Clark stops to survey the landscape.

CLARK
Yeah, honey?

ELLEN
Audrey's frozen from the waist down.

CLARK
(distracted)
That's all part of the experience.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He scans the forest. Something catches his eye. He's spotted the special tree. A CHORUS OF ANGELS FADES IN.

CLARK
There it is!

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - FAMILY

Clark points. The family turns to see what he's pointing at.

FAMILY'S POV

A perfectly shaped Norway pine. A long beat and Clark strolls INTO FRAME. We realize that the tree is twenty feet tall.

CLARK
(to the family)
The Griswold family Christmas tree.

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - FROM ABOVE - CLARK

From the top of the tree down. Clark looks up, and admires the tree. The family gathers around him.

ELLEN
(tentatively)
Clark? Isn't it a little big?

CLARK
It's not that big. It's... just... full.

(Continued)
RUSTY
Dad? That wouldn't fit in our yard.

CLARK
It's not going in the yard, Russ. It's going in the living room.

A51 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - FAMILY
Clark puts his arm around Ellen and Audrey. Ellen pulls Rusty into the family embrace.

CLARK
Just look at it.

ELLEN
It really is beautiful, Clark.

CLARK
It's something else, huh, Russ?

Yeah, Dad.

CLARK
Audrey? Isn't it a beaut?

ELLEN
She'll see it later, honey, her eyes are frozen shut.

CLARK
(a deep breath, after a satisfied pause)
The most enduring traditions of the season are best enjoyed in the warm embrace of kith and kin.
(pause)
Thith tree ith a thymble of thpirit of the Grithwold family Christmuth.

RUSTY
(after a pause)
Dad? Did you bring a thaw?

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He realizes he's made a mistake but doesn't care to admit it.

CLARK
Thyit...
EXT. TREE RANCH - HOUSE TRAILER

A rotting double wide serves as the office and residence of Jolly Jerry. The family stands at the door. It opens.

CLOSEUP - TRAILER DOOR

It opens on a sour-looking, middle-aged MAN smoking a cigarette and wearing a dirty Santa hat.

    MAN

What?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He offers a friendly smile.

    CLARK

I hate to trouble you, but I didn't bring a saw.

EXT. TRAILER

The Man puffs on his butt and blows the smoke out his nose.

    MAN

Rules say buyer provides own damn saw.

He points to a painted sign on the trailer.

CLOSEUP - SIGN

A painted sign -- black letters on white. It reads -- BUYER PAYS IN ADVANCE -- BUYER DON'T USE THE RANCH AS A BATHROOM -- BUYER DON'T CUT DOWN MORE TREES THAN HE PAID FOR -- BUYER PROVIDES OWN DAMN SAW.

EXT. TRAILER

Clark sneaks a glance at Ellen. She gives Clark a look.

    CLARK

I paid seventy-five dollars for the tree. I need some way to get it out of the ground.

    ELLEN

You paid that much for a tree?

    CLARK

Honey, it's huge.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CLARK (CONT'D)
(to the Man)
It's cold, the holidays are here,
I'd really appreciate it if
you could help me out.

CLOSEUP - MAN

He scratches his nose and reaches around behind the door.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at the family.

CLARK
Sometimes you just have to ask
nice.

CLOSEUP - MAN

He holds up a shovel.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He stares with alarm.

EXT. HIGHWAY - TAURUS - CLARK - LATER

Clark's in the front passenger seat. He's frozen, blue,
clutching the shovel. The SHOT WIDENS to reveal Ellen
and the kids. They're also blue. We continue to WIDEN
until we see the car and the enormous tree tied to the
roof. The car pulls ahead and OVERTAKES CAMERA. We
see the full length of the tree; branches bound with
heavy twine and a huge root ball.

OMITTED

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - NIGHT

A fine upper middle class dwelling. The lights are on.
The Taurus's in the driveway. The giant tree is resting
on its rootball in the front yard. Rusty and a couple
of neighbor kids are standing in the driveway looking
at the tree. Inside the garage, a CHAINSAW STARTS UP.
OMINOUS DRONING HORROR MUSIC FADES IN.

EXT. HOUSE - GARAGE DOOR

The electric door goes up. Clark steps out of the dark
wearing a hockey mask and brandishing a chainsaw.
EXT. HOUSE NEXT DOOR

A couple in their mid-thirties is getting out of a Saab parked in the driveway of the house next to the Griswolds.

They're handsome, successful, modern suburban professionals. MARGO and TODD CHESTER. They look to the Griswolds, wincing at the ROAR of the CHAINSAW. Margo crosses around to Todd to stand at his side.

TODD

Looks like the toad overestimated the height of his living room ceiling.

They have a chuckle -- a compressed, stiff laugh. They are clearly people devoid of humor.

THEIR POV

The giant tree is laying in the front yard, still bound with twine. Clark takes the chainsaw to it and cuts it in half.

EXT. TODD AND MARGO'S DRIVEWAY

Todd, wearing a cocky grin, yells:

TODD

(to Clark)

Hey, Griswold! Where do you think you're gonna put a tree that big?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Obviously no love lost on the Chesters. He's in a bad enough mood as it is. He turns OFF the CHAINSAW and pushes the mask up on his forehead. He cups his hand to his mouth and yells.

CLARK

Bend over and I'll show you!

(CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - TODD

His smile fades. He looks to Margo.

He looks back at Clark, angry at the rude suggestion offered in the presence of his wife.

TODD
You got your nerve talking to me like that, Griswold!

HIS POV

Clark yells back.

CLARK
I wasn't talking to you!

CLOSEUP - MARGO

She gasps in horror. The CHAINSAW REVS UP.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS TREE - LATER

The tree is up in the rear corner of the room. Clark's had to trim both the top and bottom to get it to fit. It's still wrapped with twine. The family is standing before the tree.

ELLEN
(looking up)
Clark? Is there enough room for the star?

CLOSEUP - TOP OF TREE

It's flush to the ceiling.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's looking at top of the tree.

CLARK
Oh, sure, honey. I have a little more trimming to do but it won't be a problem.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FAMILY

Clark steps to the tree and takes up a length of twine.

CLARK
I give you the Griswold family Christmas tree!

He yanks on the twine. The branches are released and unfold into the room. Unwrapped, the tree is enormous. Branches extend deep into the room.
EXT. HOUSE - SIDE

A BRANCH CRASHES through a side WINDOW.

EXT. HOUSE - BACK YARD

Another BRANCH CRASHES through a back WINDOW.

INT. LIVING ROOM

A third of the living room square footage is dominated by the unfurled tree. The Griswolds stand waist-deep in pine boughs. The tree is the same diameter at the top as at the bottom. It's a pine cylinder, eight feet in diameter. Clark looks at Ellen, Audrey and Rusty. He says nothing. They say nothing.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are on. We can see the glow of a fire in the living room fireplace.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - FIREPLACE - LATER

A beautiful fire. CHRISTMAS MUSIC is playing on the STEREO.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's pleasant and calm. A nearly perfect holiday picture. Clark's wearing a cashmere V-neck. He's untangling a strand of lights. Audrey, Rusty and Ellen are sitting with bowls of popcorn and cranberries in their laps. Clark has trimmed the Christmas tree branches and denuded the top twelve inches to accommodate the star. He's fishing lights out of a cardboard box.

RUSTY
I can't get my needle through the cranberries.

AUDREY
(frustrated)
The popcorn falls apart when I pull the string through it!

Clark walks to the tree with the light strands.

ELLEN
Clark? The old-fashioned ornaments aren't working out too well.

CLARK
That's all part of the fun, honey.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CLARK (CONT'D)
You know, kids, years ago, people
couldn't go out and buy their
ornaments. They had to make them
from things around the old prairie
homestead. Colored balls of mud,
wood shavings, bits of yarn and
string, ox horns, donkey tails,
prairie dog whiskers. I'll get
the lights up and then I'll give
you a hand.

Clark begins stringing the lights on the tree, starting
at the bottom. Clark moves slowly around the tree,
stringing the lights as he goes.

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

He reaches into a bowl of popcorn.

RUSTY
Dad? This tradition stuff is
pretty cool so far but I think it
might lose its charm if it
extended to our gifts. I mean,
you're not planning on making
our presents are you?

He loads the popcorn into his mouth.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Clark considers the question for a moment.

CLARK
Sounds like fun...
(pause)
But, no.

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

He pulls a string and then a row of strung pieces of
popcorn out of his mouth.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark disappears around behind the tree.

CLARK (O.S.)
Before we know it, you kids'll
be all grown up and --

ELLEN
Clark? What are you doing behind
the tree?

(CONTINUED)
CLARK (O.S.)
Putting up the lights.

RUSTY
Nobody looks behind the tree, Dad.

CLARK (O.S.)
If you just do the front, the tree isn't balanced. Believe me, if I didn't put lights back here, you'd notice a difference. Ouch!

AUDREY
Watch your eyes, Daddy.

The tree shivers and shakes as Clark works his way around behind it.

ELLEN
I hope you're not getting sap all over your sweater.

CLARK GAGS and COUGHS.

CLARK (O.S.)
Hold on, I just swallowed a cocoon.
(gags)
Okay. All better. Have you ever tasted cocoon? It's a little like cashews but not so salty.

Clark emerges from around behind the tree. He's covered head-to-toe in sap and pine needles.

CLARK (O.S.)
What'd you say, honey?

A62
INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Clark and Ellen are cleaning Clark's sweater. He's working on one sleeve, she's working on the other. She's picking individual needles off. Clark's herding them down the cuff.

ELLEN
Did I tell you that I talked to my mother?

CLARK
(false)
Yeah, and it's a shame they can't come for Christmas. I was so looking forward to seeing them.

(CONTINUED)
ELLEN
I talked to her today. They changed their mind. My dad couldn't get a good enough deal on the condo in Florida so they're coming.

CLARK
Damn. (corrects himself)
Darn. (again)
Great!

Clark pulls a large wad of sticky pine needles off the cuff of his sweater and tries to flick it into the wastebasket.

ELLEN
Let's not forget whose idea it was to have the fun, old-fashioned family Christmas here.

CLARK
Am I complaining?

Ellen is trying to get the needles off her hands. All she does is transfer the needles from one hand to the other. They continue talking, not acknowledging the sap and the needles.

ELLEN
No, but I think you're forgetting how difficult it's going to be with all these people at our house.

CLARK
They're family, Ellen, not strangers off the street.

ELLEN
They're family and they don't get along.

CLARK
They get along.

Clark tries to wipe the wad of pine needles on the edge of the grocery bag lining the wastebasket. When he pulls his arm back, the bag goes with it. It's now stuck to his hand.
ELLEN
All they do is argue. Who sleeps
in what room, who do the children
love more? Clark, it's endless.

CLARK
Christmas is about resolving
differences and seeing through
the petty problems of family life.

He holds out his hand and the bag stuck to it. Ellen
pulls the bag off. It sticks to her hands.

ELLEN
Yeah. And it's about my mother
accusing your mother of buying
cheap hot dogs and your mother
accusing my mother of waxing her
upper lip and they stop speaking
for three years.

CLARK
Your mother waxes her upper lip?

ELLEN
She has for years.

CLARK
It sure doesn't show.

Clark peels his sweater off and tosses it on the table.
It's stuck to his hand. He tries to throw it again.
The sweater goes nowhere.

ELLEN
Do you really want to listen
to my father and your father
go at it over who suffered the
most during the war?

CLARK
That's all part of it, Ellen.
You take the good with the bad.

ELLEN
The damage is done. They're
all coming. But just be aware
that it's not going to be all
sweetness and light. Especially
since my dad had his back
operation.

(CONTINUED)
Ellen puts the bag between her knees and pulls her hand free. The bag stays stuck to her knees.

ELLEN
He's extremely touchy about it.

CLARK
No problem. Nothing's going to spoil this Christmas.

Clark puts the sweater in his mouth and pulls it off his hands. He shakes his head. The sweater's stuck to his face.

CLARK
(muffled)
Not even your dad.

ELLEN
What?

CLARK
(softer)
Not even your dad.

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - LATER
The lights are out.

INT. BEDROOM
Clark and Ellen are in bed.

CLARK
How about a little home shopping?

ELLEN
Clark, it's so late.

CLARK
Can I just thumb through your catalogue?

Ellen laughs as Clark pulls her to him.

ELLEN
Okay, if I can go through yours first.

INT. BEDROOM - DOOR
It opens and Audrey peeks in.

(CONTINUED)
62 CONTINUED:

ELLEN (O.S.)
Ooo. What a big catalogue this year.

CLARK (O.S.)
All the better to serve you with.

HER POV
Clark and Ellen are under the covers.

ELLEN
What's this?

CLARK
You're in the sporting goods section.

CLOSEUP - AUDREY
She has no idea what they're talking about.

AUDREY
Oh, sick! What are you guys doing?!

INT. BEDROOM - BED
Ellen pops up from under the covers. Clark looks up in alarm. Ellen leaps from the bed.

CLARK
Ellen! Your hand!

It's too late. The power of Ellen's leap from bed drags Clark to the floor by his undershorts. He screams as he crashes to the floor.

63 OMITTED

63 CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

Of the sort that conceals each date behind a paper door. Every day in the month of December, one of the little doors is opened to reveal the date and a symbol of the season. Clark's fingers open the first door to expose DEC. 15 and a tiny illustration of a partridge in a pear tree. As Clark draws his hand away, the paper door sticks to his finger and he tears it off.

64 EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

The Loop. Decorated for the holidays.
Clark's building. A new high-rise in the heart of the city.

INT. BUILDING - COFFEE STATION

Clark and a co-worker, BILL BURKE, are standing at the coffee station, sipping coffee and chatting.

BILL
You'll be looking at a nice fat Christmas bonus this year, huh?
From what I hear, you have an excellent shot at being named Food Additive Designer of the Year.

CLARK
Nah.

BILL
I'm not kidding. What's the new thing you have over at Food and Drug?

CLARK
Non-nutritive cereal varnish crunch enhancer. It seals the cereal to prevent the milk from penetrating it.

BILL
The big question is, what're you gonna do with that big, fat bonus check? Blow it on yourself, I hope?

CLARK
Me? Heck, no. Take a look at this.

He removes a worn, color brochure from his inside jacket pocket and hands it to Bill.

INSERT - BROCHURE

An ecstatic all-American family frolicking in a deluxe in-the-ground swimming pool and spa.

CLOSEUP - BILL

He peruses the brochure, sufficiently impressed.

BILL
You're putting in a pool?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CLOSEUP - CLARK

A proud smile.

A flying wedge of black wingtips march down the hall.

INT. OFFICE - CORRIDOR - COFFEE STATION

Clark admires the brochure over Bill's shoulder.

CLARK

It's my Christmas present for Ellen and the kids. I'm gonna turn the old homestead into our own private summer resort.

BILL

Boy, what's it gonna set you back?

CLARK

Can't put a price on happiness, Bill. Plenty. But with the bonus check coming, it's covered. I went ahead and put a seventy-five hundred dollar deposit down so they'll start work as soon as the ground thaws. With the heater, we can be in that thing by May.

BILL

I guess you're the last true family man. Me? Christmas is a big pain in the ass. I get a sore face from smiling for five days at people I hate. I had the perfect holiday last year. Piled the kids in the car, drove by my sister's house, blew the horn, and threw the gifts on the lawn.

CLARK

You're a sentimental guy, huh?

BILL

What's Christmas anyway but an economic high colonic.
INT. OFFICE - CORRIDOR - CLOSEUP - FEET

The marching wingtips round a corner. CAMERA RISES to see FRANK W. SHIRLEY at the point and two YOUNG MEN off his shoulders a few steps back. Shirley is a stern, stone-faced man in middle age. His minions are young, clean-cut MBAs. They march with military precision and serious purpose. The men stop suddenly.

FRANK

Clem...

CLOSEUP - BILL

He clears his throat and corrects Mr. Shirley.

BILL

Clark.

FRANK

(to Bill)

Clark. Nice to see you. Get back to work.

Bill exits.

CLARK

That's Bill, sir. My name's Clark.

Who asked?

FRANK

CLARK

Pardon me.

FRANK

Are you the one who was working on the non-nutritive cereal varnish?

CLARK

Yes, sir.

FRANK

I'm giving a speech to a trade group and I'd like to mention it. Write me up a brief summary and have it to me by the end of the day.

CLARK

My pleasure.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
Layman's terms. None of that inside bullshit jargon that nobody understands.

CLARK
Yes, sir.

Shirley and his bootlicks start down the corridor.

CLARK
Mr. Shirley?

Shirley stops and turns back to Clark.

CLARK
We got your Christmas card the other day. My family and I are flattered that you remembered us.

Shirley stares at Clark for a confused beat then looks to one of the Young Men.

YOUNG MAN
(to Frank)
Corporate cards.

FRANK
Oh. Don't forget my speech, Bill.

CLARK
I won't, sir.

They exit. Clark sets his coffee down. He feels foolish.

CLARK
He may not be the warmest guy in the world, but at least he's fair and he signs the checks.

MUSIC UP...

HOLIDAY MONTAGE

A) Salvation Army band playing.
B) Crowded downtown department store.
C) Cash registers ringing.
D) Screaming kids on Santa's laps.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

E) Garish displays.
F) Shoppers in and out of revolving doors.
G) Businessmen testing toys.
H) Santas having lunch at a counter.
I) Heaps of purchases on store counters.
J) Gift wrapping.
K) Lost, crying child.
L) Cash and credit cards changing hands.
M) Hands rubbing sore feet.
N) Businessman asleep in the mattress dept. with bulging shopping bags at his side. Etc.

END MONTAGE.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LINGERIE DEPARTMENT - CLOSEUP - 69
CLARK - NIGHT

He's peering into a display case. He looks up. Freezes.

CLARK'S POV

Cleavage, MOVE UP TO a beautiful young WOMAN.

WOMAN

Can I show you something?

Clark's bent over a display case, looking at the delicates.

CLARK

Uh.

WOMAN

For your wife? Girlfriend?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He straightens up. He's very uncomfortable and warm.

CLARK

I guess it wouldn't be the Christmas shopping season if the stores were any less hooter... hotter than they are. It's warm in here, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)
The Woman smiles. She realizes he’s nervous.

WOMAN
You have your coat on.

CLARK
Do I?
(catches himself staring)
Sure I do. How did that happen?

WOMAN
Because it's cold out?

CLARK
Could be!

There's an uncomfortable silence.

WOMAN
So. You were looking at something?

CLARK
You know, I couldn't help it.

WOMAN
(puzzled)
Excuse me?

CLARK
Gesundheit.

* * *

WOMAN
Do you want me to take anything out for you?

Clark's jaw drops. He wheezes. He looks over his shoulder to see if anyone's listening to the conversation. He ignores the question and carries on.

CLARK
I was just looking for something for... my mother. Her wife. And obviously she doesn't wear underwear and there's plenty of shopping days left until adultery.
(winces and corrects himself)
Adulthood. Which is to say Christmas. Yuletide. Yule. As in yulelog. Not a log. I didn't mean a log. I don't have a log.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CLARK (CONT'D)
I mean, I do but not in the sense that you think I think I said. Which I said but not meaning what I said when I said it.

Clark mops his brow with the back of his hand.

CLARK
In other words, I'm late and you've been very helpful and busty and I've enjoyed talking about my log and boy, 'tis this ever the season to be huge. Uh, merry.

WOMAN
That's my name.

CLARK
Huh?

She points to the name plate on her chest.

WOMAN
Mary.

CLARK
Christmas.

WOMAN
And a happy New Year.

A70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - RUSTY
He's moving through the crowds, package in his arms, looking for Clark.

B70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - RUSTY'S POV - LINGERIE DEPT.
THROUGH the crowd he sees Clark at the lingerie counter. Clark's laughing and enjoying himself. Mary's showing him a miniscule pair of panties.

C70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - CLOSEUP - RUSTY
He watches Clark with suspicious curiosity.

70 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LINGERIE COUNTER
Rusty approaches the counter and Clark.

MARY
(to Clark)
These are cut high on the hip.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

She turns around and displays her bottom.

MARY
I'm wearing something very similar. Can you see the line?

CLARK
Oh, yeah.

Clark turns to Rusty.

CLARK
Can you see the line, Russ?

RUSTY
Yeah, Dad.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

It registers that he's just addressed Rusty. His eyes bulge. He snaps his head around to Rusty.

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

Looking at Clark.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Looking at Rusty. Complete terror.

CLARK
Hyew!

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE

Clark and Rusty walk through the store loaded with lingerie boxes. Clark's in a nervous sweat as he tries to explain himself to Rusty.

CLARK
Boy, did I get a lot of shopping done. And that funny-looking gal back there was so helpful.

RUSTY
Funny-looking?

CLARK
That wasn't fair of me. Unusual looking. So tall and skinny and ... top heavy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CLARK (CONT'D)
The wide hips, the narrow waist,
the real big eyes and lips and if
her cheekbones were any higher,
gee whiz, she'd have to open her
mouth to put in her contacts. But
she was nice and she knew her
underpants and that's all that's
important.

RUSTY
Dad? She was cover girl material.

CLARK
Yeah. For like a medical journal.
Sure.

(pause)
Gee, I hope I remember where I
parked the ole dickster...
Truckster.

Clark shoos Rusty on ahead.

RUSTY
Dad!

CLARK
Keep moving, Russ.

RUSTY
But, Dad...!

He pushes Rusty through a door and takes a look back at
Mary.

INT. LINGERIE DEPARTMENT - CLARK'S POV

She waves to him.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LADIES' ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK

A nervous smile. He turns and walks through the door.
As it closes we read a brass sign -- LADIES. O.S.
there's a collective SHRIEK and a pair of SHARP SLAPS. A
beat and Rusty and Clark walk out. Their hair is messed-
up. They both rub their stinging cheeks.

OMITTED

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - MORNING

A clear, bright Saturday morning.
B72 INT. KITCHEN

Ellen's at the kitchen table filling out Christmas cards. She looks up from her work with a troubled look. Some dreadful feeling grips her. OMINOUS MUSIC COMES UP.

C72 INT. AUDREY'S ROOM

She's struck by the same uneasy feeling. She looks up from the gift she's wrapping.
D72 INT. FAMILY ROOM

Rusty's watching TV. As the feeling comes over him, he hits the MUTE button on the TV.

E72 INT. MASTER BATHROOM

Clark's trying on a Santa beard. He's taken by the same awful feeling. He slowly removes the beard. A look of terror on his face.

F72 INT. FOYER

Ellen walks in from the kitchen. She's nervous and tentative. Rusty comes in from the dining room. Clark comes down the stairs. Audrey follows Clark. The DOOR KNOCKER sounds. THREE hard, loud BANGS.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Frightened. He's looking at the front door.

INT. FOYER - FRONT DOOR

MOVING IN.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

Cautiously approaching the door.

CLOSEUP - DOORKNOB

Clark's trembling hand grips the knob and slowly turns it.

G72 INT. FOYER - DOOR

It swings open to reveal four arguing grandparents. CLARK W. GRISWOLD SR., NORA GRISWOLD, ART AND FRANCIS PEARSON.

H72 EXT. HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

Clark greets the grandparents with open arms.

CLARK

Folks, folks! Merry Christmas!

J72 INT. FOYER

Clark steps back as the grandparents rush the house. They engulf Clark, Ellen, Rusty and Audrey in hugs and machine-gun chatter. It's an invasion.

NORA

Clarkie, sweetheart!

(CONTINUED)
CLARK SR.
How 'ya doin', boy?

Clark breaks his embrace with Nora and shakes Clark Sr.'s hand.

CLARK
Can't complain, Dad.

Art and Francis descend upon Ellen and the kids. Nora breaks from Clark and pushes past Francis to Rusty. Art returns to Clark. Clark Sr. crosses to Ellen. Rusty, Audrey, Ellen and Clark hold their positions as the grandparents move between them. Each family member is verbally attacked, hugged, squeezed and kissed. A hundred individual overlapping comments and questions in 30 seconds.

(CONTINUED)
OVERLAPPING DIALOGUE for grandparents' arrival.

NORA
Clarkie, sweetheart, how are you?
(to Ellen)
Oprah did a show on skinny women.
Did you see it?
(to Rusty)
Maybe if your Mom'd feed you
better you'd put on some height.
(To Audrey)
Since when are you wearing eye makeup?
(to Clark)
The curly hair makes Audrey look too old.
(to Clark)
Do you think this mole on my neck
has changed color? Dad says it
hasn't but I think it has.
(to Ellen)
I have no idea what to get you for Christmas.
You have two of everything.
(to Ellen)
When you go shopping remember to
get Clark Sr. rolled oats.
(to Ellen)
We don't care for T.V. in the
morning. We prefer the radio.
(to Clark)
I brought my old sewing machine. If you
get the time maybe you can fix it up for Ellen.
(to Clark)
Do you still have the rusty taste
to your tap water?
(to Rusty)
You're not seeing girls yet, are you?
(to Rusty)
Do you still like puzzles?
(to Clark)
Art wants to put his car in the garage.
Didn't he have the garage the last time
he was here? Why should our automobile
have to stay out in the elements?
(to Ellen)
It smells stale in here.
(to Clark)
You're working too hard, aren't you?
(to Clark)
This may be Dad's last Christmas.
Don't spend all your time with Art.
(to Ellen)
Dear, you look so tired.
(to Rusty)
I have a very painful spur on my heel
bone.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
NORA (CONT'D)
(to Ellen)
I had a nightmare that you talked Clark into making us sleep in the bunk beds.

ART
(to Ellen)
Dearest sweetheart, give me a big kiss!
(to Ellen)
I beat Griswold here so you tell Clark I'm parking the Lincoln in the garage.
(To Ellen)
What's your hot water situation?
(to Audrey)
They drained a pint of fluid from my lower back.
(to Rusty)
Lift with your knees, never with your back.
(to Clark)
You better salt your walk before somebody breaks their skull.
(to Clark)
You could use a little paint on your porch.
(to Clark)
I beat your dad by a good half second so I'm taking the garage space.
(to Clark)
How come you didn't put cones on your rose bushes?
(to Clark)
I'm not sleeping in any damn bunk beds.
(to Rusty)
Hey, pal, you got a kiss for gramps?
(to Audrey)
Give me an Eskimo kiss, kiddo.
(to Rusty)
Your dad still trying to turn you into a fairy?
(to Clark)
My back's killing me. I lost two inches in height on the ride over here.
(to Clark)
Whoever shovels your walk oughta be tarred and feathered. You looking for a lawsuit?
(to Ellen)
Since I bought the Lincoln, it's going to be a light year for gifts.
(to Clark)
You might mention to your dad not to ruin another of our holidays with his cornball jokes.
(to Ellen)
You know how much they wanted for a one-bedroom condo in St. Pete?
(to Clark)
Jump off your roof and land on your back and you'll know the pain I'm enduring.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
ART (CONT'D)
(to Clark)
Your mom's put on some weight, huh?
(to Ellen)
Does your pharmacy offer a senior discount?
(to Audrey)
Grandma said you're dating fellas.
We're gonna have to have a talk.
(to Ellen)
You look weary.
(to Ellen)
I'm on a low-sodium diet and your mother's eating a lot of fish.
(to Clark)
Don't try and save a nickel on heat.
I like it at seventy-two.
(to Ellen)
I need a lot of moisture in the air.
I have a sinus condition.

CLARK SR.
(to Clark)
Merry Christmas, son. It's good to see you.
(to Ellen)
Hi, there, sweetheart. You look just so lovely.
(to Ellen)
Are you getting prettier or is my eyesight improving?
(to Rusty)
I ran into Don Mattingly the other day and you know what he said? 'Don't back up!' Get it?
(to Ellen)
Your dad can't be in as much pain as he likes us to believe. If he's in so much pain, he oughta be in the hospital where folks are immune to complaining.
(to Clark)
Don't stick us in those bunk beds again, Clark. I don't have the strength to boost your mom up top anymore.
(to Audrey)
Looks like those mosquito bites turned into mole hills!
(to Rusty)
I talked to your grandpa Art and he said he doesn't want any sympathy for his back.
(to Clark)
I'll lay you odds Art couldn't get a good enough deal on the Florida condo to go south for the holidays.
(to Clark)
Let's see if the two of us can't talk your mother out of making cookies this year.
(to Audrey)
You're not listening to that devil music are you?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CLARK SR. (CONT'D)
(to Rusty)
What do you want old Santa to bring you this year?
(to Ellen)
Don't short us on towels this year.
(to Clark)
We like a late breakfast and an early dinner.
(to Clark)
Do you remember Fred Lorraine? He sold a humorous story to the Reader's Digest. Made ten bucks.
(to Ellen)
Don't fill us up with cheese like last time.
(to Clark)
Do you have a good mall where Mom and I can go take an indoor walk?

FRANCIS
(to Ellen)
Oh, my sweet girl. You look so haggard.
(to Clark)
Are you making her do heavy work?
(to Ellen)
I nearly left your father over this back thing. He's unbearable!
(to Audrey)
I clipped an article for you in our paper about disease and open-mouth kissing.
(to Rusty)
Are you getting enough fresh air and sunshine?
(to Clark)
Your dad drives like a lunatic.
(to Ellen)
Hasn't Nora aged? Poor thing. I didn't want to ask but has she gone deaf?
(to Rusty)
All the boys in our neighborhood have after school jobs.
(to Audrey)
They say pizza is very high in sodium.
(to Ellen)
I'm going to need to get my hair done but I'm not going to your place again. Not after that polish gal scalped my scalp.
(to Clark)
If Dad needs a rub down...
(to Ellen)
You have no color in your cheeks.
(to Clark)
Ellen has no color in her cheeks.
(to Audrey)
I hope you'll dress up nice on Christmas.

(Continued)
As they arrive, they exit up the stairs en masse yakking all the way, leaving Clark, Ellen, Audrey and Rusty standing stock still. It's as though a tornado passed through.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

Her face is frozen, her eyes fixed in a stare.

CLOSEUP - AUDREY

She's wearing an identical, catatonic expression. Her hair's messed up.

CLOSEUP - RUSTY

The same expression. He has a large, distinct lipstick print on each cheek.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He comes to his senses. He smiles.

CLARK

This is what Christmas is all about. It's gonna be great. I'll be outside. For a few hours.

Clark exits out the front door leaving his stunned family alone.

The garage door opens and Clark comes out carrying an extension ladder. Rusty follows with a huge carton of lights and decorations. Clark and Rusty are wearing their winter gear. Clark leans the ladder against the house. Rusty sets the carton down.

CLARK

We're gonna have the best-looking house in town, Russ.

Clark reaches into the carton and pulls out a strand of lights.

RUSTY

That's a lot of lights, Dad.

(Continued)
CLARK
If I'm out in the cold and I'm committed to decorating the house, I'm gonna do it right and I'm gonna do it big. You want something you can be proud of, don't you?

RUSTY
Yeah, I guess...

CLARK
Sure you do.

RUSTY
You're not gonna overdo it are you, Dad?

CLARK
When have I ever overdone something?

Clark gives a tug on the strand pulling a three-foot ball of tangled lights from the carton.

OMITTED

A75
EXT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

They exit their house noticing Clark on the ladder. They're dressed for an evening out.

MARGO *
I hope he falls and breaks his neck.

TODD *
He'll fall for sure but we're not lucky enough to have him break his neck.

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - TODD AND MARGO'S POV - DAY

Clark's climbing the ladder, dragging a strand of lights behind him. As he gets to the top of the ladder, it collapses, sending Clark crashing to the ground.
EXT. CHESTER HOUSE - CLOSEUP - TODD AND MARGO

They're irritated and fussy.

TODD

There should be some sort of ordinance prohibiting outdoors lights.

MARGO

If we can't keep kids and dogs out of the neighborhood, we're not going to prevent Christmas lights.

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE

Clark resets the ladder against the house, climbs back up and begins stapling light strands to the roof.

OMITTED

Clark Sr. and Art asleep in wingchairs. They're snoring. Nora and Francis are watching a Christmas parade on TV as they construct a prefab gingerbread house. They have to speak up against the loud snoring.

NORA

If you keep eating the shingles we won't have any left for the roof.

Nora remote controls the VOLUME UP on the TV. The snoring increases.

FRANCIS

They're stale anyway.

Francis remote controls the VOLUME LOUDER on the TV. The snoring becomes louder.

NORA

Is that the fella from 'Jeopardy'?

Nora turns UP the VOLUME more. The snoring gets louder.

FRANCIS

I don't know.

Francis turns UP the VOLUME again. The snoring gets louder.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANCIS
It's the sports guy who's married to the news gal with the drinking problem.

Francis turns UP the VOLUME again and again; the snoring increases.

NORA
What?

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - DUSK

The left side of the house is partially decorated. Clark is twenty feet above the ground stringing lights under the eaves. He reaches over to secure a strand. The ladder tilts from his weight and one leg lifts off the ground. Encumbered by the lights and the stapler, Clark struggles to get both of the feet of the ladder back on the ground. As he leans into the house he (accidentally) staples his sleeve to the roof. This temporarily stabilizes him. To free himself he pulls the sleeve and the staple loose. This upsets his balance, tilting Clark and the ladder back away from the house. Right before he crashes backwards into the tree, he grabs the partially stapled strand of lights and uses it as a safety line to pull himself (and the ladder) back up to the house.

INT./EXT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

THROUGH the bedroom window that faces the street, we see Clark struggling with the ladder, holding on for dear life to a strand of lights. As he slowly pulls himself in, the ladder crashes back into the house slamming Clark into the window.

OMITTED

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT
Rusty comes out of the garage carrying a six-foot-tall plastic Santa.

RUSTY
Dad? Where do you want the Santa?

EXT. HOUSE
Clark is on the spine of the roof where he's stapling lights.

CLARK
Just put him on the lawn.
EXT. FRONT YARD

Rusty sets the Santa down on the lawn. Behind him a large wooden shutter falls to the sidewalk and shatters. Rusty turns and looks up to the roof.

RUSTY
Dad? I couldn't find the eight tiny reindeer.

CLARK
I think they're in the basement.

Rusty heads into the house.

OMITTED

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN

Ellen and Audrey are making dinner. They have to shout above the snoring and the BLASTING TELEVISION set.

AUDREY
Would it be indecent to ask the grandparents to stay at a hotel?

Ellen's answer is a tired look.

AUDREY
Can we at least forbid them to answer the phone? Alexander called this morning and Grandpa Clark said I couldn't come to the phone because I was going to the bathroom.

ELLEN
We're all making sacrifices, Audrey.

AUDREY
Everybody? Are you sleeping with your brother? Do you know how sick and twisted that is?

ELLEN
Don't be so dramatic.

(continues)
CONTINUED:

AUDREY
Mom, I have nightmares about what he does in his own bed. Alone.

ELLEN
Honey, I don't know what to say except that it's Christmas! We're all in misery!

EXT. HOUSE - ROOF

As Clark continues crawling along the spine of the roof, he loses his footing on a patch of ice, sending him sliding down the roof face first.

CLARK
Holy...hairy...hell!

He grabs the gutter as he slides past. His body jack-knives over the eaves.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clark's body slams into the house and knocks a picture off the wall in the bedroom.

OMITTED

EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - CLARK - NIGHT

He's dangling from the gutter. He looks to the side.

CLARK'S POV

The ladder is several feet away, resting on the gutter.

WIDE ANGLE

The gutter has pulled five feet away from the house. Clark is clinging to it, moving cautiously toward the ladder which still rests against the moving gutter. He begins inching toward the ladder, sliding his gloves along the gutter. It begins to tear loose from the house, sending the ladder crashing to the lawn.

CLOSEUP - GUTTER

It's filled solid with ice. The ice shoots out of the gutter like a spear.
INT. TODD AND MARGO'S LIVING ROOM

The ice spear crashes through the side window and impales the stereo.

EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Clark, holding on to the gutter, as it continues to tear loose, realizes that the lower roof is just below his feet. He lets go of the gutter, leaving him standing on the lower roof. He stands for a beat feeling secure. Suddenly his feet slide out from under him, he hits the roof on his stomach, shoots off like a rocket, and disappears in a cloud of snow into the bushes below. The front door opens the moment he lands.

EXT. HOUSE - PORCH

Ellen steps outside.

ELLEN

Clark? Dinner's ready!

A beat and Clark answers from the bushes.

CLARK (O.S.)

I'll be right in.

INT. KITCHEN - CLOSEUP - DISHWASHER - LATER

A grandmother's hand closes the door and turns it ON.

INSERT - CLOSEUP - COFFEE MACHINE

A grandmother's hand pours water into the machine.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

INSERT - CLOSEUP - REFRIGERATOR

Freshly-wrapped leftovers are placed on a shelf and the door closes.

85 EXT. HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

Clark, Ellen, Audrey and Rusty, Clark Sr., Nora, Art and Francis are standing on the front lawn.

Clark's worn and tattered from his efforts. His enthusiasm and excitement is unabated. He's holding two extension cords, ready to plug them in.

ART
You want to hurry up with this, Clark? I'm freezing my baguettes off.

Clark gives Art a sidelong glance. He refuses to let him spoil his fun.

CLARK
Are you ready? Two hundred and fifty strands of lights, one hundred individual bulbs per strand for a grand total of twenty-five thousand individual miniature imported Italian twinkle lights. Twenty-five thousand!

AUDREY
I hope nobody I know drives by and sees me standing in the yard staring at the house.

ART
If they know your dad they won't think anything of it.

RUSTY
Fire it up, Dad!

CLARK
I dedicate this house to the Griswold family Christmas. (to the family) Drumroll, please.

No one responds.

CLARK
Drumroll?

(CONTINUED)
Reluctantly Ellen, Rusty and Audrey flutter their tongues in a cheap imitation of a drumroll.

CLARK
Dad? Mom?

Clark and Nora join in. After a beat Art and Francis reluctantly flutter their tongues.

CLARK
Joy to the World!

He joins the drumroll, louder and more enthusiastic. He holds up the plug and the outlet and with great drama and the sound of a CRASHING CYMBAL, joins them.

EXT. HOUSE - CLARK'S POV

The house is dark.

EXT. HOUSE - FAMILY

Continuing their drumroll. Dampened somewhat. Clark unplugs the cords, gives them a twist, revs up his drums and again joins the extension cords. Nothing. The drums peter out. Clark continues his, but at a lower volume and in an angry tone. He plugs and unplugs the cords a couple of times.

ART
Beeeeee--u-t-tiiiiii-ful, Clark!

FRANCIS
Boy, talk about tinkling your money away. I hope you kids see what a silly waste of resources this was.

AUDREY
He worked really hard, Grandma.

ART
So do washing machines but they don't make very good fathers.

Art and Francis head back to the house.

CLARK SR.
It's probably a bad bulb, son. If one goes out the whole thing doesn't work.

Clark Sr. and Nora go inside. Clark stares at the house. Seething anger.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

AUDREY

Sorry, Dad.

RUSTY

Good try, Dad.

ELLEN

Clark?

No response. Clark just stares at the house.

ELLEN

We'll be inside, honey.

She fixes his coat around his neck to cover his neck.*

ELLEN

Don't stay out too late. You have work in the morning.*

She leaves a nearly despondent Clark and slips away into the house before he explodes.

INT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

They've returned home. Todd's looking at the broken window. Margo's looking at the trashed stereo system.*

TODD

Something had to break the window.
Something had to hit the stereo.

MARGO

And why is the carpet all wet?

TODD

(looking out the window)

I don't know. But I'll bet that asshole had something to do with it.

EXT. HOUSE - CLARK - NIGHT

He sets the ladder against the house and begins to climb.

INT. HOUSE - SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

Nora and Clark Sr. are in Audrey's double bed. Their debris is all over the room. Medicines, trusses, clothing, suitcases. A room humidifier is spewing out cold steam. Nora's snoring softly. Clark Sr.'s reading a teen fashion magazine with a flashlight.*
INT. FAMILY ROOM

Rusty and Audrey are sleeping on a hide-a-bed. She's on her back, awake. Rusty has his arm around her and his face against her ear. She pushes his arm away and his leg replaces it. She groans.

AUDREY
Get off me, you little fungus.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Ellen's asleep. Alone.

INT. RUSTY'S ROOM - INSERT - POSTER

A well-oiled babe in something indecent. The poster is taped to the ceiling.

CLOSEUP - ART

He's laying on his back staring up with mild curiosity.

INT. RUSTY'S ROOM

Francis is on the bottom bunk. Art's on the top bunk.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A lonely figure on the ladder in the dark of the cold night. A sky filled with twinkling stars.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

Audrey opens the door marked, DECEMBER 19. Behind the door is a gingerbread man.

OMITTED

INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Clark peeks out of his bedroom. He looks up and down the hall, then sneaks out of his room with a two-handled shopping bag filled with wrapped gifts. He reaches up to the ceiling.

CLOSEUP CEILING - ATTIC STAIRS

Fold-down stairs. Clark slips his finger in a brass ring and turns it, unlocking the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY

Clark pulls down the attic stairs. He does so slowly but the STAIRCASE still SQUEAKS. He brings the stairs down to eye level and stops.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He listens to see if he's attracted anyone's attention. He looks up at the stairs. The steps, which are collapsed on runners, slide down and hit Clark square in the forehead taking him clear OUT OF FRAME.

INT. ATTIC - LATER - DAY

Clark climbs up the creaky stairs into the attic, rubbing his aching forehead.

It's a standard, cluttered, wood floor, unfinished, unheated attic. He steps carefully over and around the detritus of twenty years of married life to the chimney. He sets down the bag of gifts. He takes out a gift and hides it behind the chimney. As he reaches behind the chimney, he notices something. He brings out a dusty, gift-wrapped package. He reaches back around, stretches, grits his teeth as he reaches far behind the chimney. He pulls out another wrapped gift. He sets it down and again reaches behind the chimney. He finds another gift-wrapped package. He looks at the gifts curiously. He blows the dust off one of the packages and reads the tag.

CLOSEUP - GIFT TAG

The tag reads -- TO MOM, FROM CLARK. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at another package.

CLOSEUP - GIFT TAG

The tag reads -- HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, ALL MY LOVE, CLARK.

Francis comes out of the guest room. She sees the attic stairs down.

FRANCIS

Gee whiz! Feel the cold air coming down from there!

INT. ATTIC - CLOSEUP - CLARK - DAY

He picks up the third gift.
CONTINUED:

CLOSEUP - GIFT TAG
The tag reads -- HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY, LOVE, CLARK.

INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY
Francis lifts the staircase and lets it crash closed.

INT. ATTIC - CLARK - DAY
He freezes.

EXT. HOUSE
The Taurus is running. Clark Sr. is in the front, Nora's
in the back with Audrey. Ellen's standing at the Taurus.
She's going to drive.

INT. ATTIC - DAY
Clark's on his hands and knees pushing on the attic
stairs. It doesn't budge. Locked tight.

CLARK
Hello?! Ellen?! Somebody?!

INT. FOYER - DAY
Art and Francis bundle up and exit the front door. They
can't hear Clark's FAINT CRIES.

INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY
O.S. Clark's BANGING on the attic stairs.

CLARK (O.S.)
Help!

EXT. HOUSE
Art and Francis come out of the house. Ellen calls to
them.

ELLEN
Dad? Is Clark coming?

ART
How the hell would I know?

ELLEN
Was he in the house?

(CONTINUED)
ART
If he's not up on the ladder
tartin' around with his lights, he
must be in the house.

ELLEN
I'm sure he wants to go to lunch
and shopping with us.

ART
You've got another car. He can
drive. Me, I have to eat so I can
take my back pill.

INT. HOUSE ATTIC - DAY
Clark works his way down the attic, heading for a small
window at the other end. There is a narrow walkway of
boards across the joists that runs from one end of the
attic to the other. Except for this walkway, the floor
is unfinished and consists only of joists and insulation.

CLOSEUP - FLOORBOARDS
Loose planks. Clark's foot steps down on the end of a
plank. It sinks under his weight.

INT. ATTIC
Clark, anticipating that he's going to get hit in the
face with the loose board, quickly steps back. The board
he steps back onto flies up and smacks him in the back of
the head. The impact throws him forward onto the first
board which flips up and slugs him in the face.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY
Art and Francis get in the Taurus.

INT./EXT. ATTIC WINDOW - CLARK - DAY
He's pressed up against the small, dirty attic window. A
look of defeat and resignation on his face.

INT./EXT. STREET - CLARK'S POV - DAY
Far below, the Taurus pulls away and heads down the
street.

EXT. ATTIC WINDOW - CLOSEUP - CLARK - DAY
He watches sadly as the Taurus disappears down the
street. He sighs in utter defeat.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He glances to the side and notices the window is ringed with his inoperative imported twinkle lights. He reaches into his shirt pocket for a new bulb, opens the tiny window and reaches out to test for bad bulbs.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - MEN'S ACCESSORY DEPT. - DAY

Clark Sr. and Nora are at the counter looking at manicure sets.

CLARK SR.
I don't see anything wrong with getting Rusty an air rifle.
That's what he wants.

NORA
Ellen said, no. You heard her.

CLARK SR.
Alright. Clarkie had one when he was a boy.

NORA
And he put out all the windows in the garage and you threw it away. (referring to the manicure set in her hand)
No. I think he'll be just as thrilled with a manicure set.

CLARK SR.
Yeah. You're right. There's nothing more important to a young fella than well-groomed fingernails.

NORA
The set also includes a nifty toenail clipper.

CLARK SR.
That's a heck of a nice deal. Especially in the summer.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Clark comes back down the attic from the window, returning the failed bulbs to his pocket. He reaches the boards that whacked him earlier. He gingerly steps on both boards, balancing for a moment. Suddenly, the boards fly up on either side of Clark, smacking him both front and back.
The plaster cracks under the weight of Clark's feet, leaving the approximate shape of human footprints in the ceiling.

He's stepping between the joists.

More cracked footprints on the ceiling.
INT. ATTIC

Clark's rummaging through boxes, looking for a coat. He finds nothing and crosses to another stack of boxes.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CEILING

The footsteps continue across the master bedroom ceiling.

OMITTED

INT. ATTIC

Clark's rummaging through another box. He comes up with an old wool scarf. He looks at it with a small degree of satisfaction.

INT. RUSTY'S BEDROOM - CEILING - DAY

The girlie poster above the top bunk. Clark's feet suddenly break through the ceiling and tear through the poster.

INT. ATTIC

Clark's sunk to his knees in the attic floor.

INT. RUSTY'S BEDROOM - WIDE

A pair of legs standing on the top bunk.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LADIES' ACCESSORIES

Art and Francis are at a counter discussing a gift for Audrey.

ART

Doesn't Audrey have a purse and gloves?

FRANCIS

This is for when she dresses up.

INSERT - PURSE AND GLOVES

A taupe leather purse and matching leather gloves.

FRANCIS (O.S.)

We'll have them monogrammed.

BACK TO SCENE

Art looks at the pricetag.

(CONTINUED)
INT. ATTIC - LATER

Clark is wearing an old fur coat, a hat and white ladies' gloves that he's found among the stored junk. He's rummaging through boxes, resigned to his fate.

CLOSEUP - SHOE BOX

Clark lifts the lid to reveal yellow Kodak boxes. The old home movies. He takes out several and looks through them.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He smiles as the inscriptions on the boxes bring back pleasant memories.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - BOXES

Shuffling through them -- Clark's fifth B-day, Vacation to Toledo, Aunt Lou's funeral and finally, Xmas '59.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at the box for a moment. MUSIC comes up.

8MM FILM PROJECTED ON WHITE SHIRT

A title card with the words in glitter. CUT TO: Griswold house -- a tract ranch house with a single string of lights around the door. CUT TO: Griswold family, Nora, Little Clark (age 9), an ancient woman dressed in black, a young sailor, a smashed old priest, a middle-aged man with a loud sport coat, slicked hair and a pencil moustache with his arm around a middle-aged woman in a low-cut dress -- sitting in the living room eating Christmas dinner on TV trays. A metallic Christmas tree stands in the corner. A wobbly pan across the people, squinting against the harsh light of the light bar.

INT. ATTIC

Clark is sitting on a child's chair with the projector on a box beside him. The image is projected on a shirt hung from a rafter.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He smiles at the old images.
CONTINUED:

8MM FILM

The man with the pencil moustache smiles and holds up his middle finger. CUT TO: Family gathered around a free-standing kettle fireplace singing Christmas carols. On the left side of frame, we see flames. The camera pans to the curtains. The heat from the floodlights has ignited the curtains. The camera drops again. CUT TO: The family and three firemen toasting the holidays with eggnog. Behind them, the wall is blackened. CUT TO: Clark Jr. asleep in his bed, despite the floodlights. CUT TO: Clark Sr. in a cheap Santa suit coming in the front door with a pillowcase stuffed with gifts. A German shepherd dog attacks him. The camera drops to the floor. CUT TO: Clark Jr. running down the stairs in the AM. CUT TO: Clark Jr. ripping open a large gift. He looks up to camera with a grim expression. He lifts a handful of wool socks from the box.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY (LATER)

The Taurus is in the drive. The grandparents are walking carefully up the slick pavement to the house.

INT. HOUSE - STAIRWELL - DAY

Ellen sneaks up the stairs with packages in her arms.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ellen turns down the hall, stopping at the attic stairs. She reaches up and turns the attic stair lock.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Clark, the chair, the box of memories and the projector fall OUT OF FRAME. O.S., CLARK and his MEMORIES CRASH to the floor.

OMITTED

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Todd and Margo have returned home from a run. They're dressed in the best winter running fashions.

TODD
I want to take off these clothes and sit in the dark with a glass of wine and kiss every square inch of your body.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

TODD (CONT'D)
(kisses Margo)
After you shower, of course.

MARGO
Of course.

110  EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Clark plants a floodlight in front of the Santa Claus and the plastic reindeer and a sign announcing MERRY CHRISTMAS in glittering plastic letters.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He feels a degree of satisfaction with the new decorations, even though the lights on the house are still out of order.

EXT. HOUSE - PORCH

Ellen comes out the front door. She closes the door and steps down from the porch.

ELLEN
Clark?

EXT. YARD - CLARK

Ellen walks over to him.

ELLEN
Are you out here for a reason or are you just avoiding the family?

CLARK
No. But I still have a few hundred more bulbs to check. In the meantime, at least I can light up the manger and Santa Claus and the eight tiny reindeer and the Merry X-Mas sign. That should look pretty good.

Clark picks up the yellow extension cord that the house lights are plugged into. There are two inputs on the cord.

CLARK
Ready?

(CONTINUED)
ELLEN
- Do you want me to do the drumroll thing?

CLARK
No, it's okay. Here goes nothin'.

Clark grimaces as he sticks the floodlight plug into the extension cord input.

EXT. HOUSE - WIDE

Nothing.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
Stares in disbelief.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN
Wincs.

INT. GARAGE

The door from the house opens.

EXT. FRONT YARD

Clark's holding the cords, staring at the house.

CLARK
I don't understand it. The house lights don't work, the floodlights don't work.

ELLEN
Is it plugged in?

CLARK
Do you honestly think I'd check thousands of tiny little lights if I wasn't sure the extension cord was plugged in?

INT. GARAGE

Nora steps into the garage. She hits the light switch.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Todd and Margo are sitting on their king-size bed in the dark. Todd's in his shorts. Margo's wearing a satin robe. They clink glasses and kiss. The moment their lips touch, the room is flooded with light.
EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT


EXT. CLARK'S TOWN - NIGHT

The lights in the panorama dim as the house sucks power.

CLOSEUP - HOME ELECTRIC METER

It's a spinning blur.

CLOSEUP - POWER PLANT CONTROL PANEL

A male hand slaps a button marked "AUXILIARY NUCLEAR ON."

INT. GARAGE

Nora crosses to the refrigerator in the garage and takes out a carton of milk.

EXT. YARD - CLARK AND ELLEN - NIGHT

Clark, blasted with light, continues to fiddle with the extension cords, unaware that the lights are on. Ellen's jaw drops.

ELLEN

Clark!

CLARK

Just a second, honey, I think I know what's wrong...

INT. GARAGE

Nora crosses back to the door. She turns off the light.

CLOSEUP - HOME ELECTRIC METER

It slows down.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Margo and Todd climb off the bed and charge the front window. The lights go off. Margo and Todd, temporarily blinded, crash into a table.

EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE

It's dark.

CLARK

Turn the lights back on, sweetheart, I can't see what...

He looks up slowly. Puzzled.
INT. GARAGE

Ellen rushes into the garage. She hits the light switch and looks for the plug.

OMITTED

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The lights go back on. Todd and Margo are hopping around the room, holding their banged shins. The wine bottle's fallen to the floor along with cheese and crackers and caviar and fruit, flowers, vase and water. It's a terrible mess, made all the worse by the screaming, bright light flooding into the room.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are back on. Clark yells.

CLARK

Ellen! I fixed it!

INT. GARAGE - ELLEN

She follows the extension cord to the plug. It's plugged in. She's puzzled.

EXT. HOUSE - CLARK

He's still yelling.

CLARK

Everybody out! Quick! Look at the lights!

OMITTED

INT. FOYER

Art and Clark Sr. run in from the family room. The grandmothers from the kitchen.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Todd has the cheese, fruit, wine bottle, vase and flowers on the table and is carrying it out of the room.

TODD

Get a towel! Quick! There's wine all over the carpet!

Margo takes off for the bathroom.

INT. GARAGE

Ellen sees nothing wrong. She heads back to the door, reaching for the light switch.
D127  INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM
      The lights go out. Margo rams into an armoire. O.S.,
      Todd takes a header down the stairs.

E127  EXT. HOUSE - PORCH
      Art and Clark Sr. come out on the porch.

      ART
      What's all the yelling about?!

      CLOSEUP - CLARK
      Bewildered. He wiggles the cords furiously.

F127  INT. KITCHEN
      Ellen comes back in the house. She stops as something
      occurs to her. She thinks for a moment.

127   EXT. HOUSE - PORCH
      Art, Clark Sr., Audrey, Francis and Nora are gathered on
      the porch looking at Clark.

      NORA
      What's he doing, Clark?

      CLARK SR.
      I haven't the foggiest...

AA128  THEIR POV
      Clark's twisting, shaking, whipping the cords and
      cursing. He throws the cords down and in his rage socks
      the Santa.

      CLARK
      Damn it! Damn it! damn it...

      CLOSEUP - SANTA
      The face caves in when Clark slugs it.

      EXT. YARD
      Clark kicks the reindeer and the sign.

A128  INT. KITCHEN
      Ellen turns and runs back to the garage.

B128  EXT. PORCH
      The family is disturbed by Clark's behavior.

      (CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - CLARK

He rips the cords from the junction, spreads his arms wide and with a great, dramatic gesture rams them back together.

C128

INT. GARAGE

Ellen comes back into the garage. She hits the lights. *

AD128

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

The lights are back on, the room is blown out with light. The armoire is toppled. A television and component stereo is spilled on the bed in a tangle of wires and video cassettes, audio cassettes and CDs.

BD128* INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - FOYER

Cheese, fruit, flowers, wine, the table and Todd are littered down the staircase. The harsh light is spilling through the living room, dining room and foyer windows.

D128

EXT. HOUSE

The lights are on. For good. *

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's stunned that the lights work.

EXT. HOUSE

The family comes down off the porch and onto the lawn, admiring the lights.  

RUSTY

Wow! Dad, it's incredible!

Ellen comes out of the house and runs to Clark. He takes her under his arm. Rusty under the other. Audrey hugs him and they look up at the house with great pride. The family gathers around. *

EXT. HOUSE - THEIR POV

A great swell of holiday MUSIC as we HOLD ON the magnificently-decorated house.

128

OMITTED

129

EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's in tears. The struggle, the frustration, the anger has paid off. The emotion is too much for him.

(CONTINUED)
EXT. HOUSE - FAMILY

It's a great moment of family warmth and love. Clark embraces Nora, then Clark Sr.

NORA
It's lovely, Clark.

CLARK
You deserve a house like this to spend Christmas in.

CLARK SR.
It's a beaut, Clark.

CLARK
Dad, Dad, Dad. You taught me everything I know about exterior electrical illumination.

He embraces Francis.

CLARK
Dear, dear Francis. I hope this adds to your enjoyment of the holidays.

FRANCIS
It's wonderful, Clark.

Clark embraces Art.

CLARK
Art, Arthur, Dad. Thanks for being here.

ART
You got too many blue lights.

Clark doesn't mind the insult. He regards it as a charming moment of truth and honesty.

CLARK
I know, Art. And thanks for noticing.

Clark moves from Art to the next person. It's COUSIN EDDIE. He's dressed in a cheap overcoat with a fake collar and a Kansas City Chiefs stocking cap.

EDDIE
The house looks real swell, Clark.

(CONTINUED)
Thanks, Eddie. I hope it enhances your holiday spirit.

Catherine's standing next to Clark. She's wearing a quilted car coat. Clark takes her in his arms, hugs her.

Catherine! Dear...

Something's suddenly not right. Clark lets go of Catherine. He steps back and looks at Eddie and her.

Eddie?

The house is gorgeous, Clark.

Eddie?

I sure hope you didn't do all this on our behalf, Clark.

He turns and yells over his shoulder.

You kids get out here and see what Uncle Clark has done to the house!

Eddie?

He's baffled.

(to himself)

He looks off and is hit with another surprise...

The biggest commercially-available RV is backed in his driveway. The door opens and two little kids, a boy and a girl, ROCKY and RUBY SUE, followed by a mixed breed hound, SNOTS, jump out. Rocky's six and Ruby Sue's five. The kids and dog run across the lawn.

(CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's stunned. He looks at Ellen.

CLARK

Eddie?

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She's equally stunned. She shrugs. She doesn't have any idea why Eddie and Catherine have shown up.

EXT. FRONT YARD

Eddie and Catherine greet the grandparents as the kids walk up.

EDDIE

If you don't remember, this is Rocky.

ART

You got a kiss for me?

EDDIE

Better take a raincheck on that, Art. He's got a lip fungus they ain't identified yet.

Art pats Rocky on the head.

CATHERINE

You remember Ruby Sue.

FRANCIS

Oh, my gosh! Her eyes aren't crossed anymore!

EDDIE

Somethin', ain't it? Falls in a well, eyes go crossed. Gets kicked by a mule, they go back to normal.

Eddie slaps Snots on the flanks.

EDDIE

This here is our pride and joy. Snots.

CLARK

Pretty name, Ed.

(CONTINUED)
EDDIE
We named him that 'cause he's got sinus troubles.

CLOSEUP - SNOTS

He SNIFFS, CLEARS his THROAT and...

EXT. HOUSE

... SPITS. Clark looks up with disgust.

EDDIE
(to Snots)
Snots, you roll over and let Uncle Clark scratch your belly.
(to Clark)
You never saw a set on a dog like this one's got.

CLARK
It's alright, Eddie.

EDDIE
You rub his belly, Clark, and he'll love you till the day you die.

CLARK
I really shouldn't. My hands are chapped.

CATHERINE
(to Ellen)
We would have called, but Eddie wanted to make it a surprise.

EDDIE
Clark? You surprised?

CLARK
Surprised? Eddie, if I woke tomorrow with my head sewed to the carpet, I couldn't be more surprised than I am right now.

Ellen gives Clark an angry look.

ELLEN
We have plenty of room. Plenty of everything.
(to herself)
I think.

(continued)
EDDIE
We're pretty much set in the R.V.
It's a little tight, but we
didn't come to impose.

ART
Hell, there's plenty of room.
(to Eddie)
Quit being so damn polite, Ed.
You want to spend the holidays
with four people jammed toe-to-
nose in a motor home?

Eddie reevaluates his position.

EDDIE
Catherine and me are comfy in
there. Maybe you folks wouldn't
mind the youngsters shacking up
with you. After that drive...
(puts his arm
around Catherine)
We could use some time together.
(to Catherine)
Honey, run and get the kids'
things. And don't forget the
rubber sheets and the gerbils.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Clark and Eddie are standing at the tree sipping eggnog.
Eddie's wearing a flannel shirt tucked into sweat pants
and leather tie shoes. He's showered. His hair's combed
back.

EDDIE
Honey of a tree, Clark. Is it a
real one?

CLARK
Dug it out of the ground myself.

EDDIE
Is that a fact...?

Clark reaches under the tree.

CLOSEUP - SNOTS
He's drinking the water out of the tree stand.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLARK AND EDDIE
Clark shoos the dog out from under the tree.

(continued)
CLARK
Get outta there!

EDDIE
Don't worry about it, Clark, a little tree water ain't gonna hurt him. Before we left, he drank half a quart of Pennzoil. Boy, when he lifted his leg the next morning...

CLARK
If he drinks the water out of there, the tree'll dry out.

EDDIE
Snuts! Get outta there! Go to the kitchen and get something to eat!

The dog saunters out of the living room.

EDDIE
Cute, isn't he? Only problem is, he's got a little Mississippi hound in him. If the mood catches him right, he'll grab your leg and go to town. You don't want him around if you're wearing short pants, if you know what I mean. A word of warning, though. If he does start on you, you best let him finish.

CLARK
(changes the subject)
I just can't believe you're actually standing here in my living room. I never thought the day would come.

EDDIE
I'm excited about it, too. It's a cryin' shame the older kids couldn't make it. I got the daughter in the clinic to get cured off the Wild Turkey and the older boy, bless his soul, is preparing for his career.

CLARK
College?

EDDIE
Carnival. (CONTINUED)
CLARK
(facetiously)
You gotta be proud.

EDDIE
Oh, yeah. He worked last season
as a pixie dust spreader on the
Tilt-O-Whirl and he thinks maybe
next season he'll be guessing
people's weight or barking for
the Yak Woman. You ever see her?

CLARK
Sorry to say I haven't.

EDDIE
Big horns growing right above her
ears. Ugly as sin but a real
sweet gal and a hell of a good
cook.

CLARK
(changing the
subject)
Can I refill your eggnog, get you
something to eat, drive you out to
the middle of nowhere and leave
you for dead?

Eddie doesn't catch the insult.

EDDIE
I'm doing fine, Clark. Just glad
to be here.

There's a lull in the conversation.

CLARK
Yeah. So, when did you get the
tenement on wheels?

EDDIE
That's an R.V. I borrowed it off
my buddy. He took my house. We
took the R.V. It's a good-lookin'
vehicle, ain't it?

CLARK
Beautiful. And it looks so nice
backed in the driveway.

EDDIE
Sure does, but don't go fallin'
in love with it. When we leave
next month, it's goin' with us.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

CLARK

Huh?

EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is glowing. Neighbors have gathered in the street and on the adjacent lawns.

EXT. CLARK'S NEIGHBORHOOD

From several blocks away, the house continues to glow.

EXT. CLARK'S TOWN

Clark's house glows in the distance.

INT. HOUSE - RUSTY'S BEDROOM - CLOSEUP - ART - NIGHT

He's staring at the ceiling. He's bewildered.

HIS POV - CLOSEUP - CEILING - POSTER

Two big foot holes are punched through the bimbo's chest.

CLOSEUP - ART

He gives up trying to figure out what happened to the poster. He rolls over and settles into the bed. He turns AWAY FROM CAMERA revealing that the back of his head is white with plaster dust. As he pulls the covers up around his shoulders, a cloud of dust rises.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - CLOSEUP - ROCKY AND RUBY SUE

They're sleeping in the hide-a-bed. A cage packed with anxious gerbils rests between them. Rocky smiles and we hear the SOFT SPLATTER of WATER on rubber. We MOVE OFF them TO the floor and Rusty and Audrey. Rusty's laying on top of Audrey. She's struggling beneath his dead-weight.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clark and Ellen are in bed, awake. The lights are off. The room is illuminated by the outdoor lights.

CLARK

I'm not complaining, I just don't know how we can have a nice Christmas with Eddie here.

ELLEN

Well, they are sleeping the driveway.

(CONTINUED)
CLARK
And isn't that a kick in the nuts?
How can the house look like
anything but a junkyard with his
shack on wheels parked in the
driveway?

ELLEN
You've never judged anyone by how
much or how little they have,
Clark.

CLARK
No, and I never will. If Eddie
was rich...

There's a long pause.

CLARK/ELLEN
He's be worse.

CLARK
Good night, sweetheart.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

Eddie's greasy fingers tear off a door marked, DEC. 21,
to reveal a sprig of mistletoe. He leaves a big smudge
mark on the calendar.

EXT. HOUSE - EXTREME CLOSEUP - SANTA - MORNING

MOVE UP FROM Santa's crushed face TO the house and the RV.
The door opens and Eddie lets Snots out. Snots sniffs out
the lawn.

EXT. CLARK'S OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Mid-morning in the business district.

OMITTED

INT. EXECUTIVE OUTER OFFICE

Clark pokes his head inside. No secretary. He tiptoes
in, holding a poinsettia plant. He crosses to a door,
knocks twice.
A vast room with an enormous desk. Shirley is seated behind it, having a conversation over the speaker phone.

**FRANK**
Get Ed Leftie up here and have him look over these figures.

Clark enters with the poinsettia.

**CLARK**
Mr. Shirley, merry Christmas.

**CLARK'S POV - MR. SHIRLEY**

He's become Scrooge counting his money. He doesn't look up.

**FRANK**
What do you want?

**CLOSEUP - CLARK**

edging forward.

**CLARK**
It's me, Clark Griswold. I have a gift for you.

**INT. OFFICE**

Frank Shirley is back to normal. He waves toward an opposite wall.

**FRANK**
Put it over there with the others, Grisball.

**CLARK**
(can't resist)
By the way, sir. Hope my report helped out at the trade show.

**FRANK**
I'm sure it did. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm in the middle of an important call.

He picks up the receiver.

Clark turns to put the poinsettia on a sideboard and sees it's jammed with about fifty other poinsettias.
EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Taurus rolls through heavily-wooded, snow-covered hills.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - SIGN - NIGHT

A big wooden sign that reads -- OSHGONOGGIN STATE PARK.

EXT. SLEDDING HILL - NIGHT (LATER)

A parking lot at the bottom. A warming house. Outdoor light illuminates the hill. CHRISTMAS CAROLS are playing on the PA.

EXT. SLEDDING HILL - TOP - NIGHT

Clark, Eddie, Audrey, Rusty, Ruby Sue and Rocky are at the top of a suburban park sledding hill. They each have a saucer sled. Clark's on one knee with his saucer sled upside-down on the snow. He's shaking a spray can.

CLARK

This is a new non-caloric silicon-based kitchen lubricant my company's working on. It creates a surface 500 times slipperier than any cooking oil. We're really gonna fly down the hill with this stuff.

RUSTY

Has anybody ever put it on a sled?

CLARK

Not that I know of.

EDDIE

Don't put none of it on my sled, Clark. You know that metal plate in my head?

CLARK

How could I forget it?

He sprays the bottom of the sled.

EDDIE

I had to have it replaced because whenever Catherine revved-up the microwave I'd piss my pants and forget who I was for half hour or so.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
EDDIE (CONT'D)
Over at V.A. they replaced it with
a plastic one and it ain't as
strong. I don't think I oughta
be sailing down no hill with
nothing between the ground and my
brain but a piece of government
plastic.

Clark's growing weary of the endless blabbering.

CLARK
Do you really think it matters,
Ed?

EDDIE
The plate runs right under my
part. If it gets dented, my hair
ain't gonna look right.

Clark groans and flips his sled right-side up.

CLARK
Let me go first and see how it
works.

EDDIE
Be careful there, Clark.

CLARK
There's nothing to worry about,
Ed.

Clark mounts the sled.

CLARK
Going for a new amateur
recreational saucer sled land
speed record, Clark W. Griswold,
Jr.

He sets his palms on the snow and rocks the sled back and
forth. It's extremely slippery.

CLARK
Oh, yeah. This is gonna be some
kind of wild ride!

Clark rocks himself back, holds a split second and pushes
off. The sled flies off the peak of the hill.
EXT. HILL - NIGHT

Looking straight down the hill. Clark’s sled streaks down the hill, across the flat and into the dark beyond. One moment he’s on top of the hill, the next, he’s gone.

A146 OMITTED. A146 *

EXT. HILL - EDDIE AND KIDS

They’re stunned by how fast Clark flew down the hill.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Clark’s sled sails through the parking lot.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He’s holding on for dear life, screaming all the way.

EXT. PARKING LOT. CLARK’S POV

LOW and MOVING. Barely missing cars, people jumping out of the way and heading for a Jeep.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He leans back and closes his eyes in anticipation of serious injury.

EXT. PARKING LOT - JEEP

LOW. The sled shoots under the Jeep and out.

EXT. STREET

Clark’s sled flies out of the parking lot and onto the street. He reappears every few seconds as he passes through the pools of street lamp light.

EXT. STAND OF TREES

A heavily wooded area. Branches are breaking, BIRDS are roused and SQUAWKING.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER - CHARITY TOY COLLECTION BOX

A big red and green metal bin resting in the parking lot.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Out of the darkness into the harsh mercury vapor light of the parking lot, comes Clark and his sled. Sparks fly as he strikes dry pavement.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He opens his eyes for a terrified moment.

HIS POV

The collection box is coming up fast. A freshly-painted Santa and the words HO! HO! HO! is on the red bin.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He braces for the crash.

EXT. SLEDDING HILL - EDDIE AND KIDS

In the distance, we hear the METAL BOOM of Clark's impact.

EDDIE

Bingo!

INT. CLARK'S OFFICE

He's sitting behind his desk, staring out the window. Bill walks in.

BILL

Clark?

Clark turns in his chair.

BILL

Staying late?

CLARK

Just finishing up a few things. Last day of the year for me.

BILL

Have a really merry Christmas.

CLARK

Thank you. You, too.

Bill starts to exit. Clark stops him.

CLARK

Did you get your bonus yet?

BILL

I just talked to my son. He said a messenger brought a company envelope to the house. I guess that's it. Nothing like waiting until the last minute. Did you get yours?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Clark shakes his head, no.

BILL
If it's not already at your place, it has to be on its way. Don't worry about it.

CLARK
If I don't get my bonus I'm in it...

(hand to his nose)
... up to here.

BILL
Don't sweat it. It'll come. Merry Christmas.

CLARK
Same to you.

Bill exits.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He's concerned that something's gone wrong.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT
The exterior lights are on. The interior lights are off except for a single light in the kitchen. It's late.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT
Clark's in a red bathrobe, standing at the sink looking out the window. He's lost in troubled thought.

HIS POV
Out the window. It's daytime. The pool is in and the kids are in the water.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
A big, happy, dreamy smile.

HIS POV
Clark and Ellen have joined the fantasy.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He slips deeper into his fantasy. MUSIC FADES UP.
HIS POV

Mary, the girl from the department store, is bouncing on the diving board. MUSIC'S PLAYING. She plays to Clark in the kitchen, waving for him to come out.

EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - CLARK

In the window, looking out. It's dark inside, light outside. Mary's reflected in the window glass. Clark's in his robe. He shakes his head, "no." He's embarrassed.

CLOSEUP - MARY

Big, sexy smile. She mouths, "Come on!"

CLOSEUP - CLARK

From the outside. He begs off again.

CLOSEUP - MARY

She reaches around behind her back and (BELOW FRAME) unfastens her top.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He presses his face to the cold glass.

CLOSEUP - MARY'S FEET

She kicks off her bathing suit bottom.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

His face is severely pressed to the window. The bathing suit bottom hits the window.

INT. KITCHEN DOOR - NIGHT

Ruby Sue appears in the doorway, in her pajamas, rubbing sleepy eyes. She squints. She sees Clark. Her jaw drops.

HER POV

Clark is leaning against the sink with his face pressed to the window. We hear a SPLASH.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL

Mary surfaces and swims to the ladder.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's straining for a better view.
CLOSEUP - MARY

She begins to rise from the water and...

INT. KITCHEN - RUBY SUE

Her eyes are wide and her jaw is slack.

RUBY SUE
Holy shit! Santa Claus!

CLOSEUP - CLARK

From outside. It's dark again. The pool fantasy has evaporated. He's startled.

INT. KITCHEN - CLARK

He lets out a sharp cry as he turns quickly from the window to face Ruby Sue.

INT. KITCHEN

Ruby Sue approaches Clark.

RUBY SUE
Uncle Clark! Are you Santy Claus?

CLARK
Boy, you scared me. No. I'm not Santa Claus. I wish I was.

Clark sits at the kitchen table and pats his heart. He composes himself.

CLARK
How come you're up, sweetheart?

RUBY SUE
Rocky bit my thumb.

CLARK
Huh?

RUBY SUE
My mom puts bad tasting crap on his thumb so he don't suck it so sometimes he sucks mine and he has a bad dream, sometimes he bites it.

CLARK
Oh.

RUBY SUE
Him's nervous because Christmas is almost here.

(CONTINUED)
Clark senses a problem. He sits down and offers his knee to Ruby Sue.

CLARK
Excited or nervous?

RUBY SUE
Shitting bricks.

CLARK
You shouldn't use that word.

RUBY SUE
Sorry. He's shitting rocks.

CLARK
Don't use the 'S' word.

RUBY SUE
Oh. Him's nervous because he don't know if he's getting nothing.

CLARK
Are you in school?

RUBY SUE
Firstus grade.

CLARK
(to himself)
Good school system. I don't think he should be nervous. And you shouldn't be either. Because if you're good, Santa Claus knows it. If you believe in him and you believe in your mom and your ... dad and you've been good all year, Santa Claus will bring you something.

RUBY SUE
Sometimes I think all that Santa crap's just bull. If he was so real how's come he didn't give us squat last year? We didn't do nothing wrong and we got the shaft.

CLARK
I know for a fact that Santa Claus is real. And somehow in the next couple days I'm going to prove it to you. He comes to this house every year. I've seen him.

(CONTINUED)
RUBY SUE

That's for true?

CLARK

Cross my heart. It's a good idea you came to stay with us, isn't it?

RUBY SUE

(nods)

I love it here. You don't gotta put on your coat to go to the bathroom and your house is always parked in the same place.

CLARK

I think you better get back in bed.

RUBY SUE

How's come you ain't sleeping?

CLARK

I was just looking for something. Did you notice if a man came to the house today to deliver a letter?

Ruby Sue thinks hard as she recalls the day.

RUBY SUE

Nope. How come?

CLARK

Just wondering. You go back to bed now, okay?

RUBY SUE

Okay.

She slips down off his lap and waddles across the kitchen. She stops and turns back to Clark.

RUBY SUE

You sure you ain't Santy Claus?

Clark smiles and shakes his head. Ruby Sue exits.

CLARK

(to himself)

I can't even afford to be an elf.

Clark walks back to the kitchen window and looks out.
HIS POV

Mary's bathing suit is laying on the frozen ground in the dark, cold, barren back yard.

OMITTED

thru

177

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Rusty, Audrey, Francis, Nora, Clark Sr., Art, Ruby Sue, Catherine and Rocky are at the kitchen table. The kitchen looks like an Army mess hall.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Clark's standing at the window looking out. Ellen walks in.

ELLEN
 Aren't you having breakfast?

CLARK
 I'm not really in the mood.

ELLEN
 What are you looking at?

CLARK
 The silent majesty of a winter's morn. The clean, cool, chill of holiday air. And an asshole in his bathrobe emptying a chemical toilet into my sewer.

She pulls the curtain aside and looks out.

HER POV

Eddie, unshaven, in his bathrobe, black socks, brown loafers, a baseball cap, with bare legs and a cigarette is watching over a four inch black plastic corrugated hose that runs from the RV, across the lawn to the curb and the sewer. Snots is on a rope anchored to the manger. The Santa, the busted reindeer and assorted trash bags are piled up on the curb. Eddie takes a drag of his cigarette, spits and looks to the window. He notices Clark and Ellen in the window. He smiles and waves.

EXT. HOUSE - WINDOW - CLARK AND ELLEN

Limp, forced smiles and waves.

THEIR POV

Eddie yells to them.

(CONTINUED)
EDDIE
Shitter was full!

INT. HOUSE - CLARK AND ELLEN

Ellen smiles sheepishly. Clark sighs.

CLARK
Have you checked our shitters, honey?

ELLEN
Clark, please. He doesn't know any better.

CLARK
He oughta know that's illegal. That's a storm sewer. It fills up with gas, pity the person who lights a match within ten yards of it.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

Todd comes out the front door in sweats. He's on his way for a run. He notices a strange odor. He looks to Clark's house.

HIS POV

Eddie smoking his cigarette, kicking the hose to keep it flowing. The RV's in the drive, Snots is tied to the manger. Eddie sees Todd. He waves.

EDDIE
Merry Christmas!

CLOSEUP - TODD

He's shocked.

EXT. HOUSE - EDDIE

Eddie leans down and picks up Clark's saucer sled. The bottom is worn clean through. He hurls it toward the RV, intending to keep it.

OMITTED

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark turns away from the window in disgust.

(CONTINUED)
ELLEN
You know, Clark, I have this
terrible suspicion that he and
Catherine don't have any presents
for their kids.

Clark recalls the conversation with Ruby Sue.

ELLEN
Rocky said something about Eddie
telling him that Santa wasn't
coming this year.

CLARK
Ruby Sue said something like that
last night. How could they not
have anything for their kids?

ELLEN
Eddie's been out of work for
close to seven years.

CLARK
In seven years he couldn't find
a job?

ELLEN
Catherine says he's been holding
out for a management position.

CLARK
Jeez, what a worm.*

INT. TOY STORE - DAY

A large, chain toy store jammed with last minute holiday
shoppers. Eddie and Clark are strolling down an aisle.

CLARK
How's the live bait business, Ed?

EDDIE
Can't complain. How're you doing?

CLARK
Not that good, actually.

EDDIE
Your company kill all them people
in India not too long ago?

CLARK
No, we missed out on that one.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CLARK (CONT'D)
(continues)
You're pretty well set so far as shopping goes?

Eddie senses that Clark knows he's been lying.

EDDIE
(after a pause)
Can't lie to you, Clark. The truth is things aren't going good at all. I said I borrowed the RV from my neighbor? It's mine. We live in it. I sold off the house and the barn and the ten acres. All I kept was a 50 foot plot and the pigs and the worm farm.

(angry)
If I had back all the money me and Catherine sent that T.V. preacher that was screwing the hockey players...

CLARK
What about the kids?

EDDIE
I sent the money to the preacher himself, his kids can fend for themselves.

CLARK
Your kids, Ed.

EDDIE
Oh, well, that's the bitch of it, Clark. I don't know what to do. We coasted into town on fumes. Gas money run out in Kankakee.

CLARK
Ellen and I want to help you give the kids a nice Christmas.

EDDIE
I couldn't do that, Clark.

CLARK
No, we insist.

EDDIE
I'm not one for charity, Clark.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

CLARK
I know that Eddie, but it's not
charity. It's family.

EDDIE
I don't know...

CLARK
If you don't tell me what they
want, I'll get the stuff on my
own.

EDDIE
Boy, this is a surprise, Clark.
Just a real nice surprise.

Eddie reaches into his pocket and pulls out a piece of
brown paper grocery bag.

EDDIE
Here's a little list.
Alphabetical starting with
Catherine. And if it wouldn't
be too much, I'd like to get
something for you, Clark.
Something real nice.

OMITTED

thru 201

EXTREME CLOSEUP - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

Ruby Sue's hand opens a door marked, DEC. 24. Behind
the paper door is a candy cane. Ruby Sue leans INTO
FRAME and licks it.

EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - MORNING

A beautiful sunrise. Except for the RV and the dog tied
to the manger and the Santa and the broken reindeer on
the curb, the house looks great.

OMITTED

thru 213

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS TREE

Gifts are placed beneath the tree.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM

A floral centerpiece is placed on the table.
C214 INT. KITCHEN - SINK
Potatoes are being peeled.

D214 CLOSEUP - ROCKY
Catherine combs his hair.

E214 CLOSEUP - ART
He ties his Christmas tie.

F214 INSERT - CHRISTMAS CANDLES
Ruby Sue lights them.

G214 INSERT - TABLE
A place is set.

H214 EXT. HOUSE - DUSK
The outdoor lights are lit.

J214 CLOSEUP - SNOTS
Eddie puts a ribbon around his neck. MUSIC ENDS.

214 INT. FOYER - FRONT DOOR - DUSK

It opens to reveal Clark and Rusty helping an elderly woman, AUNT BETHANY, and her husband, UNCLE LEWIS into the house. Rusty's following behind with their gifts. Uncle Lewis is in his late eighties, cranky, stooped, dressed in a tweed suit and sucking on a long cigar. Aunt Bethany's also in her late eighties, four and a half feet tall, wearing a well-worn mink stole, a polyester pant suit and a hat. She's taking two-inch steps, clinging to Clark.

BETHANY
Don't throw me down, Clark.

CLARK
I'll try not to, Aunt Bethany.

CLARK'S POV
Aunt Bethany is now a skeleton.

CLARK
(calls)
We're here!

UNCLE LEWIS
Say, Griz, me and Bethany figured out the perfect gift for you.

(CONTINUED)
CLARK
Gee, Uncle Lewis, you didn't have
to get me anything.

UNCLE LEWIS
Dammit, Bethany, he guessed it!

Ellen, Catherine and Francis come into the foyer from the kitchen.

AUNT BETHANY
Oh, that was fun! I love riding in cars.

Ellen helps her off with her coat as Francis and Catherine greet her.

CATHERINE
Aunt Bethany, you look so wonderful. Hello, Uncle Lewis.

UNCLE LEWIS
How do, princess.

FRANCIS
Hello, Bethany. Lewis.

Francis embraces Uncle Lewis. The rest of the family crowds into the foyer. Lewis shifts his cigar in his mouth to keep it from setting Francis's hair on fire.

UNCLE LEWIS
Watch the stinkeroo! I don't want you to burn down your wig.

INT. FOYER - RUSTY AND RUBY SUE

Ruby Sue tugs on Rusty's coat to get his attention. He looks down at her.

RUBY SUE
Who're the old geezers?

RUSTY
That's your mom and my mom's great aunt and uncle.

RUBY SUE
What's so great about 'em?

(CONTINUED)
CHRISTMAS VACATION - Rev. 4/19/89

CONTINUED: (2)

INT. FOYER

Ellen helps Bethany off with her stole. Clark tries to help Lewis with his.

UNCLE LEWIS
Get your fingers out of my armpits!

He peels off his hat and hands it to Clark. He's bald.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at Lewis curiously. Something's not right. He looks in the hat.

CLOSEUP - HAT

A gray toupee is inside the hat. Lewis has removed his hat and his hair.

INT. FOYER

Clark takes the toupee out of the hat and attempts to place it back on Lewis's head. He stands behind Lewis waiting for his opportunity.

RUSTY
Where do you want the presents, Mom?

ELLEN
In the living room. Thanks.
(to Aunt Bethany)
Aunt Bethany, you shouldn't have done that.

AUNT BETHANY
Oh, dear. Did I break wind?

UNCLE LEWIS
Jee-zuz! Did the room clear out, Bethany? Hell, no! She means presents. You shouldn't have brought presents.

Clark tries to drop the toupee on Lewis's head. He moves forward. Ellen sees him. He explains what happened in gesture.

AUNT BETHANY
Well, heavens, it isn't every day that somebody moves into a new house.

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE LEWIS
They didn't move to a new house!

AUNT BETHANY
You'll have to speak up, dear.

Uncle Lewis throws his arms in the air and heads for the living room. Clark flips the toupee, Frisbee-style at Lewis.

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

The toupee lands on his head. He looks up. He pats his head and straightens his toupee.

INT. FOYER

Clark takes Bethany's coat from Ellen and hangs Lewis's and her coats in the closet.

RUSTY
Mom?

ELLEN
Just put the presents in the living room.

But, Mom...

RUSTY

ELLEN
Not tomorrow, Rusty. Now!

AUNT BETHANY

This house is much bigger than your old one.

ELLEN
(to Aunt Bethany)
Why don't you go with Catherine into the living room and say hello to everybody?

AUNT BETHANY

Oh, sure.

Catherine and Francis help her into the living room.

RUSTY
Mom?

ELLEN

What?!

(CONTINUED)
RUSTY
This box is meowing.

Clark takes the box from Rusty. He shakes it. From inside we hear a MUTED CAT'S MEOW.

CLARK
She wrapped up her damn cat!

ELLEN
Take it in the kitchen and open it up.

CLARK
Then we'll have a cat running around.

ELLEN
You can't leave it in a box.

RUSTY
Why would somebody wrap a cat in a box?

ELLEN
She gets confused, Rusty. She's old. She and Uncle Lewis don't have much money. She takes things from around the house and wraps them up as gifts.

RUSTY
Oh, great. I can't wait to see what I got.

Eddie walks back in with a box.

EDDIE
This one's leaking.

Eddie licks his finger.

EDDIE
Mmm. It's cherry-flavored.

Ellen samples it.

ELLEN
Oh, God. It's her Jell-O mold. I'll take it. Everybody just go into the living room.

The foyer clears, leaving Ellen and Clark with their packages. Ellen's is leaking. Clark's is HOWLING.
INT. LIVING ROOM

Aunt Bethany is sitting with a fat Persian cat in her lap. Lewis, Clark and Eddie are standing at the tree. Audrey's sitting next to her.

AUNT BETHANY
I have a cat just like this at home.

Audrey forces a polite smile.

UNCLE LEWIS
Clark, that's the ugliest goddamn Christmas tree I've ever did see. What the hell did you do to it?

He reaches out and touches it.

UNCLE LEWIS
I'm glad I'm not sleeping here tonight.

CLARK
You and me both.

UNCLE LEWIS
This son of a bitch can't wait to catch fire and kill a household.

EDDIE
(sniffs)
Hmm! Boy! Do you smell that?

AUNT BETHANY
Oh, dear! I'm so sorry...

UNCLE LEWIS
The turkey, Bethany! He's smelling the turkey!

INT. DINING ROOM - CLOSEUP - TURKEY

It's a magnificent twenty-pound turkey. Perfectly prepared, perfectly presented.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks up from the turkey with delight.

CLARK
Catherine, if your turkey tastes half as good as it looks, we're all in for a big treat.

Catherine smiles sheepishly.

(CONTINUED)
EDDIE
Save the neck for me, Clark.

Clark throws Eddie a tired glance. He puts his smile back on and prepares to carve the turkey.

CLOSEUP - TURKEY
Clark puts the gleaming knife to the turkey. He punctures the hind end. A great gush of gas escapes.

INT. DINING ROOM
Everyone leans back from the table as the turkey SPUTTERS and COUGHS.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - TURKEY
The slit in the turkey skin flutters as the gas escapes.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He's leaning back. The gas runs out and the SPUTTERING STOPS. Clark leans forward and looks at the turkey.

CLOSEUP - TURKEY
The legs slowly begin to rise up on their own.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He leans back again. His look is curious and mildly frightened.

INT. DINING ROOM
Everyone leans back again.

CLOSEUP - TURKEY
The legs are standing straight up. The wings pull away from the body and extend themselves. The incision Clark made begins to expand. It tears slowly from the crotch to the neck with the sound of RIPPING CANVAS.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He's leaned back as far as he can go. His eyes are wide with alarm.

(CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - TURKEY

The skin separates like two hard, brown flower petals opening in time-lapse, exposing the breast meat. A beat and it falls from the bones in dry, dusty threads.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He fishes through the debris and comes up with a can of prepared poultry stuffing.

CLARK

Ed? Did you make the dressing?

CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He smiles.

EDDIE

I gotta confess, Clark, it's store bought. Found it in the R.V. last night. All you gotta do is pop the top off it and serve it up.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He glances down at Ellen, seated at the other end of the table.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She offers a stern, silent warning for him to keep quiet.

OMITTED

Bethany's cat approaches the Christmas tree and sniffs the needles.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark has served everyone their turkey threads. He makes an announcement.

CLARK

Since this is Bethany's 80th Christmas...

Everyone breaks into applause -- including Aunt Bethany.

(CONTINUED)
CLARK
I think she should lead us in the saying of grace. Bethany?

AUNT BETHANY
What, dear?

NORA
Grace.

AUNT BETHANY
(after a pause)
Grace? She passed on, oh, goodness, thirty years ago?

UNCLE LEWIS
Aw, for the love of God and country. She won't wear a hearing aid because she says it makes her look old.
(to Bethany)
They want you to say the grace!

Aunt Bethany shakes her head, "no." She doesn't get it.

UNCLE LEWIS
The blessing!

Bethany catches on. She bows her head. The others follow suit. She clears her throat. Several times.

AUNT BETHANY
I pledge allegiance to the flag...

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He looks up.

CLOSEUP - EDDIE
He looks at Clark.

CLOSEUP - LEWIS
He exhales loudly out his nose and strokes his forehead in defeat.

CLOSEUP - BETHANY
She continues.

AUNT BETHANY
... of the United States of America...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

Everyone joins in. They all slowly rise off their seats and put their hands over their hearts.

ALL

... And to the Republic for which it stands...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aunt Bethany's cat is playing with the Christmas tree lights. Batting them. She bites a strand and pulls. She backs up, pulling the lights off the tree.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone's eating in silence. Art picks through the overcooked food with disgust. Nora scowls at Eddie's kids' horrible table manners. Lewis power-spits an olive pit into his hand. Bethany is eating with a huge serving fork which Francis removes from her, replacing it with a conventional fork, all of which she is oblivious to. Clark takes a bite of Jello mold. Eddie feeds the dog under the table. It CRUNCHES loudly. And tastes terrible. Clark Sr. cuts Audrey's meat for her. Rusty struggles to keep Rocky out of his food. Catherine silently apologizes for her family's manners.

CLARK

I heard on the news that an airline pilot spotted Santa Claus' sled on his way in from New York.

The adults look to the kids for their reaction. Ruby Sue and Rocky smile.

EDDIE

You serious, Clark?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He gives Eddie a tired look. He takes a bite of Jello mold. He chews. It doesn't taste right. He looks down at his plate.

CLOSEUP - JELLO MOLD

In the Jello mold are little dry cat food stars.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He takes a sip of water and swishes it around his mouth.

CLARK

Bethany? By any chance, does your cat eat Jello?

(CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - ELLEN
She gives Clark a dirty look.

CLOSEUP - EDDIE
He's chewing his Jello. Crunching away.

EDDIE
I don't know about the cat, but I sure am enjoying it. Clark?
You want to load me up with a little more? It is goo-ood!

From underneath the table comes a loud, ugly DOG COUGH. Everyone but Bethany stops eating. The DOG COUGHS again. A deep, resonant crack. The DOG COUGHS again. An extremely LONG and DEEP COUGH. The force of the cough causes the dog to hit the table leg and rattle the glassware.

CLARK
Ed?

EDDIE
Yeah, Clark?

CLARK
What's wrong with your dog?

CATHERINE
(to Eddie)
Honey? Maybe the bow you put around his neck is too tight.

Eddie peeks under the table.

EDDIE
(sitting up)
He was yacking on a bone but he got it up. He's alright now.

CLARK
Maybe if you didn't feed him from the table.

EDDIE
No, Clark. He was probably just nosing around in the trash.
INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (LATER)

Trash is strewn across the kitchen floor. Snots has gotten into the trash under the sink and has spread it across the kitchen floor.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The cat continues to pull the lights off the tree.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (LATER)

Clark and Ellen are cleaning up the mess.

CLARK
I don't know why he isn't in here cleaning this up. It was his dog...

ELLEN
If you want to go in and have dessert, I'll finish.

CLARK
That's alright. When I was cutting the pie, I found half a Band-aid.

ELLEN
That must have been Ruby Sue. She was helping roll the dough. Did you find the other half?

INT. DINING ROOM - CLOSEUP - LEWIS AND BETHANY

Bethany is chewing with considerable difficulty. She swallows hard. Lewis leans back and yells to the kitchen.

UNCLE LEWIS
Griz! You're not doing anything constructive, you wanna run into the living room and get my stogie?

INT. KITCHEN

The last of the mess is off the floor. Clark is annoyed with the order from Lewis.

CLARK
Anything else I can do for you, Lewis?

ELLEN
He's an old man. This could be his last Christmas.

(CONTINUED)
CLARK
He keeps it up, Ellen, it will be his last Christmas.

He exits the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CAT

It's still chewing. It yanks its head for a little more strand.

Clark walks in and takes Uncle Lewis' cigar case from the coffee table. The lights on the tree go out. Clark looks at the tree, puzzled. He walks over to it. He bends down and plugs in the lights. The tree lights go back on. Clark starts to straighten up. He notices something.

CLOSEUP - FLOOR

The strand the cat's chewing is unplugged.

CLARK

He plugs the lights in.

There's a horrendous SCREECH from under the club chair. A tremendous electrical SIZZLE, the lights dim and then an EXPLOSION and the house falls dark.

INT. UTILITY ROOM (OR GARAGE)

Rusty holds a cigarette lighter to the circuit box. He resets the breaker and the lights go on.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark and Eddie are at the chair. The others are gathered around and behind. The room smells horrible.

ELLEN
What's that smell?

EDDIE
I think it's your chair, Ellen.

CLARK
Move it away from the wall.

ART
I told you you had too many plugs in one socket.

Clark grumbles to himself. He and Eddie lift the chair and carry it away from the wall.

(continued)
Continued:

Everyone leans forward to see what's behind the chair. There's a collective gasp.

**CLARK**

Oh, God...

**CLOSEUP - FLOOR**

The blackened, smoldering outline of a cat scorched into the carpet.

**CLOSEUP - AUNT BETHANY AND UNCLE LEWIS**

They're trying to see past the others.

**UNCLE LEWIS**

What is it?

Ellen shepherds them away.

**ELLEN**

It's nothing. Let's go finish our dessert.

Eddie tilts the chair and looks at the underside.

**EDDIE**

If this one's got nine lives, she just spent 'em all.

*OMITTED*

**B231 INT. FOYER - LATER**

**CLARK**

Dad? Can you get the door?

Clark Sr. opens the front door. Ellen walks in.

**ELLEN**

What are you doing, Clark?

**CLARK**

What's it look like I'm doing? Throwing away the chair.

**ELLEN**

Is it ruined?

**CLARK**

Honey, you and I will not outlive the stink in this piece of furniture.

(Continued)
ELLEN
What did you do with the cat?

CLARK
There's nothing to do anything with, Ellen. It blew up. Eddie found its asshole stuck to the wall, for God's sake.

ELLEN
Watch your mouth!

RUSTY
Oh, sick! I thought it was a piece of licorice Rocky spit on the wall.

EDDIE
You know, Clark, if somebody hadda got hit with that thing, it coulda put an eye out.

CLARK
Thanks for sharing that with me, Eddie.

They cart the chair outside. Ellen makes a general announcement.

ELLEN
Everything's fine now. Let's just carry on. It's tragic and distressing, but it's over.

C231 EXT. HOUSE - CURB

Clark and Eddie dump the chair on the parkway next to the Santa and the reindeer. Clark notices an odor.

EDDIE
If you wouldn't mind, Clark, I'd like to see if I can fumigate that chair. It's a good-quality item. You mind if I ask how much it set you back?

CLARK
Do you smell something?

EDDIE
Deep-fried pussy cat.

CLARK
No, it's some kind of gas.

(CONTINUED)
C231 CONTINUED:

Clark looks into the gutter.

CLARK
It's coming from the sewer.

Eddie picks up the Santa and sets it over the sewer grate.

EDDIE
That oughta take care of it.

Clark shakes his head in disgust and heads back up to the house.

D231 INT. LIVING ROOM

Uncle Lewis is alone in the living room. He's standing in front of the tree. He's lighting his cigar. He puffs furiously and he waves the flame under his stoggie. He shakes the match. It doesn't go out.

E231 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLARK

Clark has come back inside. He's putting his coat in the closet. There's a flash of intense light from the living room and a low-pitched poof! Clark dashes into the living room.

231 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLARK

He rushes in and recoils in alarm.

CLARK
Lewis!

HIS POV

Uncle Lewis is happily puffing a cigar. The quick, intense flash fire has left the tree a blackened skeleton.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's in horror.

CLARK
The tree!

UNCLE LEWIS

He looks up, oblivious to the raging fire storm behind.

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE LEWIS
(cranky)
What're you yelling about?

CLARK
He points.

CLARK
Look what you did to my tree!

INT. LIVING ROOM - UNCLE LEWIS
He catches the signal and turns to look at the tree. He
turns around. His backside's in flames.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
Horror upon horror.

CLOSEUP - UNCLE LEWIS
He's looking wide-eyed at the burning tree.

INT. LIVING ROOM
Clark rips a curtain down and dashes to Uncle Lewis.

CLOSEUP - SMOKE DETECTOR
It GOES OFF.

INT. KITCHEN
The women are cleaning up the kitchen and getting desert
ready, Christmas CAROLS are playing on the RADIO, the
TV's BLASTING for Aunt Bethany's benefit. Ellen hears
the SMOKE DETECTOR.

ELLEN
Is that the smoke alarm?

NORA
(listens)
Sounds like it.

ELLEN
Lewis probably lit a cigar.

OMITTED

INT. LIVING ROOM
The tree has burned out. Clark slowly unwraps Lewis from
the curtain.

(CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - UNCLE LEWIS

His toupee's in his face, his cigar's crushed but still smoldering.

UNCLE LEWIS
Griz, you're on my priority shit list.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The tree is a blackened skeleton. The ceiling is blackened. The few gifts that were placed around the bottom of the tree are charred. The ornaments and lights are fried. The carpet around the tree is melted.

The family, minus Clark, is in the living room, looking at the burned tree.

ART
It was an ugly tree anyway.

UNCLE LEWIS
At least it's out of its misery.

Ellen takes Rusty and Audrey into the foyer.

ROCKY
(to Eddie)
Will Santy Claus still come?

EDDIE
(thinks)
That's a good question, Rock. Catherine? If the tree's...

CATHERINE
Of course he'll still come, Rocky.

UNCLE LEWIS
If he's smart, he'll stay well clear of this joint. It's a death-trap from stem to stern.

OMITTED

INT. FOYER - ELLEN AND KIDS

Audrey and Rusty are confused and upset.

AUDREY
Mom? The tree burned down, the cat blew up...

(CONTINUED)
ELLEN
I know, honey, but there's nothing we can do about it.

RUSTY
Dad's gonna flip out, right?

ELLEN
Nobody's going to flip out. We're going to have a wonderful Christmas. We just have to be patient. There's nothing to be upset about.

The DOORBELL CHIMES. Clark stomps in from the kitchen. He grabs the front door handle and whips it open.

INT. HOUSE - DOORWAY
A DELIVERY BOY in a blue uniform is standing at the door. He's holding the door knocker that's been torn off the door in his hand. The door wreath with blinking lights is dangling around his arm. His other hand is poised over the doorbell, index finger pointed. He's shocked.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He barks at the Boy.

CLARK
What the hell do you want?!

CLOSEUP - DELIVERY BOY
He's horrified.

DELIVERY BOY
I have a delivery for Clark W. Griswold. I was supposed to deliver it yesterday but it fell between the seats and I didn't see it. I'm sorry.

He holds up an envelope.

CLOSEUP - CLARK
His angry expression withers as he sees the envelope.

INT. FOYER
The Delivery Boy hands Clark the envelope.

DELIVERY BOY
Merry Christmas.

(CONTINUED)
CLARK
(looking up from the envelope)
Merry Christmas...

He closes the door and stares at the envelope.

CLARK
I can't believe it.

ART
What is it? A letter confirming your reservation at the nuthouse?

CLARK
It's from my company.

ELLEN
Your bonus!

CLARK
My bonus!

He grabs Ellen and hugs and kisses her. He brings Audrey and Rusty into his embrace.

NORA
Open it, Clarkie.

EDDIE
Clark? I hope it's a fortune.

Clark starts to sob. Smiling, sobbing, gushing emotion.

UNCLE LEWIS
I never saw such a sight, jeezuzzz!

CLARK
I thought... I never knew... I was afraid...

ART
You gonna bawl all over it or are you going to open it?

CLARK
I was going to wait until tomorrow to tell you all this but what the heck. With this bonus check...
(holds up the envelope)
... I am putting in a swimming pool!

There's a moment of stunned silence followed by a gleeful outburst.

(CONTINUED)
238 CONTINUED: (2)

CLARK
That's it, the big one.

ELLEN
Open it, honey.

CLARK
I'm sorry if I've been a little short with everyone. I've been waiting for this check. To make sure the pool goes in as soon as the ground thaws, I had to lay out the money in advance. Until this little miracle arrived, I didn't have the money to cover the check.

AUDREY
Tear the sucker open, Dad!

He tears open the envelope slowly and deliberately, teasing himself and the others. He brings the envelope to his lips and blows, inflating it. With great flair, he reaches two fingers into the envelope and snares its contents. He withdraws a green slip of paper. He waves it in the air.

CLARK
If there's enough left over, I'll fly you all in to help us dedicate it!

EDDIE
Clark? I can't swim.

CLARK
I know.

He turns the slip of paper over and looks at it.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

His face freezes. He stares at the check. He lets out a strange, high-pitched giggle. Then he turns deadly serious.

The family stares at Clark, unable to understand his sudden change of spirit.

ELLEN
Clark? What's wrong?

Clark doesn't answer. He just stares at the piece of paper.

(CONTINUED)
ELLEN

Honey?

He doesn't respond.

ELLEN

Is it bigger than you expected?

Clark shakes his head, no.

ELLEN

Smaller?

Clark shakes his head again.

ELLEN

Well, what is it?

CLARK

A one-year membership in the Jelly-Of-The-Month Club.

ELLEN

Oh, God, Clark.

The family is knocked into silence by the news.

EDDIE

(innocently)

That's a gift that keeps on giving the whole year.

CLARK

That it is, Edward. That it is, indeed.

* Ellen tries to calm Clark down, fearing another explosion.

ELLEN

Clark? I'm sorry.

* The family backs away as Clark's temper rises.

CLARK

If this isn't the biggest bag-over-the-head punch in the face I ever got. Goddamnit! Listen, if any of you are looking for last minute gift ideas for me, I have one. I'd like Frank Shirley, my boss. Right here. Tonight.

(CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He looks at Clark as an idea seeps into his thoughts.

CLARK (O.S.)
I want him brought from his happy
holiday slumber over there on
Melody Lane with the other rich
people and I want him brought
right here.

INT. FOYER

Clark's eyes are wide with anger.

CLARK
With a big ribbon on his head. I
want to look him in the eye and
tell him what a cheap, lying,
no-good, rotten, four-flusing,
low-life, snake-lickin',
dirt-eatin', in-bred, overstuffed,
ignorant, pus-oozing, blood-
sucking, dog-kissing, brainless,
dickless, heartless, hopeless,
fat-ass, bug-eyed, stiff-legged,
spotty-lipped, worm-headed sack of
monkey shit he is!
(pause)
Hallelujah! Holy shit! Where's
the Tylenol?!

Clark storms out of the room into the kitchen, leaving
the family silent.

CLOSEUP - EDDIE

He grins.

CLOSEUP - ELLEN

She clears her throat.

ELLEN
How about some eggnog?

O.S. a CHAINSAW kicks in.

EXT. HOUSE

Clark comes out of the garage with the CHAINSAW ROARING.
Ellen and all the kids hurry out the front door.

(CONTINUED)
239 CONTINUED:

AUDREY
He's got that look, doesn't he?

RUSTY
We should have gone to Hawaii.

ELLEN
Turn that thing off and get in the house!

Clark ignores her and heads for the corner of the house.

RUSTY
I'll talk to him, Mom.

Rusty steps off the porch and approaches Clark.

RUSTY
Dad?

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He turns to Rusty. He has an angry look in his eyes and a chainsaw in his hands.

CLOSEUP - RUSTY
He steps back.

RUSTY
Good talk, Dad.

Clark turns from Rusty and marches across his lawn to a blue spruce on the corner of his property. He lays the chainsaw into the trunk and yells at the top of his voice.

CLARK
Tim-bar!!

240 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They're sitting in the living room having cocktails, listening to New Age Christmas MUSIC.

MARGO
Aren't you just the tiniest bit sorry we didn't get a Christmas tree? Even if they are dirty and messy and corny and cliched?

TODD
Where are we going to get a tree at this hour on Christmas Eve?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Behind them, the end of Clark's blue spruce CRASHES through their WINDOW.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Clark's washing his hands. Ellen is scowling at him.

CLARK

What?

ELLEN

Was that really necessary?

Clark plays dumb. The heat of the moment has cooled and he feels slightly foolish for his outburst.

CLARK

What?

ELLEN

Making a scene like that?

CLARK

We needed a tree.

ELLEN

May I remind you...

CLARK

(finishes her thought)

That this was my idea. No. I am well aware of it.

ELLEN

Could you keep that in mind next time you go berserk?

CLARK

I didn't go berserk. I simply solved a problem. We needed a coffin... tree. There are no tree lots open on Christmas Eve. Your uncle burned down my tree so I simply replaced it as best I could.

ELLEN

You're okay?

CLARK

Honey, I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)
Clark picks up his chainsaw off the bathroom vanity and exits.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Clark comes down the stairs. He grabs the newel post and the ornamental piece atop it comes loose in his hand. He looks at it angrily, puts it back, STARTS UP the CHAINSAW and levels the newel post in one, clean swipe.

CLARK
(loud, to Ellen)
Fixed the newel post!

EXT. STREET

The burned tree is on the curb next to the chair. The RV backs out of the driveway.

OMITTED

INT. LIVING ROOM

The new tree is up and has been hastily decorated with ornaments salvaged from the burned tree. A single strand of lights, melted, elongated bulbs, and charred tinsel. The family has reassembled in the living room. Clark walks in and places presents under the tree.

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

She perks up.

AUNT BETHANY
What's that sound?

All eyes turn to Bethany.

BETHANY
Do you hear it? A funny squeaking sound?

UNCLE LEWIS
You couldn't hear a dump truck driving through a nitroglycerine plant...

CLARK
Shh! I hear it, too.

We hear a FAINT but distinctive, HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL.
INT. LAUNDRY ROOM

Snots is locked in the laundry where he's thoroughly chewed up a full load of wash. He stops chewing. He looks at the door. His ears perk up.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The SQUEALING grows LOUDER. Everyone leans forward to listen closer.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He leans down to the tree and has a listen.

CLARK

I don't hear it anymore.

HIS POV

Thick, fresh branches with charred ornaments and a single strand of lights.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

From inside the tree. Clark's hand separates the branches as he peers into the tree. A sudden look of shock.

HIS POV

A squirrel LEAPS INTO CAMERA.

All hell breaks loose as a wild crazed, SHRIEKING SQUIRREL bursts into the room.

CLARK

Holy infant!

RUSTY

Squirrel!

People are running every which way, bumping into each other. Nora faints dead away in the middle of the room. Lewis' cigar ashes spray as he rams Clark Sr. Ruby Sue and Rocky are screaming at the top of their voices. The women are screaming. Art decks Francis on his way out. The squirrel goes up the drapes and leaps onto the couch.

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

She's oblivious to the mayhem.

CLOSEUP BETHANY'S LEGS

Befitting her age, she's sitting with her legs relatively far apart. A beat and the squirrel runs up one of her legs under her skirt.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

A puzzled look on her face. She grimaces and gives a yank on her undies.

AUNT BETHANY
Oh, my! I hope somebody got me a girdle. This one's pinching and binding something terrible.

The family's in horror as they watch Bethany.

THEIR POV

Bethany is still unaware of what's up her skirt. We can see the squirrel scrambling around her lap.

CLOSEUP - LEWIS AND CLARK

He looks up from Bethany to Clark.

UNCLE LEWIS
You can write that son of a bitch off. Nothin' goes up there and lives to tell about it.

Clark and Lewis look back at Bethany. A beat and they scream. The squirrel flies INTO FRAME.

OMITTED

INT. FOYER

Everyone's huddled in the foyer screaming and shivering in revulsion.

CLARK
Quiet! Shut-uuuuup!

The screaming dribbles out.

CLARK
We don't want it to get out of the living room! Give me a coat! Where's Eddie? He eats these goddamn things.

CATHERINE
Not recently, Clark. He read that squirrels are high in cholesterol.

CLARK
Thank you, Catherine. (MORE)
CLARK (CONT'D)
(continues)
I'll try and trap the thing under
a coat. Audrey, get me Grandpa
Art's overcoat. Rusty, go get the
hammer.

ELLEN
What do you need a hammer for?

CLARK
I'll catch it in the coat and
smack it with the hammer.

Ruby Sue screams. Francis faints.

248 OMITTED

A249 INT. LIVING ROOM

It's silent. Nora's out cold in the middle of the room.
Bethany's still sitting on the couch. Clark and Clark
Sr. tiptoe into the room.

CLARK SR.
Nora?

For whatever reason, Nora's playing dead. She lays
perfectly still.

NORA
(whispers)
Is it gone?

CLARK SR.
Nope. Just lay still. Clark?
You want to get Bethany out of here?

CLARK
Dad, do you honestly think
there's anything else the squirrel could do to her?

CLARK SR.
That's a point.

Clark steps lightly into the room. He makes a chirping
sound. There's no response.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's on full alert. Nerves tingling.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:  

CLARK

It probably got scared and ran back into the tree.

CLARK'S POV

MOVING TOWARD the tree.

BACK TO SCENE

As Clark steps over Nora, she starts to slowly get up. She lifts her butt in the air, afraid to move too quickly. As Clark passes, CAMERA GOES WITH him, REVEALING the squirrel on his back.

CLOSEUP - CLARK SR.

He sees the squirrel and yells.

CLARK SR.

It's on your back!

BACK TO SCENE

Clark screams, turns and plows into Nora, spilling her ass over tea kettle again. It's mayhem in the foyer as everyone runs in opposite directions.

INT. KITCHEN

Ellen and Rusty burst into the kitchen.

INT. DINING ROOM

Catherine crashes into the dining room table.

INT. KITCHEN

Clark flies into the kitchen.

INT. FOYER

There's a wild scramble for the stairs. Everyone runs up. Audrey runs out of the kitchen with the squirrel clinging to her head. As she passes the stairs, the squirrel leaps onto Clark Sr. and onto the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - LAUNDRY ROOM DOOR

Snots bursts through the door.

OMITTED
A251 INT. FOYER

Snots charges in from the kitchen, decking Art. In a spray of foam and spit, the DOG tears up the stairs, BARKING and SNARLING. A beat and the people that ran upstairs plow back down.

251 OMITTED

A252 INT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Everyone charges into the living room.

252 OMITTED

A253 INT. HOUSE - FOYER

The squirrel, followed by Snots, clambers down the stairs and runs into the kitchen.

253 OMITTED thru

A255

B255 EXT. MARGO AND TODD'S HOUSE - PORCH

Todd and Margo stand on the porch.

MARGO
You march right over there and slug that prick in the face!

TODD
I can't just attack someone.

MARGO
If you're not man enough to put a stop to it, I am.

She marches off the porch, heading for the Griswolds.

255 INT. FOYER

Clark cautiously comes back in. It's silent. Snots and the squirrel charge in from the kitchen. Clark grabs the door handle and whips the door open.

CLOSEUP - MARGO

She's standing in the door. Her eyes pop and she screams.

HER POV

The squirrel leaps for her face. Snots is right behind, heading for her midsection.
INT. FOYER - CLARK

slams the door.

CLARK

Gone!

INT. MARGO AND TODD'S HOUSE - FOYER

The DOORBELL RINGS. The front door opens. Margo steps in. Her face is clawed from the squirrel, the bottom half of her outfit is torn off. Her pantyhose is shredded and hanging around her ankles. Her top is clawed open.

CLOSEUP - TODD

He's horrified.

TODD

My God! What happened to you?

CLOSEUP - MARGO

She pushes the hair out of her face. She draws back and throws a mighty punch.

Todd hits the deck. Margo steps over him and heads for the stairs.

INT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - FOYER

Clark comes down the stairs in a Santa suit. Ellen and the kids follow. Catherine is behind them. Art and Francis are at the closet getting their coats.

CLARK

Where do you think you're going?

Art and Francis look up at Clark with alarm.

CLARK

Nobody's leaving. Nobody's walking out on this fun, old-fashioned family Christmas. No, no. We have a full-blown, four-alarm holiday emergency here. We're gonna press on and we're gonna have the hap-hap-happiest Christmas since Bing Crosby tap-danced with Danny fuckin' Kaye. And when Santa squeezes his fat, white ass down the chimney tonight, he's gonna find the jolliest bunch of assholes this side of the nuthouse.

(CONTINUED)
ART
You're goofy!

CLARK
Don't piss me off, Art.

ELLEN
Clark! It's over.

CLARK
Not according to Santa's watch, it's not.

CLARK SR.
Son?

CLARK
Dad? Stay out of this.

ELLEN
I think it's best if everybody just goes home before things get any worse.

CLARK
How the hell could it get any worse? Take a look around, Ellen. We're at the threshold of hell.

A258 EXT. MANSION

The RV whips out of a long driveway and hits the street on two wheels.

B258 INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN

Clark Sr. is talking to Clark.

CLARK SR.
Son, I love you, we all love you. This is a terrible night, nothing's gone right, it's a disaster, but you sitting out there singing like a lunatic only makes things worse.

Clark looks at him, feeling slightly foolish.

CLARK SR.
You're too good a father to act like this. In years to come, you want your children and your family to remember all the love you gave us and how hard you tried to make the perfect Christmas.

(CONTINUED)
B258 CONTINUED:

CLARK

I just...

CLARK SR.
You just cocked it up. It's okay. It happens. Go upstairs and put on some fresh clothes and a happy attitude.

CLARK
All of our holidays were always a mess. How did you get through it?

CLARK SR.
I had a lot of help from Jack Daniels.

CLARK
Good talk, Dad.

CLARK SR.
Good talk, son.

CLARK
Are you gonna recite 'The Night Before Christmas'?

CLARK SR.
No. It's your house, it's your Christmas. I'm retiring.

C258 INT. LIVING ROOM

The family is seated in the living room. Clark's standing at the fireplace.

CLARK
The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugarplums danced in their heads.

D258 EXT. HOUSE

The RV ROARS into the driveway and slams to a stop.

E258 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK

He continues his recitation.

CLARK
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CLOSEUP - ROCKY AND RUBY SUE

They listen intently.

CLARK (O.S.)
I sprang from my bed to see
what was the matter.

EXT. HOUSE - RV

The RV door flies open.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark steps from the fireplace as he physically interprets the poem.

CLARK
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

With great flair, Clark throws open the curtains on a bay at the front of the room.

CLARK
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave luster of midday to objects below;
When what to my wondering eyes should appear...

Clark takes a close look out the window.

CLARK
But a miniature sleigh and...
Eddie, my cousin,
A man with no brain
And my boss in his jammies
All wrapped up in chain.

INT. FOYER

The front door opens and Eddie enters with FRANK SHIRLEY.
His hair's mussed, his face is red with anger, a Christmas bow is tied tightly over his mouth to silence him. He's in his pajamas and slippers, bound wrist and ankle in dog chain. He mumbles and grumbles with rage.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The family is gathered in the doorway in stunned silence.
INT. FOYER - CLOSEUP - EDDIE

Big, proud grin.

EDDIE
Merry Christmas, Clark.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's speechless with shock.

INT. FOYER - EDDIE AND FRANK

Eddie looks at Frank.

EDDIE
You ready to do some kissing?

Frank's eyes bulge in horror.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Frank Shirley's house. The lights are on.

INT. MANSION - LIBRARY

Helen Shirley is on the phone. She's frantic.

HELEN
My husband's been abducted.

INT. GRISWOLD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

The ribbon and chain has been removed from Frank Shirley. He shakes the cramps out of his wrists.

FRANK
I've never been treated like this in my life.

ELLEN
I'm sorry. This is our family's first kidnapping.

FRANK
(to Clark)
You're fired! Where's the phone? I'm calling the police.

EDDIE
Hold your wad, there, fella. Clark didn't have nothing to do with it. This was my idea.

FRANK
Alright. He's still fired and you're going to jail!
CLOSEUP - BOOTS

Several pair of Jack boots run across the snow.

INT. GRISWOLD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLARK
No. It's my fault, Eddie.
(to Frank)
I lost my temper when I got my bonus and I said some things I shouldn't have.

Frank's confused. He thinks for a moment.

FRANK
How did you get a bonus? I cut out bonuses this year.

CLOSEUP - RIFLE

A fresh clip is slammed into an assault rifle.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clark is offended by Frank's arrogance.

CLARK
And thanks for telling us. I was expecting a check and instead I got enrolled in a jelly club. Seventeen years with the company and I've gotten a Christmas bonus every year but this one. If you don't want to give bonuses, that's fine, but when people count on it as part of their salary, what you did just plain...

RUSTY
Licks it.

CLARK
Thanks, Russ.
(pause)
My brother-in-law, whose heart is a lot bigger than his brain...

EDDIE
(sincere)
I appreciate that, Clark.

(CONTINUED)
B263 CONTINUED:

CLARK
... is innocent. I'll be more
than happy to take the rap on
this. On my behalf and on behalf
of every other employee you
rear-ended this Christmas.

CLOSEUP - FRANK

He feels guilty. He looks around the room.

FRANK'S POV

MOVING ACROSS the sad, confused, angry faces of the
Griswold family. Clark's weary face, Ellen's embar-
ragement, the children's confusion, the cold anger of
the grandparents. Small, common people who are righteous
in their innocence.

CLOSEUP - FRANK

He can't sustain his anger. His heart melts. He sees,
first-hand the people his bloodless policies affect.
After a considered pause he offers his apologies.

FRANK
Sometimes things look good on
paper but lose their luster
when you see the effects on real
folks. A healthy bottom line
doesn't mean much if to get it
you hurt the ones you depend on.
Clark? Whatever you got last
year, add twenty percent.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He's bursting with joy. He looks to Ellen, to the kids,
the rest of the family.

The family delights in the news. Ellen runs to Clark.
He lifts her off her feet.

CLARK
Merry Christmas, Ellen.

C263 EXT. STREET - POLICE CARS

Three suburban squad cars grind to a halt.

D263 INT. LIVING ROOM

Rusty holds up his hand to Clark.

(CONTINUED)
D263 CONTINUED:

RUSTY
To the old-fashioned fun family Christmas.

Clark slaps his hand. Audrey kisses him.

AUDREY
Thanks, Daddy.

Art walks over to Clark and offers his hand.

ART
Merry Christmas, son.

Clark takes Art's hand.

CLARK
Thanks, Art.

E263 EXT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - PORCH
Police officers stream into the house.

F263 INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - CLARK
He turns to the family with a huge grin.

CLARK
Hey, everybody! Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!

G263 ANGLE
Florid, sentimental MUSIC COMES UP. CAMERA PULLS BACK from Clark. OUT the WINDOW TO the lawn and two dozen police officers on the lawn. TO a street jammed with police vehicles and cops.

H263 EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - CLOSEUP - POLICE COMMANDER
He barks a sharp order.

J263 INT. HOUSE - FOYER - CLOSEUP - UNCLE LEWIS
Uncle Lewis standing at the front door.

K263 EXT. GRISWOLD HOUSE - LEWIS'S POV
A wave of officers approach the house.

L263 INT. LIVING ROOM
Lewis saunters into the living room.

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE LEWIS
Griz! You got just what you need.
More friggin' company!

CLOSEUP - CLARK
He turns to Lewis, puzzled. He looks to Frank Shirley.

CLARK
Frank? Did you call and let your
wife know you're alright?

CLOSEUP - FRANK
It occurs to him that he's forgotten to call his wife.

FRANK
(pause)
No.

INT. LIVING ROOM
The living room windows are bashed-out by rifle barrels.

M263 INT. FOYER
Cops storm in the door.

263 OMITTED
265 thru

A266 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S HOUSE - BEDROOM
Margo's in bed. Alone. There's a KNOCK on the door.

MARGO
(yells)
Go to hell, you worm!

There's another KNOCK.

MARGO
If you want to come in here,
you're gonna have to break down
the goddamn door!

The door blows off the hinges. Armed officers charge into
the room and clamor over the bed to the window facing the
Griswold house.
INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

POLICE charge the room.

OFFICER

Freeze!

The family freezes. Clark's on one foot, arms out, caught in mid-stride. Ellen, Clark Sr., Francis and Frank Shirley, are caught in a rising squat. Nora freezes adjusting her bra. Audrey's adjusting her underpants, Rusty's about to sneeze. Uncle Lewis is frozen holding a lighted match. Art is bent forward in pain. Rocky has a finger in his nose, Catherine in holding a hankie to Ruby Sue's nose, Eddie is adjusting his balls. Bethany continues to drink her eggnog. Snots is in the corner frozen in a half-seated position.

A police car pulls up and stops at the curb. A middle-aged woman, HELEN SHIRLEY, gets out. A high-ranking OFFICER greets her and escorts her to the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The police hold the family at gun point as they search the family.

CLARK

I think you've made a terrible mistake.

COP

I told you to freeze!

Clark holds his position and talks through his clenched teeth.

CLARK

May we blink?

INT. FOYER

Mrs. Shirley and the Officer walk in and cross to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSEUP - FRANK

He's frozen in semi-squat with his hand in his hair.

FRANK

Helen!

(CONTINUED)
Helen runs to Frank and embraces him.

HELEN
Thank God, you're alright!

FRANK
I'm fine. I'm just fine. There's been a big misunderstanding tonight.

OFFICER
Excuse me, would you and Mrs. Shirley like to step outside while we take care of business here?

FRANK
There's no business. I'm not pressing any charges.

What?

HELEN

FRANK
It was a mistake.

HELEN
Frank, you were kidnapped.

FRANK
I did something I shouldn't have and these people called me on it. This is Clark Griswold and his family.

ELLEN
Welcome to our home. What's left of it.

Helen is completely baffled.

HELEN
What is going on here?

FRANK
Remember how I was toying with the notion of suspending Christmas bonuses?

HELEN
You didn't...

FRANK
I changed my mind. I'm reinstating all the bonuses.

(CONTINUED)
HELEN
Of all the cheap, lousy ways to
save a buck. I'm ashamed of you,
Frank.

FRANK
You're not going to fire me, are
you, honey?

CLOSEUP - ROCKY
He's standing at the window looking out.

ROCKY
Look!

Everyone turns to Rocky.

A283 INT. FOYER
Rocky runs into the foyer and dashes outside.

B283 INT. LIVING ROOM
The family, the police, Frank and Helen exit.

C283 EXT. FRONT YARD
Rocky stands on the lawn, looking up at the sky. Every-
one comes outside and gathers around him.

D283 EXT. SKY
A red dot of light, low in the sky.

E283 EXT. FRONT YARD - CLOSEUP - CLARK
He looks up at the light with a grin.

CLARK
That's the Christmas star.

A snowflake falls.

CLARK
And it's all that matters tonight.
Not bonuses or gifts or turkey or
trees. It means something
different to everybody and now I
know what it means to me.
F283 EXT. HOUSE - DOORWAY

Aunt Bethany's standing in the doorway. She begins to recite softly.

AUNT BETHANY

'Yea, Lord, we greet thee
Born this happy morning
Jesus, to Thee all glory
Giv'n Word of the Father.'

G283 EXT. HOUSE

Clark takes Ellen's hand. Ellen takes Audrey's hand. Audrey takes Rusty's hand. Rusty takes Nora's hand. Nora takes Francis's hand. Francis takes Frank Shirley's hand. And so on until everyone is holding hands.

H283 OMITTED

283 EXT. CLARK'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD

Aunt Bethany begins to sing.

AUNT BETHANY

'Now in flesh appearing
O come let us adore him
O come let us adore him
Venite adoremus Dominium
Christ the Lord.'

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

He's standing next to the Santa on the curb. He has a cigar in his mouth. He strikes the match on the Santa's ass and lights his cigar.

UNCLE LEWIS

That ain't the friggin' Christmas Star, Griz. That's the light on the water treatment plant.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

A terrible thought crosses his mind.

CLARK

Sewer gas!

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

He finishes lighting the cigar and shakes the match.
CONTINUED:

- CLOSEUP - CLARK

He makes a move for Lewis.

CLARK

Don't drop that...!

CLOSEUP - LEWIS

He flips the match over his shoulder.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - MATCH

drops in the sewer. There's a FLASH of light. An EXPLOSION.

The explosion blows the Santa and the reindeer and the Merry Christmas sign into the sky. Everybody hits the deck. Bethany remains standing.

CLOSEUP - BETHANY

She looks into the sky.

EXT. SKY - BETHANY'S POV

The Santa rockets into the air, glowing and sparking.

EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - BETHANY

looking to the sky. She puts her hand to her heart and begins to sing again.

AUNT BETHANY

'And the rocket's red glare
The bombs bursting in air
Gave proof through the night
That our flag was still there...'

Everyone puts their hands to their hearts and joins in.

ALL

'Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave.
For the land of the free
And the home of the brave.'

AUNT BETHANY

Play ball!

CLOSEUP - RUBY SUE

She looks up into the sky.
EXT. SKY - RUBY SUE'S POV

The Santa and the reindeer and the sign arc across the full moon.

EXT. HOUSE - CLOSEUP - RUBY SUE

A huge smile.

RUBY SUE

Uncle Clark?

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at Ruby Sue.

CLOSEUP - RUBY SUE

She points to the sky.

RUBY SUE

Santa Claus ain't bullshit! He's real.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks at Ruby Sue and gives her a wink.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Frank and Helen, the police, the grandparents, Eddie and his family, Rusty and Audrey are crowded into the living room. The grandmothers are serving coffee. The police commander's playing the piano and the officers are singing, in less than wonderful voices, "I SAW MOMMY KISSING SANTA CLAUS."

EXT. HOUSE - YARD

Clark's still in the yard looking up at the Christmas star. Ellen puts her arm around his waist.

ELLEN

Merry Christmas, Clark.

She kisses his cheek and heads back to the house. Clark continues to look at the star.

CLOSEUP - CLARK

He grins triumphantly.

CLARK

I did it!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He laughs to himself.

Snots returns from the squirrel chase and saunters over to Clark. Clark looks down at him.

HIS POV - CLOSEUP - SNOTS
Snots looks up at him, sucks, COUGHS, and...

CLOSEUP - CLARK

... Spits. A troubled thought crosses Clark's mind.

CLOSEUP - CLARK'S LEG
Snots puts his paw between Clark's feet.

290 EXT. HOUSE - PORCH

Ellen stands in the doorway.

ELLEN
Clark? Are you coming in?

291 EXT. YARD - CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks down at Snots and then to the door.

CLARK
In a couple minutes, honey.

292 EXT. HOUSE PORCH - ELLEN

She goes inside and closes the door. The lights on the house go off.

293 EXT. YARD - CLOSEUP - CLARK

He looks down at Snots.

CLARK
Merry Christmas, Snots.

FADE ON Clark's smiling face. THE SINGING DOGS' rendition of "JINGLE BELLS" COMES UP and...

FADE OUT.

THE END
POST-CREDITS

FADE IN:

294 INT. TODD AND MARGO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

They're in bed.

TODD
It's over, honey. Griswold had his Christmas. Nothing else can happen. It's quiet, it's peaceful, all is calm.

MARGO
Will you just hold me?

TODD
Of course.

He folds her into his arms.

TODD
Let's go to sleep and let visions of sugarplums dance in our heads.

MARGO
I'm so tense.

TODD
Sweetheart, if we don't go to sleep, Santa Claus won't come.

MARGO
You're so cute.

A long beat and the SANTA, the REINDEER and the LIGHTS CRASH through the ceiling into the bedroom.

FADE OUT.