

DASH AWAY MALL

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FADE IN:

EXT. MALL - NIGHT

A big box covered in multicolored Christmas lights, middle of the Arizona desert.

TRISTAN (V.O.)

Christmas. That special time of year when you put differences aside in favor of warm wishes and hot chocolate. Unless you live in the desert. Unless you're the new kid in town with the misfortune to have a job in retail customer service. I hate Christmas.

INT. MALL - NIGHT

A huge holographic head of Santa Claus fills the center court.

A small group of business men and women beam at it.

SANTA'S HEAD

Ho, ho, ho! And what do you want for Christmas boys and girls?

BUSINESSMAN

Huge profits!

BUSINESSWOMAN

Shareholder confidence!

Lights come up, VERONICA KILLDEER (42) steps into the glow of Santa's Head.

VERONICA

Isn't he fantastic? Designed and brought to you by the ultimate Christmas attraction, Rod Ulsi! Silicon Valley's loss is our gain.

ROD ULSI (35) steps from behind a curtain.

He looks just like Santa's head without a beard.

ROD

Thanks Veronica, I just used a spatial light modulator to create an oblique projection onto the focal point of normal--

VERONICA

Whatever. Ladies and Gentlemen of the board, this is how we out-do the bigger malls this Christmas season: with a bigger, better Santa kids can't wait to meet.

TRISTAN STYLES (17) and ZEKE NIELSEN (18) hang Christmas decorations on tall ladders nearby.

ZEKE

Pay attention, Styles, I'm destroying you here. I've done sixty-one tinsel wreaths to your fifty-three.

TRISTAN

Not everything's a competition, you know. Besides, Christmas in Arizona's retarded. Back in Stockbridge, they make over a whole town to look like a Norman Rockwell. You can't just throw strings of lights on the cactus and call it--

ZEKE

Rockbridge? Where's Rockbridge?

TRISTAN

Stockbridge. Where I'm from.

Zeke hangs another wreath.

ZEKE

Sixty-five, Rockbridge. Better hustle!

AMY KILLDEER (17) emerges from Santa's Workshop.

TRISTAN

Hold a sec, who's she?

She approaches the group around Veronica.

Tristan and Zeke gawk.

ZEKE

Nice!

TRISTAN

I saw her first.

ZEKE

You did not.

Businessmen and women nod to each other.

BUSINESSMAN

I think we have a winner, Ms. Killdeer. Looks like the mall's finally in capable hands.

AMY

(to Veronica)

Mom, the Insta-Snow machine's still fritzzy, and I don't have enough volunteers to staff the Village. If you want me to be ready tomorrow, I can't just--

VERONICA

May I introduce my daughter, Amy? She's home from boarding school for the holidays. Christmas is her favorite, you know, everything has to be perfect.

The businesspeople frown at her.

AMY

(waves to businesspeople)

Hello.

VERONICA

It's a time for family, and I've promised Amy we'll make it the best Christmas ever.

TRISTAN

She's incredible!

He stares, almost falls off the ladder.

ZEKE

Offsides, Rockbridge. You don't even like Christmas, there's no way you're gonna score with this chick over me. You can't found a relationship on lies.

TRISTAN

(sotto)

You can't found it on an unimaginative jock, either.

ZEKE

What?

Tristan hangs a wreath.

TRISTAN

Don't you have a football rehearsal?

ZEKE

(hangs last wreath)

Seventy-Five! Touchdown, Styles. I am outta here.

(slides down ladder)

Go ahead, try it, she'll still end up with me. Game on! Later, chump.

Zeke kicks Tristan's ladder, lets him hang.

TRISTAN

(screams)

Veronica, Amy and the rest look. Zeke's gone.

AMY

(gasps)

VERONICA

Tristan! Get down from there!

TRISTAN

Right. No problem! He's got the looks, and the luck. But I'm from the home town of Norman Rockwell, nobody can fake it better than me. Game on.

He jumps to a line of tinsel.

TRISTAN (CONT'D)  
She needs workers? Super New  
England kid Christmas team go!

He swings, catches a string of lights wrapped around a  
column.

The lights pop and spark, unwind from the column, lower him  
to the ground.

TRISTAN (CONT'D)  
I'm alive!

AMY  
I don't believe it.

TRISTAN  
It's a time for belief. My heroic  
decorating skills're needed  
elsewhere, so I'll just vanish  
mysteriously into the--  
(off looks)  
You know, after I put these back.

VERONICA  
(to businesspeople)  
Moving on.

EXT. MALL - DAY

Heat waves obscure the mall, follow shoppers inside.

INT. MALL - DAY

Tristan enters in a homemade elf costume.

He finds Amy.

AMY  
You're an elf.

TRISTAN  
Yeah, maybe. I love Christmas. I'm  
the Christmas-iest Christmas elf  
you ever met!

AMY  
We don't choose our talents.

Tristan avoids her gaze.

TRISTAN  
I heard you needed help.

AMY  
Aw, how sweet of you. Follow me.

TRISTAN  
(sotto)  
Sweet!

Tristan follows her to,

INT. SANTA'S VILLAGE - DAY

A line of fussy kids wait to meet Santa's Head.

Amy leads Tristan past them, through the gate into a world of fake snow hills and oversized candy canes.

Rod fusses with the Insta-Snow machine, which CHUGS and SPITS.

ROD  
(grumbles, kicks it)

Tristan stops short. Zeke's already there - in a much more professional elf suit.

AMY  
Zeke volunteered just before you did!

TRISTAN  
(sotto)  
Oh, no!

ZEKE  
What's this, Styles? Did you actually make your own elf outfit?

TRISTAN  
Yeah, where did you get--

Zeke slaps the back of Tristan's head.

ZEKE  
The company provides uniforms, nimrod! Tell me you didn't stay up all night.

TRISTAN  
Of course not, I got an hour--

ZEKE  
You're lower than those snot-nosed  
two year olds.

Tristan takes off his shoes.

TRISTAN  
I'll get changed.

BIG JIM (O.S.)  
No time!

BIG JIM (32) lumbers over. Amy, Zeke and Tristan fall silent.

BIG JIM (CONT'D)  
Before frivolity commences, I want  
to remind you Christmas is all  
fuzzy puppies and such, but keep an  
eye out for shady characters -  
especially kids - around Santa's  
village. Remember Big Jeff, the  
security guard before me?

(Tristan mouths the words  
along with him)

Big Jeff once tackled a shoplifter,  
broke his own leg and the  
merchandise.

(Amy raises her hand)  
Yeah, what?

AMY  
So, he cost the mall more than if  
he'd let the guy go.

BIG JIM  
Sure, sure. But he was legend  
afterwards.

Big Jim heads over to the line of kids.

TRISTAN  
(whispers to Amy)  
Mall security guards need to make  
names for themselves. They're  
afraid no one respects them 'till  
they do a crazy.

Amy giggles, Tristan makes a face at Zeke, Zeke fumes.

BIG JIM  
 (opens gate)  
 Have at it, kids!

Kids storm into Santa's village, stop short when Santa's Head appears!

SANTA'S HEAD  
 Ho ho ho! I am Claus the great and  
 powerful! Who're you?  
 (kids gape)  
 Who are you?

KIDS  
 (scream)

Kids climb over each other to get away from Santa's Head.

AMY  
 Oh, no! Don't let them leave! They  
 haven't even gotten to know him  
 yet!

TRISTAN  
 I don't think he's got the right  
 mythology!

ZEKE  
 (brandishes peppermint  
 canes)  
 Hey look, kids! Candy!  
 (kids stop, wary)  
 Meet Santa in my line, get a candy  
 cane! First one's free!

Kids flock to Zeke.

TRISTAN  
 (eyes Amy)  
 Sure, go in his line! Or get a free  
 candy cane and the secret to bigger  
 presents in mine!

Kids stampede to Tristan.

SANTA'S HEAD  
 Ho ho ho!!! Merry Christmas!!

Kids freak.

Zeke tries to stem the tide.

ZEKE

Two candy canes, and even bigger presents!

TRISTAN

Three candy canes!

They run to Tristan.

He doles them out.

ZEKE

Four candy canes, final offer.

The kids stampede to Zeke.

AMY

I'll get more candy canes.

She exits.

TRISTAN

Unlimited presents!

The kids run in every direction, mouths full of candy canes.

Some try to run to Tristan, but Zeke ICES the ground with the Insta-Snow machine nozzle!

SANTA'S HEAD

What do you want for Christmas?

Kids try to run, slip, fall, trample each other!

ZEKE

Unlimited presents and candy canes!

The kids run to Zeke, Tristan lassoes one with the belled harness from Santa's sleigh.

TRISTAN

Don't' go with him, he just wants to corrupt your teeth!

Zeke horseshoes a tinsel wreath at Tristan, it pins his arms.

He falls over and the kids swarm him, go through pockets for candy.

TRISTAN (CONT'D)

I hate Christmas.

## SANTAS' HEAD

Stop it!! Line up in an orderly fashion or so help me I will bury you in coal! Do any of you even know what coal smells like?

Pandemonium!

Rod comes out from behind the curtain, gestures to Zeke and Tristan.

## ROD

Look, I run the controls, take pictures and mind the Insta-Snow machine doesn't overload. My job's hard enough, don't make it worse!

## ZEKE

That's rich, we're not "Claus the great and terrible!"

Tristan, hands still pinned by the wreath, ties the bells on Zeke's elf shoes together.

## ROD

Listen, punk, I'm--

Amy arrives with more candy canes.

Zeke, Tristan and Rod leap to in different directions.

Zeke trips over his shoes, falls into Rod.

They crash into the giant Christmas tree, which falls through the curtain, lands on the controls.

## SANTA'S HEAD

(goes berserk!)

## KIDS

(scream)

Kids lose minds!

Boys, parents, kids, and Rod collapse in a heap.

Veronica comes out of her office, sees the chaos.

## VERONICA

What's this ruckus? Amy? Explain yourself!