

CROSS COUNTRY CHRISTMAS

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INT. MCCARTHY HOUSE - MORNING

It's just past 6am and the sun is about to rise. COLE, (11), wakes up karate chopping!

COLE
COWABUNGA! IT'S CHRISTMAS!

He's rocking a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles onesie, with a matching headband. Cole leaps out of bed smiling.

INT. MCCARTHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Cole comes flying down the stairs with his siblings, KATRINA (9) and DAVID (13). They bee-line it to the small TREE next to the raggedy fireplace, in awe at the lack of presents.

Then they go crazy.

Tossing boxes. Shredding wrapping paper. Ripping bows. It's the worst Christmas. Oversized clothes. Old video Games. Hand me down toys. A kid's worst nightmare.

Their parents APRIL (30's) and KEN (30's), stumble down the rickety stairs. They look as old as the house. All the furniture is run-down, and the tree is littered with cheap ornaments. They sit on the lumpy couch, half-awake, exchanging bad gifts. They're disappointed and it shows.

Ken removes a retro VHS TAPE RECORDER from behind the couch, and hands it to April. She reluctantly hits: RECORD

Katrina forces a smile playing with dolls, as Cole and David play MARIO KART on their Wii. Cole wins a heated battle, and as he celebrates he notices a bulge in his stocking...

He rises from the ground and approaches the fireplace.

VHS RECORDER POV:

Cole sticks his hand into the stocking. He digs around, then starts to pull his hand out --

His eyes go wide at the sight of --

A LUMP OF COAL

WIDE SHOT - LIVING ROOM

April, Ken, Katrina and David burst into laughter as Cole holds the COAL. They point and howl relentlessly as we --

CUT TO:

SUPER: 1 YEAR LATER

INT. WESTFIELD SOUTHCENTER - EVENING

TICK-TOCK, a clock on the wall reads 6:07PM as--

We PULL BACK to reveal the main entrance -- decked to the halls for Christmas, as shoppers flood the stores.

ANGLE ON:

Ken, Cole and Katrina exit Macy's. They walk past a DICK'S SPORTING GOODS with an elaborate window display.

COLE

Dad, check out that Burton!

Cole spots a TRICKED-OUT BLUE SNOWBOARD in the window.

COLE (CONT'D)

Now THAT'S a snowboard.

KEN

Not for a \$1,000 it isn't. There ain't nothing wrong with the one you got.

Cole sighs as Ken's phone buzzes. He answers. As they approach Santa's Workshop --

COLE (V.O.)

It's been eleven months, thirteen days, fifteen hours, seven minutes, and thirty two seconds since last Christmas. And this year...I'm gonna stuff Santa's Stocking.

Cole mean mugs Santa as Ken wraps up the call --

KEN

(to Katrina)

You ready to meet, Santa?

KATRINA

Yeah!

COLE

That's not the real Santa.

KEN

Of course it is, Cole!

Ken gives him a stern look to stop talking.

KATRINA

You're a hater. That's why you were on the naughty list last year.

COLE

I wasn't on the naughty list! One of those elves must've screwed up. And this year, I'm staying up all night, no matter what.

KEN

Oh yeah?

COLE

I wanna make sure he fixes his mistake from last year. I think a few presents might've got lost.

KEN

Santa never loses a present, son. That's why he's Santa.

COLE

Then why did he give me that lump of poop?

KATRINA

Cause you're naughty.

An ELF signals it's Katrina's turn. As she hops on Santa --

KEN

Coal isn't poop, Cole. It's Santa's way of telling you to be better next year. He told me all about it when he was eating our cookies.

COLE

You talked to Santa?

KEN

Of course I talked to him. All parents do. How do you think he gets the inside information?

COLE

Did you tell him I want to be like Sting when I grow up?

KEN

Are The Police the greatest band ever?

Cole smiles ear to ear.

EXT. KEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ken pulls into his driveway.

ANGLE ON: April's CAR.

Parked by the curb. She exits with an old SNOWBOARD. David's behind her, his headphones glued into his ears. As she shuts the door, Ken, Katrina and Cole come running up.

KEN

Whew! It's cold! Sorry, we're late.

(to David)

What's up David?

Katrina hugs April. David gives his Dad a fist bump --

DAVID

(to Ken)

What's up, pop?

(to Cole)

Move, peasant.

David shoves Cole and walks inside.

KEN

(to April)

Wanna come in for a minute? Buy you a cup of coffee?

APRIL

Henry's waiting in the car so...

KEN

Why doesn't he come in?

COLE

Cause, dad, he says you'll just end up saying something sarcastic.

KEN

Not on purpose. Could be nasty or unpleasant. Whatever sticks...

APRIL

(sarcastically)

...Anndddd we're back.

Ken waves, flashing a big shit-eating grin at HENRY, (40's).

ANGLE ON:

Henry in car, a balding, boring, lazy man, wearing busted glasses and an ugly jacket he bought at Macy's 3 years ago.

Clearly no love lost here. He forces a half-hearted wave.

APRIL (CONT'D)

I gotta run.

KEN

Just a minute, just a minute. Come on.

April gives in. Henry is not pleased.

APRIL

(to Henry)

Two seconds...

(to Katrina)

Go wait with Henry, sweetie.

Katrina gives Ken a bear hug.

KATRINA

(kisses Ken on the cheek)

Buy, dad! Love you!

KEN

Love you too, Kat. Watch your step. It's slippery.

Katrina slips -- quickly regains her balance.

KEN (CONT'D)

What'd I tell ya?

Katrina smiles and hops in the backseat.

INT. KEN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ken takes off his coat as April sets down presents in the foyer. Cole heads into the living room to look at the tree. As they walk and talk through the house --

KEN

So...

APRIL

So...

KEN

You going to your dad's for Christmas?

APRIL

Thinking about spending it with Henry's family.

KEN

Ah -- Christmas at the asylum. How charming...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ken and April enter from the kitchen as Cole approaches --

COLE

Not seeing a lump in my stocking --

KEN

Relax buddy, nobody gets coal two years in a row. Have a feeling Santa's gonna be extra good to you this year.

COLE

Henry doesn't think Santa's coming this year.

KEN

Well, Henry's ears are too big for his head.

Henry honks the car horn.

COLE

He's like a genius, dad. He's a doctor.

KEN

He's not a doctor, he's an optometrist. Take your jacket off. You did plan to stay, right?

Cole reluctantly gets comfortable.

EXT. KEN'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

Henry lays on the car horn. April opens the front door --

APRIL

I'll be right out --

Henry angrily taps his watch and adjusts his glasses.

INT. KEN'S CONDO - FOYER

Ken shuts the door as April enters.

APRIL

I just want to tell Cole --

KEN

Did that loser tell Cole Santa Claus lost our address?

APRIL

What? No...Last week Cole came home from school crying because some sixth grader told him we were the reason he got coal last year.

KEN

What?

APRIL

He told Cole that if things were different between us and we weren't separated Santa wouldn't have put our family on the naughty list.

KEN

Are you serious? He told him we're all on the naughty list?

APRIL

Sure did. And so you know Henry, he took him for pizza and --

KEN

-- And he told him we're definitely on the nice list.

ANGLE ON:

Cole listens in from the living room, hidden behind a wall.

APRIL

Well, all he said was that Santa sometimes forgets presents for people who were naughty the year before. That it was more of a reminder to be extra good, so you never get coal again. Like a: less-is-more attitude this year.

KEN

Henry is definitely worthless. And who are you to tell Cole there's no visit from Santa this year? I think if we're gonna crush our son's dreams -- I should be a part of it.

APRIL

Yeah, well your phone never works though, does it, Ken?

KEN

Stop...Stop my voicemail was full one time --

APRIL

Sure, it was that one time for his soccer match, then that one time for his karate class...and who could forget that one time for his birthday when you forgot how to get to the mall?

KEN

Oh please, I'm running a start-up, plus google maps took me to the wrong one. Happens all the time with similar zip codes.

APRIL

Listen, all we're trying to do is manage Cole's expectations.

KEN

Great idea. You wouldn't want him to get his hopes up for the most wonderful day of the year.

APRIL

Uh-huh. This from the guy who took 10 hours putting together a lego pirate ship.

KEN

You leave legos alone. Those directions are worse than Ikea.

APRIL

Work always come first, and we're always second.

Cole enters in a hurry.

COLE

Why do you guys always have to yell?

KEN

I promise we're not yelling. It sounds a lot like fighting doesn't it? Dogs even.

(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)

(makes barking noises)

The trouble is Henry didn't leave any cookies out last year, and now he fears he may be on the naughty list. Probably won't get any presents either.

APRIL

(to Ken)

Nice, Ken.

COLE

It seems kind of silly to think Santa would skip our house.

KEN

Exactly!

COLE

When he comes down that chimney, I'll be waiting.

KEN

I don't doubt it. Want some company? We can set up the tent!

COLE

Tents are for toddlers, dad. I'm a big kid now.

KEN

What are you talking about? Tents are awesome and I don't act like a toddler.

APRIL

Well...

KEN

Maybe it's time you go. We don't want to keep Dr. Doofus waiting.

Ken walks into the kitchen, adjacent to the hallway.

APRIL

(to Cole)

Come here.

Cole walks over and wraps his arms around his mom.

COLE

Do I really gotta stay all week?

That one stung. April shares a reassuring look with Ken.

APRIL

Listen, you and your daddy are gonna have a great snowboarding trip with your cousins, okay?

COLE

But I don't want to share a room with Reggie. If he has rocky-road ice-cream, he'll shart in the bed.

APRIL

You'll be fine.

COLE

Two scoops and we're dead. Why can't they ski in Chicago?

APRIL

They're missing a great game to be with you guys. Court-side seats are very expensive, so you be nice. Did you remember to pack your puzzle?

COLE

Yeah.

APRIL

Which bridge is it this time?

COLE

The one in Brooklyn.

APRIL

Your really on a New York kick these days. How come you love their bridges so much?

COLE

Their bridges bring people together from all over the world. It's the center of the universe, mom.

April looks at her son with an endearing smile.

APRIL

Such a smart boy...How did I get so lucky? I miss you already.

COLE

Will you pick me up Christmas morning?

APRIL

Yes, sir.

COLE

Like early, early? Like still dark
outside but it's morning, early?

APRIL

Of course.

COLE

We're talking sunrise, you're here?

APRIL

(laughing)

You'll be fine. I'll see you in a
few days. I love you.

COLE

I love you too, mom.

He squeezes her tight and gives her a kiss on the cheek.

APRIL

You be a good boy, okay? Merry
Christmas!

April exits.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM - LATER

David plays Mario Kart. Cole enters in his onesie pajamas.

COLE

David...

David gets distracted and loses the match. He turns to Cole.

DAVID

Don't you know how to knock,
sausage baby?

COLE

(looks down at his tummy)
Mom said my baby fat is almost all
gone.

DAVID

Tell that to your onesie. Now
speak. You have ten seconds before
I throw you down the stairs.

COLE

Can I use your hotspot on the trip?
Their Wi-fi sucks and Reggie never
shares the password.

DAVID
I wouldn't let you use my hotspot
if we were stranded on Mars!

Cole's eyes go wide. He starts to head out. David relents.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Hey, diarrhea breath --

COLE
(turns back to face him)
What?

DAVID
It's his birthday.

COLE
Huh?

DAVID
The Wi-fi password is Reggie's
birthday. Same as the man-cave code
in Chicago. Now leave in silence.

COLE
Thanks, David.

DAVID
What'd I just say!?

David throws a water bottle at Cole as he hurries out. A small grin flashes over David's face.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ken is fast asleep on the couch as Cole watches NORAD'S Santa Tracker on his laptop. He opens FACEBOOK in another tab. Goes to his friends' list. Finds his cousin Reggie.

INSERT: Reggie's Birthday.

Cole takes a screenshot. He AirDrops the image to his CELL. A commercial for Santa Con comes on --

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Tired of traveling from mall to
mall in search of the real Kris
Kringle? Say you'd do just about
anything to meet him? Well...in two
weeks the world's largest gathering
of Santas hits New York City!

Various clips featuring Santa Con and the Knickerbocker Hotel come on showcasing the event. It's a big, old resort.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Join us at the Knickerbocker Hotel
for an evening of cookies, candy,
and celebration, where you'll have
a chance at meeting the real Santa!
Tickets on sale now!

Cole sneakily grabs Ken's phone. He holds up his dad's head to unlock the home screen. It doesn't work. Tries again. Same thing. He finally gets Ken's face to sit up straight and -- it works. Cole releases him, and Ken's neck snaps back and lands in a pillow. A devilish grin takes over Cole's face.

He pulls up APPLE PAY and buys one ticket to Santa Con. He tosses Ken's phone into the couch, and pulls out his own CELL, snapping pictures of Ken's digital wallet.

COLE

Kris Kringle knows better than to
skip my house. We have unfinished
business...

He then takes a picture of Ken's Driver's License, and makes reservations for the Knickerbocker Hotel.

COLE (CONT'D)

(singing)

*You better watch out...you better
not cry. You better not pout I'm
telling you why --*

CUT TO:

INT. COLE'S ROOM - LATER

Cole crosses off days on the CALENDAR that lead to December 24th. On that date is a picture of Santa with a red "X" over his face and a tear streaming down his cheek.

COLE

(singing)

Cole McCarthy is coming to town!

MONTAGE BEGINS:

MARIAH CAREY'S: *All I Want For Christmas is You* cues up.

Cole tiptoes into the KITCHEN. Hops on a chair to reach the CUSS CUP on top of the fridge, finally finagles it down.

He enters his room and stares at a framed puzzle of Gothic Bridge hanging above his bed. His hands draw out a battle plan on a large sheet of paper.

He blows up a kid-size INFLATABLE DUMMY.

He ties a string to a snow globe and attaches it to the knob of his door, fills a duffel bag with clothes, fireworks, Nerf Guns, the cash from the cuss cup, binoculars and his lucky guitar pick. He records expressions into his iPhone. Uploads them to his computer. He attaches a zip-line from his bedroom window to his tree-house out back. Cole pens a letter. Licks the envelope closed.

He takes his home run bat off the wall, unclips the false bottom, shaking out the maps for his upcoming trip, then spreads them across the floor. As he goes over them he pulls out his Cell turning off the "find my location" in settings.

MONTAGE ENDS

EXT./INT. HOUSE - MORNING

All quiet on the home front.

The sun shines bright. A light clicks on in Cole's room. We PUSH IN through the window as it opens. Cole stands there, backpack on, ready to go.

COLE

This is it. Don't get scared now.

He looks up at the zip-line attached to his window. He puts bike handlebars on the line and leaps out! He flies down the zip-line into his treehouse and lands with a thud.

EXT. KEN'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Cole comes around the side of the house in front of the garage, punches in a code and the door opens. WE SEE an electric scooter. There's no turning back.

EXT. BRIDGE/SEATTLE - DAY

Cole floors it over a bridge on his scooter, smiling.

INT. CANDY STORE - DAY

Cole runs through a MOM & POP style candy store stuffing his backpack with an assortment of different candies.

COLE
This is the breakfast of kings!

As he rips open a REESE'S --

INT. KEN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

David rips open a bag of pop-tarts and plays video games. Ken makes eggs and toast in a hurry. Clearly late for work.

KEN
Alright Cole, breakfast is on the table -- I'll be home late --
(to David)
Pizza money is on the fridge. Make sure your brother eats, David.

DAVID
Got the dog food ready, dad.

EXT. KEN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The garage door is open, but Ken doesn't notice. He locks the front door and rushes to his car in the driveway. He throws his pick-up truck in reverse, and takes off.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE NEEDLE

The fog rolls off the iconic Space Needle.

Cole parks his scooter and gazes up at it.

SEVERE UP ANGLE

At the scope and size of the monument.

REVERSE

On Cole.

Holding binoculars with a smirk.

COLE
Whoah...

We FLY UP the building to the top floor. Cole leans face first on the glass peering down at the city.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOPOP MUSEUM - LATER

Cole pulls up in front of the museum and parks his scooter.

INT. MOPOP MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Cole bounces from room to room popping spree's into his mouth as he goes through the exhibits.

He hunts ghouls as a ghost buster in the "*Infinite World of Science Fiction*" room --

Fights with light sabers in the "*Fantasy Hall of Fame*" --

Gets scared to death in the "*Thrill of Horror*" film exhibit and runs out panting --

GUITAR GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

He rounds a corner trying to catch his breath, then stops. He looks up in awe at the Guitar Gallery.

COLE

That's what I'm talkin' about.

He takes a breath, then walks in. His jaw glued to the floor.

INT. GUITAR GALLERY - CONTINUOUS - COLE

Spins around the room taking it all in. One guitar in particular calls his name. He checks to see if anyone is around, lifts the guitar from its stand, then strums. As the sound fades out, cheers fade in...

EXT. DREAM AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

ANGLE ON: CROWD

Chanting Cole's name. Pleading for him to start the show. We PUSH through the crowd to the stage where WE SEE a P.A.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The P.A. makes their way down a hall as the crowd roars. We follow them around a corner and stop in front of a door.

INT. GREENROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door flies open and we see --

Cole, in all his rock glory wearing sunglasses, a bandana and biker vest with his name on the back. He's surrounded by groupies downing a bottle of chocolate milk.

P.A.

We can't hold them off much longer!

COLE

We'll go on, when we go on...

P.A.

You've got to go on now!

Cole rips open a pixie stick and dumps it into his mouth --

COLE

Let's rock.

Cole exits the Green Room and takes the stage with his band. Girls from the crowd scream as "I Wanna Rock" plays. Cole and his band perform the Twisted Sister hit. The song comes to an end as the crowd starts to chant --

CROWD

We love Cole! We love Cole!

END DREAM SEQUENCE**INT. GUITAR GALLERY - CONTINUOUS**

A SECURITY GUARD shakes him --

SECURITY GUARD

We heard you kid. I said: where are your parents?

Cole finally snaps out of the dream.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

You deaf or something? I said where are your parents?

Cole freezes. He wants to speak, but the words just don't come out. He drops the guitar on the Security Guard's foot. Then high tails it out.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Ow! Hey, stop! Get back here!

INT. MOPOP MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

The guard chases after Cole through the pop culture riddled venue. Cole dodges a stroller -- hops a bench -- slides under a table, then ducks into the Heroes and Villains hall.

SECURITY GUARD
I said stop, you little punk!

HEROES AND VILLAINS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Security Guard flies into the hall then comes to a halt. He scans the room for Cole but he's nowhere in sight. As he takes off down the hall WE SEE Cole dressed as Woody from Toy Story. He drops the hat and runs in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOPOP MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Cole bursts through a set of EXIT doors. Leaps down a flight of stairs and takes off running. He rounds a corner -- spots his scooter -- hops on.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Cole coasts into a charging station. Parks. Runs inside.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION

Cole looks around the massive lobby --

COLE
Now we're rollin'.

HIS POV

A grand, Art-Deco inspired lobby with a granite ceiling, cast stone ornamentation and circular clerestory windows.

COLE
I'm going on a little road trip.
How's New York this time of year?

CLERK
Pretty chilly.

The Clerk types in the travel information.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Okay, that'll be one-hundred and
ninety-seven dollars and thirty-
seven cents. You paying cash or
credit?

COLE
Hold on, I got a promo code for
that.

Cole pulls out his cell and shows the Clerk.

COLE (CONT'D)
It was in the online edition of the
paper this morning.

She smirks at him and recalculates the cost.

CLERK
With the promo it comes to \$150.

COLE
No problem.

Cole reaches into his pocket and pulls out crumpled up cash.

CLERK
(as she takes the money)
Are you traveling all alone?

Cole freaks for a second, but hides it well, then says --

COLE
Mam, I'm eleven years old and can
barely see over the counter. You
think I could travel alone? By bus?
(then)
No way, Jose.

CLERK
Well, where's your mom?

COLE
She's shopping for presents.

CLERK

What about your brothers and sisters?

COLE

They're all grown up.

(then)

I'm pretty much an only child.

CLERK

What about your dad?

COLE

(motions to businessman)

He's on a call right now and I'm not allowed to interrupt him. Says it's rude. So he sent me over here.

Cole waves to the Businessman who "dropped" the five dollars. The Businessman smiles and waves back.

COLE (CONT'D)

He gave me some cash and told me to come talk to the pretty teller in window 3 with the great style.

(motions to socks)

Your elf earrings are really cool.

The Clerk glances up at her Christmas themed earrings and can't help but smile. She prints two tickets to New York.

CLERK

(handing the tickets)

Have fun in the big apple.

COLE

Merry Christmas!

CUT TO:

EXT. KEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ken's car pulls in the driveway. He gets out and heads in.

INT. LIVING ROOM

David is glued to the TV still playing video games. Pizza boxes and paper plates are strewn about on the coffee table. Ken enters. Takes off his coat. Tosses his keys in a bowl.

KEN

You winning?

DAVID
That even a question?

KEN
It is when we play Mario Kart.

DAVID
In your dreams old man.

KEN
(laughs)
You guys get enough to eat?

DAVID
(motions to kitchen)
Took the pepperoni solo with all
the breadsticks. Think there's some
barbecue chicken left over there...

Ken grabs a slice and sees it's barely been eaten.

KEN
Cole sick or something?

DAVID
You know I don't talk to the orphan
when I'm gaming, dad.

KEN
That pizza's barely been touched.

DAVID
Nerds don't eat like us. He's been
in his room all day. Think he's
asleep.

Ken cracks open a beer and heads upstairs.

INT. COLE'S ROOM

It's dark. There's a figure in the bed. We hear soft snoring.
A wire runs from under the bed covers to the closet door to
the door to the room itself.

CU. DOOR KNOB

The wire is tied to the doorknob. It's taut.

INT. HOUSE STAIRWAY/HALLWAY

Ken quietly makes his way upstairs eating a slice.

He comes into the hallway and crosses to Cole's room. He listens at the door. WE HEAR THE SNORING.

CU. DOORKNOB

Ken slowly turns the doorknob, pushing the door open a crack.

HIS POV

The door opens and the figure-like lump in the bed moves. He smiles and closes the door.

INT. ROOM CLOSET

The closet door is open. The wire from the bedroom door is strung over the top of the closet door. A snow-globe is attached to the end of the wire and it's resting on a golf club. As the bedroom door closes, the snow-globe lifts up off the golf club and the KID SIZE DUMMY in the bed goes back down to its original position.

CU. COLE'S COMPUTER

PRO TOOLS is open. Little SOUND EFFECTS are lighting up to the rhythm of the snoring. It's all simulated.

INT. HALLWAY

Ken listens at the door for a beat. He smiles with affection.

EXT. KEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

A beautiful sunny day.

INT. KEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

KEN

Cole, David, breakfast is ready!
Get it while it's hot.

Ken takes the waffles out of the oven and sets the plates with scrambled eggs. David enters and snags a piece of bacon.

KEN (CONT'D)

You're brother, up yet?

DAVID

Hopefully he stays asleep and misses the trip. It'd be nice to hit some real runs this time.

KEN

Be nice to your brother. You only got one.

DAVID

Don't remind me.

Ken walks over to the bottom of the stairs. Shouts --

KEN

You alive up there, Cole?

Still nothing.

KEN (CONT'D)

Gotta leave in the next hour if we're gonna beat your uncle.

Ken begrudgingly makes his way up the stairs, yawning.

INT. HALLWAY, COLE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ken knocks on Cole's bedroom door. Starts to enter --

KEN

Cole...earth to Cole. You awake?

INT. COLE'S ROOM

As Ken says this, Cole's Computer lights up --

CU. COLE'S COMPUTER

PRO TOOLS turns on. It's filled with expressions Cole recorded from the night before.

KEN'S POV

The lump in bed, tossing. The strings out of his POV.

KEN

It's time to get up, buddy.

The recording "clicks" on and WE HEAR --

COLE (O.C.)
I'll be down in a bit, dad. Gonna
get dressed now.

KEN
Hurry up! No way we're bunking with
your cousins again. I'm hopping in
the shower. Food's on the table.

Ken exits and heads back downstairs. As he closes the door,
the Dummy rolls back to its side.

INT. KEN'S CONDO - LATER

Ken comes downstairs with a towel around his neck.

KEN
This ship sets sail in ten! We want
the bonus room this year, we gotta
move! You better be packed...

LIVING ROOM

David plays Halo, shouts back --

DAVID
Already done, old man! I say if
he's not down in five, we leave
him.

KEN
Shut-up, David.

He walks into the kitchen -- Cole's food is untouched.

KEN (CONT'D)
(shouts)
Cole, did you fall back asleep?

He pours a cup of coffee. About to take a sip, but stops.

KEN'S POV

The cuss cup is missing from on top the fridge.

An ALARM BEEPS

Ken walks over to the security panel: GARAGE DOOR OPEN

EXT. KEN'S GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

We follow Ken as he enters the garage from his laundry room. He scans the room. Everything seems to be in place except --

The SCOOTER

A charging wire dangles from the ceiling.

KEN

Oh shit.

INT. KEN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - KEN

Running up the stairs to Cole's room -- swings the door open.

DAVID (O.S.)

Where's the fire, pop?

INT. COLE'S ROOM

The INFLATABLE DUMMY pops up from the bed.

COLE (V.O.)

Be down in a sec, dad! Just getting packed...just getting packed...

As the Voice Memo skips Ken's eyes lock in on the computer.

KEN

No, no, no, no...

He crosses to the laptop and sees the recordings. His eyes dart to the Dummy, then to the elaborate wires running along the ceiling, then to the zip-line hanging out of the window.

KEN (CONT'D)

Oh, Cole...

Ken shuts the laptop, and is about to leave when he notices something on top of the dresser...

ANGLE ON:

An ENVELOPE labeled: MOM & DAD. Ken picks it up.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Ken, April and Henry talk to a POLICE OFFICER.

POLICE OFFICER
What's the boy's name?

Cole.

APRIL

Cole.

KEN

APRIL (CONT'D)
C-O-L-E. No a.

POLICE OFFICER
When was the last time you saw him?

APRIL
(motions to Ken)
Night before last, when I dropped
him off.

POLICE OFFICER
When did you notice he was missing?

KEN
This morning, when he didn't come
down for breakfast. David said he
never left his room yesterday.

POLICE OFFICER
He didn't see him all day?

KEN
When David's plugged in, all he
sees is the game. After I got out
of the shower, I saw his waffles
hadn't been touched, so I went
upstairs to check on him, and
that's when I found the note...

The Police Officer picks up the note off his desk.

POLICE OFFICER
(studying the note)
Has the child ever run away before?

APRIL
No.

KEN
Never.

POLICE OFFICER
And last year was the first time he
ever got coal?

KEN
Uh-huh.

APRIL

He was very challenging last year.

POLICE OFFICER

This letter tells me he really believes in old St. Nick. He's on a mission to find him and confront him even if that means traveling all the way to the north pole.

APRIL

He's been upset with Santa since last year and thinks this whole thing actually happened.

HENRY

Ken, what was the last thing you and Cole did before you went to bed night before last?

Ken thinks hard.

KEN

(sarcastically)

We shared a pan of triple fudge brownies, had a few white Russians, played with my knives, TP'd a few houses. Scoured Tinder for women...

April is not amused.

KEN (CONT'D)

We watched a movie!

HENRY

What movie?

KEN

Uh...Showgirls.

(then)

Scrooged, folks! Come on!

HENRY

And did Santa *really* bring him coal last year?

KEN

This is stupid. Officer, we need to be out there looking for him.

POLICE OFFICER

All units have already been notified. We're gonna do everything we can to find him.

(MORE)

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Odds are, he's in downtown. It's highly unlikely he'd be somewhere else.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

A luxury BUS flies down the interstate.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Packed with passengers.

ANGLE ON:

Cole approaches the DRIVER and inspects the dashboard --

COLE

Hi, I'm Cole McCarthy. Thanks for helping me surprise Santa with my list. Did you know his sleigh travels faster than a Boeing 747? How fast does this bus go? Where you headed after New York?

DRIVER

Kid, do me a favor and go sit down.

COLE

Can it handle off-roading? Does it have NOS?

DRIVER

NOS? No kid, this isn't the Fast and Furious.

COLE

Swear on your kids.

DRIVER

How do you know my kids?

COLE

I don't. How old are they?

DRIVER

You're an inquisitive little shit, ya know that?

COLE

If inquisitive is good, then I'm it.

DRIVER

Your list to Santa must be very detailed.

COLE

You should've seen last year's. Figured I should hand deliver it after the whole coal mix-up.

DRIVER

Santa gave you real coal?

COLE

He's a no good, yellow-snow-eating bag of tricks.

DRIVER

(laughing)
Cole got coal?

COLE

He sure did.

DRIVER

(laughing)
Sounds like you were being bad, and made the naughty list...

COLE

I promise you I didn't. Why would he bring some stuff I wanted...and coal? Doesn't make sense.

DRIVER

Neither does standing after the driver asks you to sit down, but that's probably why you were on the naughty list.

COLE

I was on the naughty list cause I don't sit down on buses?

DRIVER

No. You were on the naughty list because you don't follow directions, and from where I'm sitting, this isn't the first time.

COLE

Well, Santa Claus was not very good to me. Plus, my mom told me, I was on the nice list.

DRIVER

(laughs)

You're not, cause you're being bad. Now, please sit down.

Cole takes a breath.

Begrudgingly sits in the passenger seat next to the Driver.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

So, what'd your dad, say?

COLE

He said Santa called him when he was working late about six months before Christmas, and said to tell me to start being a good boy or I wouldn't get any presents.

(then)

I think they're working together.

DRIVER

Of course they are! How else would Santa get the inside information?

COLE

Did you ever get coal?

DRIVER

Me? Nah. I was always somewhere between good and okay. Never naughty.

COLE

What about your kids?

DRIVER

Don't think so. It's been awhile since I've seen them, but when I was there, they never got coal.

COLE

How come you don't see them anymore?

DRIVER

I'm not welcome.

COLE

At home?

DRIVER

You're always welcome at home. I'm not welcome with my wife.

(then)

A few years back, we had an argument over presents. I'd just been laid off and didn't have much money. I lost my temper and I said I didn't want to face my kids like that. She said if I didn't want to be there, then I should go, and we haven't spoken to each other since.

COLE

What about your kids?

DRIVER

We text sometimes. Not often.

COLE

If you miss them, why don't you go see them?

DRIVER

(beat)

I'm afraid if I show up, they won't open the door.

COLE

How do you know?

DRIVER

I don't know. I'm just afraid they won't.

Cole gives him the once over.

COLE

No offense, but aren't you're too big to be scared?

DRIVER

I'm 6'5" and still hate rollercoasters. You're never too big to be scared.

COLE

That's true. I've always been afraid of slides.

(MORE)

COLE (CONT'D)

They're dark, there's bumpy plastic stuff that hurts your back when you go down, and there's no safety rails. They've bothered me for years.

DRIVER

Slides are like that.

COLE

Then I made myself go down one the last time we went on vacation, and I realized it's not so bad. All this time I've been worried about it, but if you close your eyes, it's no big deal.

DRIVER

What's your point?

COLE

My point is, you should call your wife and go be with your kids.

DRIVER

What if she won't talk to me?

COLE

At least you'll know for sure. Then you won't have to be scared anymore. I don't care how scared I am, I'd pick up the phone. Especially at Christmas.

DRIVER

You don't know my wife...

COLE

It's not like she kicked you out. You left on your own, right?

DRIVER

Yeah. I did.

COLE

Okay then. After we stop in Minnesota, you should call them. I know they miss you, and all the presents.

The Driver smiles, he has a newfound respect for Cole.

DRIVER

Ya know, you're not half bad, Cole
McCarthy.

COLE

That's what I been saying!

They both share a laugh as we --

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

The Officer hangs up a phone call.

POLICE OFFICER

Merry Christmas...
(to Ken & April)
Nothing. His location settings were
turned off last night on his cell.

Ken and April nod in disappointment.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Have any recent pictures of him?

April pulls out her phone. Ken reaches back for his wallet.

KEN

I have one in my wallet.

APRIL

His instagram handle is @coleworld.

She hands the Officer her phone. As he scrolls through I.G. --

KEN

(pulls out picture)
That was from Big Bear last year
when we were all together.

ANGLE ON:

A family photo with everyone in snow gear. Cole in the front.
April and Ken share an uncomfortable glance. Henry notices.

KEN (CONT'D)

(unlocks phone)
Have a few more, here...

Ken hands the Officer his phone. APPLE PAY is open --

OFFICER
 (inspecting phone)
 Says here you made a purchase using
 Apple Pay last night?

KEN
 What? I didn't buy anything --

OFFICER
 (scrolls)
 One ticket to Santa Con at the
 Knickerbocker hotel in New York
 City.

The Officer hands the phone back to Ken.

KEN
 My phone was in between the pillows
 on the couch this morning...
 (thinks)
 Last night Cole was looking at my
 phone when we were watching movies.
 Said he was paying for games. Cole
 must've used my Apple Pay.

POLICE OFFICER
 Do you have other credit cards
 saved on your phone?

KEN
 Credit cards, gift cards, bank app
 login...

POLICE OFFICER
 We'll notify the phone company and
 bank immediately. If your son has
 access to your digital wallet we
 can get a location on him, when and
 if uses it.

APRIL
 (shakes head in disbelief)
 No, no I don't think Cole even
 knows how to use a digital card.

SMASH CUT TO:

INSERT: C.U. DIGITAL CARD BEING SCANNED ON A CELL PHONE
 Apple Pay card that reads: KEN J. MCCARTHY.

INT. MALL OF AMERICA, TWIN CITIES GRILL - DAY

Cole buys a fancy cheeseburger and fries at a restaurant.

COLE
(to himself)
Whoah. It really worked.

A WAITRESS gives him a suspicious look. Cole relaxes, smiles. She hands the PHONE back to him and Cole maneuvers his way through a sea of shoppers carrying his food tray.

The MALL is packed wall-to-wall for the holidays.

He's in awe of the roller-coasters, giant lego models, and the Nickelodeon experience. He gets spun around for a moment and bumps into --

BRODY, (22), decked out in old snow-boarding gear.

BRODY
I got ya, little dude --

Brody catches the tray before it falls, hands it to Cole.

BRODY (CONT'D)
Those fries smell, bomb.

COLE
They're my favorite. Want some?

BRODY
I'll snag a couple.
(grabs fries)
Happy holidays, bro!

Brody wanders off with his friends as Cole sits down to eat.

EXT. MALL OF AMERICA - CONTINUOUS

Cole's luxury BUS is parked outside the Mall. The Driver's hand hovers over the "Home" name on his phone. He takes a deep breath, then presses the "Call" button.

DRIVER
(beat)
Hey, baby girl...Daddy misses you
too...Is your mom around?

INT. MALL OF AMERICA, LOG CHUTE - CONTINUOUS

Cole floats past various assortments of scenery as he comes up on Paul Bunyan, fitted with a Santa Jacket and oversized hat. He pulls out his Nerf Gun, FIRING.

BANG!

Paul Bunyan takes a dart to the face. Cole smiles, then plummets down a forty foot drop as water sprays all over.

INT. MALL OF AMERICA, SHARK TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Cole walks through an underwater tunnel as sharks swim over the top of him. So close you can see the razor sharp teeth.

EXT. MALL OF AMERICA - CONTINUOUS

The Driver wraps up his call.

DRIVER
...yeah, I'd really like that
too...I'll see you soon.

He hangs up smiling ear-to-ear. His mind-races. Suddenly he has an idea. He unlocks the bus. Opens the undercarriage.

INT. MALL OF AMERICA - CONTINUOUS

Cole enters the Sponge-bob Squarepants Rock Bottom Plunge rollercoaster. As the RIDE ATTENDANT straps him in, Brody plops down in the seat next to him. He notices Cole --

BRODY
Little dude! What's up?

COLE
Oh, ya know. Just hanging.

BRODY
Love that. This ride is sick!
Tallest one they got.

COLE
Tallest? How tall?

The coaster starts moving. As they rise up the incline --

BRODY
Like 100 feet. Plus there's a
vertical loop and heart-line roll.

COLE

Cool...

Cole has no idea what any of this means.

BRODY

We're gonna go beyond vertical.

COLE

Beyond vertical? What's that --

But before Brody can answer, the rollercoaster launches down the track into a series of twists and turns!

COLE (CONT'D)

AHHHHHHHH!

BRODY

Woooo!!! This is intense!

The coaster hits two loops, back-to-back, and during the second flip Cole starts smiling. He loves every minute of it. As they approach the big drop, the coaster settles for a beat and Cole sees a giant POSTER hanging from the rafters.

ANGLE ON: A POSTER OF STING: Live in Concert

Cole's eyes light up as the coaster climbs higher and higher.

COLE (CONT'D)

Sting's playing here?! No way!

BRODY

He brought the house down last night! Even did a few Police songs.

(impressed)

You listen to Sting?

COLE

I'm from Seattle, rock n'roll is my life.

BRODY

Right on. I been traveling with the tour since summer. Orlando, Vegas, here...next stop is Chicago.

COLE

You just fly all over?

BRODY

Never. That's what my roadrunner is for. Now get ready --

As Brody says this the coaster peaks, then drops --

EXT. MALL OF AMERICA, PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The Driver rifles through bags until he finds his suitcase buried in the back. Cole approaches --

COLE
Making room for presents?

DRIVER
Not exactly, kid. Looks like I'm headed home.

COLE
Home? We still got like a thousand hours before we get to New York.

DRIVER
I'll never forget you, Cole.

The Driver loads his bag into a waiting Uber.

COLE
You're leaving? Now? What about the bus? Can you do that?

DRIVER
Told my boss it was a medical emergency, so I'm for sure making the naughty list.

COLE
(realizing)
You called your family?

DRIVER
Couldn't have done it without you.

The Driver gets in and rolls down the window.

COLE
What about Santa Con? How am I supposed to get to the north pole?

DRIVER
Whatever will be, will be. Trust the elves. Follow the stars.

As the Uber pulls away --

DRIVER (CONT'D)
You're inquisitive, remember!?

COLE
I don't even know what that means!

Cole chases after the Uber through the parking garage as --

INT./EXT. V.W. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Brody swerves around a turn unwrapping a chicken parmesan sandwich.

Cole runs down a ramp from the opposite direction as Brody takes a bite and the chicken drops to the floor.

BRODY

Come on, Brody! Not the parm...

He bends over trying to grab it. Almost has it but can't reach. He takes his eyes off the road for a split second reaching with all his might. He grabs it.

The Uber swerves almost spinning out to avoid him --

COLE'S POV:

Brody's Van headed straight at him. He freezes --

COLE

Ahhhhh!

INT./EXT. V.W. VAN

Brody's head pops up just in time to see Cole. He slams on the brakes, but it's too late --

CRACK!

The van gives Cole a love tap sending him to the ground.

ANGLE ON: COLE

Rolling around on his back like a turtle on his shell. His winter coat makes it impossible for him to stand up.

BRODY'S POV:

Throws the door open, scrambling to help Cole to his feet.

BRODY

You okay, little dude?

COLE

I'll live. This coat is like a parachute with football pads.

Brody helps Cole stand up.

BRODY
What are you doing out here?

COLE
I was trying to convince my bus
driver to ditch his family for
Christmas, but he up and left me.

BRODY
(laughs)
Why would you do that?

COLE
Cause I gotta get to the north
pole. Now I got no ride.

The van door swings open. Two BANDMATES exit. ZIGGY and
DAMIEN both in their 20's wearing Sting T-shirts.

ZIGGY
That's a long ways out.

BRODY
Does Greyhound even go to the north
pole?

DAMIEN
Heck yeah it does. My sister showed
me last year on that Santa Tracker.

COLE
Exactly. Gotta get to New York
first, though.

ZIGGY
What's in New York?

DAMIEN
Santa Con, bro! It's where the real
Santa goes before the big day.

COLE
Finally! Somebody who speaks my
language.

ZIGGY
Why don't your parents just take
you?

COLE
They're busy with their other kids
I'm not sure are related to me.

ZIGGY

I think my siblings are aliens too.

BRODY

So, what are you gonna do now?

COLE

Try and find a way to New York.

BRODY

Well we're headed to Chicago if you want to hitch with us. Lots of ways to get to N.Y.C. from there.

COLE

What's in Chicago?

BRODY

Sting's next show of the tour!

ZIGGY

After the concert we're playing a little gig in downtown.

COLE

You guys are a band?

BRODY

(laughs)

You know it. We're the Three Wise Men! I'm Brody Melchior, that's Zach Gaspar, we call him Ziggy, and that's Damien Balthasar.

Cole has no clue who they are.

BRODY (CONT'D)

The Police Cover-band kings of the east...

Cole is still confused.

BRODY (CONT'D)

That's okay, I thought you might've heard of us. We had a few Soundcloud hits last year...

ZIGGY

(sings)

Roxanne -- you don't have to put on the red light...

DAMIEN

(sings)

*Every little thing she does is
magic, everything she do just turns
me on...*

BRODY

We do them with a Reggae twist.
Peaked in the top 500 on Spotify...

COLE

These are remixes?

BRODY

Yeah, we...ya know put our own spin
on some of the bigger hits from the
80's.

DAMIEN

Sold out seven venues last year.

ZIGGY

Mostly dive bars, but still...

COLE

In Chicago?

BRODY

No Hoboken. Very big in Jersey.
Yeah, they love us out there.

COLE

And you'd give me a ride?

BRODY

Sure we will. Why not? You're on a
mission right?

COLE

A ride to Chicago?

DAMIEN

Sure, ya know it's Christmas time.

COLE

Thank you! Thank you!

BRODY

If you don't mind a little guitar
playing...

COLE

I can shred, Brody. Little hands
move quicker on the strings.

BRODY
Welcome to the Roadrunner my man.

Cole hops in the retro van. Damien piles in behind him.

COLE
(sniffs)
Hey, Brody -- what's that smell?

Brody quickly conceals a bag of top grade WEED under a seat.

BRODY
Oh, just herbs and spices...

ZIGGY
For cooking and...um...

DAMIEN
Meditation.

BRODY
Yeah. Meditation. We're very
spiritual.

COLE
Oh okay. My Aunt Carol must use the
same herbs.

Ziggy and Brody share a funny glance in the front seats.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. APRIL'S CAR - NIGHT

April stares out the window longingly as Henry drives. He holds her hand as they turn down Ken's street.

APRIL'S POV:

A cheerful FAMILY builds a snowman in their front yard. The DAD lifting the SON up to stick the carrot in place. The MOM packs a snowball throwing it at the daughter. SPLAT.

They laugh as they launch into a snowball fight.

ANGLE ON: APRIL

Smiling to herself, thinking of Cole.

INT. KEN'S CONDO - NIGHT

David and Katrina watch *HOME ALONE* on the TV. She creates an Instagram post. Ken's in the background talking on the phone.

KATRINA

What if he fell into a lake?

DAVID

Then he's frozen dumb.

KATRINA

Don't say that, David.

DAVID

That's what he gets. Nobody told him to run away. He's acted like a punk all year and this time he got caught with his pants down.

KATRINA

He's so weak and useless. Don't you think he's scared?

DAVID

The little turd can use a few days road tripping.

KATRINA

You're not worried at all?

DAVID

No. For two reasons. A. He has the internet. And D. Santa didn't make him disappear last year like I asked, so he must be looking out for the little rat.

KATRINA

New York's really far away, even *if* you have internet.

DAVID

Bet you \$10 and a stocking stuffer he doesn't make it past Iowa.

KATRINA

Make it twenty.

DAVID

Done.

Katrina uploads her post to Instagram. It's Cole's YEARBOOK PORTRAIT. He smiles goofily. The hashtag: **GOT COLE?**

EXT. V.W. VAN - NIGHT

The Roadrunner flies down the highway.

INT. V.W. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Cole, Ziggy and Damien rock out playing guitars, singing classic rock songs as Brody drives.

GROUP

(singing)

*Take me down to the paradise city
where the grass is green and the
girls are pretty --*

His phone buzzes -

COLE POV

"MOM" pops up on his screen. He stares at it a beat, then presses decline. Brody notices in the rearview mirror. Off his concerned look --

EXT. KEN'S HOUSE

Through the foyer window we see April on the phone.

INT. KEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The cell goes straight to voicemail.

COLE (V.O.)

Hi, you got Cole...

(a beat)

*Psych! I'm on Christmas Vacation!
Leave me a message and I might call
you back! Later!*

BEEP.

She hangs up. Ken approaches.

KEN

Any luck?

APRIL

(shaking her head)

Keeps going straight to voicemail.

(then)

You think he's okay?

KEN

He's a tough kid. If anyone can survive on their own, it's Cole.

The house Phone rings. Ken answers. David mutes the T.V. Henry and Katrina sit up on the couch.

KEN (CONT'D)

Hello...

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)

Is this Mr. McCarthy?

KEN

Yes it is.

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)

We've found Cole.

KEN

Just now?

APRIL

What's he saying?

KEN

(to April)

The police found, Cole.

APRIL

Where?

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)

He was last seen at the Mall of America in Minnesota.

KEN

(to April)

He's in Minnesota.

HENRY

Minnesota?

DAVID

He went to the mall?

KATRINA

The land of a million lakes?

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)

He used your Apple Pay at Cadillac Ranch, then for the theme park.

KEN

Well, I'm sure he was hungry, and he loves rollercoasters.

APRIL

He did what? What's he saying?

KEN

(into phone)

Hold on a sec officer, one sec --

(to April)

He used my credit card to buy food
and go to the Nickelodeon
experience.

KATRINA

Awesome.

April approaches Ken. Puts her ear next to the phone.

APRIL

Is he still there? Is he with
security?

KEN

(into phone)

Does security have him?

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)

No. Police are trying to find him.

Ken shakes his head "no". Katrina opens a YOGURT cup.

APRIL

Damn it.

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)

Get to Minnesota as soon as you
can.

KEN

We're on the next flight out.

Ken hangs up. Crosses to the hall closet. Starts packing.

KEN (CONT'D)

(to April)

The restaurant manager called the
police after seeing Cole was by
himself.

APRIL

He must be so scared, Ken.

KEN

I'm going to the Twin cities.

APRIL

Well, I'm coming with you.

KEN

(motions to Henry)

And leave the kids with Lurch? I don't think so.

HENRY

It's not a problem, Ken. I'll be here for them during this confusing time.

KEN

I appreciate that, Henry, I really do, but you got more important things to worry about; you know? Like: where you're gonna get more shoes after the hobbits leave town?

INSERT: Henry's abnormally small FEET in hideous SHOES.

APRIL

That's enough, Ken.

KEN

(to April)

Does Frodo know how to watch kids?

HENRY

We'll be fine.

Katrina runs over to Ken and hugs him.

KATRINA

Is Cole, gonna be okay, daddy?

KEN

Of course he is.

She nods, squeezing Ken tight.

KEN (CONT'D)

(to David)

Take care of your sister.

DAVID

Sure, pop.

Ken gives David a fist bump and exits in a hurry.

APRIL

(to Henry)

You need anything, call.

HENRY
 (looking at his shoes)
 Sure, you bet...

April looks at his shoes then back at Henry.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 (beat)
 You were right about the shoes...

APRIL
 I know, sweetie.

Henry and April embrace. Katrina spills yogurt on her shirt.

KATRINA
 Not again --

April grabs a napkin from the kitchen and approaches Katrina.

APRIL
 (wiping Katrina's shirt)
 Now all your clothes are matching.
 (to the kids)
 You guys be good for, Henry.

Katrina hugs and kisses them both, then leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. V.W. VAN - NIGHT

The Roadrunner flies past a sign: "Welcome to Illinois"

INT./EXT. V.W. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Ziggy and Damien are passed out cold in the back. Cole sits shotgun with Brody playing a snowboarding game on his iPhone.

His cell buzzes: "MOM" appears on screen. He hits ignore.

BRODY
 She know about your mission?

COLE
 Pretty sure they got the note by
 now. When I get home, everything's
 gonna be back to normal.

BRODY
 Back to normal?

COLE

Last Christmas sucked. My dad had to make a balloon payment on our house, but we never had a party, and his job told him to lay down and never come back. Then, this sixth grader, Charlie Turby, told me if I didn't get detention so much maybe they wouldn't yell all the time. He said Santa gave me coal because I was the reason my parents were splitting up.

BRODY

You really got a lump of coal?

COLE

Sure did. Cole got coal.

BRODY

(laughs)

Hahahah...I'm sorry, that's just kind of funny. Never got your name.

COLE

Nice to meet you, Brody.

They share a fist bump.

BRODY

So, you been planning to visit Santa since last year?

COLE

Uh-huh. He's the only one who can fix this.

BRODY

You been extra good, or what?

COLE

Think so.

BRODY

Swear on your family?

COLE

No...

BRODY

Yeah, I figured as much.

(then)

Out here is the best place to be if you're feeling sorry for yourself.

COLE

Really?

BRODY

Always helps me after a rough show.
Nobody can make you feel bad.

COLE

Do you have a lot of rough shows?

BRODY

Only when we play Detroit.

COLE

(thinking)

I been acting like a real butthead
lately. I ran away and really
haven't been too good this year.

BRODY

Yeah...

COLE

I'm mad about it because I really
love my family, even though
sometimes I act like I don't.
Sometimes I even say I don't. You
get me?

BRODY

I get you, Cole. How you think
about your family is a complex
thing. My dad used to say: "*if you
got family, you got problems, but
their still your family*".

COLE

Even my siblings?

BRODY

(laughs)

Yeah man. Even your siblings. Deep
down you'll always love them. You
can not like them sometimes, and
you can disrespect them and they
can disrespect you, and that's not
just cause you're a kid.

Cole nods understanding.

EXT. V.W. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The Roadrunner pulls into an affluent Chicago suburb.

INT. V.W. VAN - CONTINUOUS

BRODY

I got 3 brothers and 4 sisters, and we couldn't stand each other growing up; but you know what?

COLE

What?

BRODY

Today, they're my best friends along with those guys --
(motions to the band)
And I wouldn't trade them for anyone.

The Roadrunner stops in front of a massive brick MANSION. The house is covered in lights and decorations along with the rest of the block. Brody puts the CAR in park. Looks over --

BRODY (CONT'D)

Those lights are pretty epic.

COLE

Uncle Sonny loves to show off. Mom says he's overcompensating cause he always smells like burnt mustard.

BRODY

My Uncle Al wreaks of old cheerios.

COLE

Maybe Santa we'll bring them some new cologne.

BRODY

Fingers crossed, my guy. You gonna be alright from here? Doesn't look like anyone's home...

COLE

Yeah, they're on vacation.

BRODY

Know how to log in to their Wi-fi?

COLE

I'm 11 years old. The internet is my life.

Brody laughs as Cole hustles out of the Car.

BRODY
Hey Cole --

COLE
Yeah?

BRODY
Moms always know when something's
wrong. Call her, dude.

COLE
(sarcastically)
Okay, mom.

They both start laughing.

BRODY
Merry Christmas, Cole.

COLE
Merry Christmas, Brody. Good luck
tomorrow.

Cole gives him a fist bump through the window.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

April fidgets anxiously with her phone. Ken notices --

APRIL
I'm a terrible mother.

KEN
Stop it.

APRIL
How did we let this happen? He ran
away. He left us, Ken.

KEN
He didn't leave us. He's...on a
mission.

APRIL
What kind of parents are we?

KEN
Quit beating yourself up. He's a
determined kid. Ya wanna talk about
bad parents -- look at me.

APRIL

Been looking at you for twelve years, figured it was time to change the view.

KEN

I think you still like this view.

APRIL

What makes you say that?

KEN

You're here aren't you?

APRIL

Would you rather Henry be sitting here?

KEN

If you weren't dating that guy, we'd be making fun of that guy.

The tiniest of smiles flashes over April's face.

KEN (CONT'D)

He's gonna be fine, Apes. Promise.

Ken reaches over and touches her hand. She smiles at him.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S HOUSE - MAN-CAVE - NIGHT

A cellar door bursts open. Cole enters.

An ALARM starts beeping.

Cole approaches, uses his cell as a light, punches in a code.

COLE

Reggie's birthday should do it --

The ALARM stops beeping. Cole flicks on a LIGHT switch.

COLE POV:

An immaculate MAN-CAVE fit for a king.

Plush Lazy Boys, a popcorn machine, darts, a massive L-shaped couch, pinball, a pool table, and a giant 100" plasma TV.

COLE (CONT'D)

(stunned)

This is awesome...

Cole is in awe at the scope of the room. He crosses to a bed.

COLE (CONT'D)

Wow. A California king all for me --

He walks back across the room, opens a door to an enclosed --

INT. SPA ROOM

A custom jacuzzi and separate shower. He turns on the jets.

COLE

Roomy yet elegant!

INT. MAN-CAVE

Cole crosses back inside to the refrigerator and opens the doors. It's filled with cookies, snacks, frozen pizza, candy, soda, deli meats, cheeses, chocolates and ice-cream.

COLE

How fitting...

A little grin sneaks across his lips.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - LATER

Food wrappers, cups, plates and an empty Ice-Cream carton litter the counter. A sticky spoon protrudes from the box.

CU. TV SCREEN

A Christmas movie is playing.

ANGLE ON: COLE

Sprawled out on the couch. Working on his 5th slice of pizza.

COLE

Now THIS is a vacation.

He takes a swig of Coke from the 2-Liter and looks around the room filled with pictures of their family's different events.

His eyes settle on last year's snowboarding trip. He rises off the couch and approaches the picture. The family is in typical disarray. David is choking him. Katrina's making bunny ears over April. Ken's smiling big with his arms around cousin Reggie and Uncle Sonny. Uncle Sonny's wife, Gwen is posing like the model she used to be.

CU. COLE

A bittersweet smile as he looks at the picture. The smile quickly fades as he feels the separation for the first time. He sits down on the couch, grabs his cell, scrolls to: "MOM"

Hits the CALL button.

EXT. AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

Barely any lights on.

INT. AIRPLANE

April and Ken are sound asleep. She adjusts her position and puts her head on Ken's shoulder. He stirs awake. Smiles.

INSERT: APRIL'S CELL PHONE

Set to Airplane mode, so no CALLS come through.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - CONTINUOUS

Cole hangs up the phone in disappointment. He holds back tears as he looks at the photo.

COLE

I'm sorry for everything. If you get back together, I'll never act like a butthead again. I swear.

He searches for and finds his strength. Addresses the photo.

COLE (CONT'D)

I love you guys.

Cole holds the picture close and snuggles up on the couch.

CU. TV

A commercial for Santa Con plays.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL OF AMERICA, FOOD COURT - DAY

Ken and April enter the Twin Cities Grill. It's empty.

APRIL

Hello. We called ahead about --

MANAGER

We don't open for twenty minutes.

The MANAGER giggles at a text on his phone, ignoring them. Ken pulls out a folder with an 8.5" x 11" portrait of Cole.

KEN

You remember serving this kid?

MANAGER

No. Sure don't. I'm a manager, Chief. Not really a part of my job.

He turns away barely glancing at the photo. Ken hands April the picture, then grabs the Manager by his arm, twisting it behind his back, slamming his face into the desk.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Owwwww!

KEN

Okay, let's try this again. Have you seen my boy?

MANAGER

On second thought, he did leave with a few guys, but they didn't come in together.

KEN

How many were there?

MANAGER

I don't know, a few.

Ken twists his arm harder. April is both scared & turned on.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Ow! Three! One of 'em was in here trying to score extra waffle fries but didn't want to pay. They were on their way to some concert.

APRIL

Where? What concert?

MANAGER

Don't know. Security should have footage from the accident.

APRIL

What accident?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MALL OF AMERICA, SECURITY OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

CU. TV

Footage from Cole being struck by the V.W. van plays.

KEN

Doesn't look like he's hurt.

APRIL

The layers saved him.

SECURITY GUARD

Yes ma'am they did. Without all that padding, who knows how bad it could've been.

KEN

Any idea where they were headed?

SECURITY GUARD

(checks notes)

Witnesses say they're a tribute band of some kind. Huge Sting fans. Cole met one of them on the rollercoasters and apparently they've been following the tour since summer.

April's eyes are glued to the TV. As Cole enters the van --

APRIL

(off the TV)

Cole McCarthy don't you get in that van! Don't drive away, don't! Stop!

CU. TV

The Van flies out of the parking garage.

APRIL (CONT'D)

Who offers a ride to a kid?

KEN

(to Security Guard)

Hold it right there --

Security Guard freezes the image on the License Plate.

KEN (CONT'D)

Can you print this out for us?

SECURITY GUARD

Of course.

KEN

Do you know what they call themselves? The tribute band?

Security Guard hands him the printed out picture of the van.

SECURITY GUARD

(checks notes)

Got it right here -- The Three Wise Men. Their instagram handle is: @the-holy-trinity-of-music with two prayer hand emojis back-to-back.

He pulls up the profile on his iPad. Ken snaps a photo of it.

INT. MALL OF AMERICA, MAIN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Ken and April walk hastily looking at the band's Instagram.

APRIL

According to this, they were supposed to play tonight in Chicago, but that show got postponed because one them got walleye food poisoning.

KEN

That's great fish. When's the next show after that?

APRIL

Um...looks like it's this weekend, somewhere in New York.

KEN

Then we're headed to New York.

APRIL

Cole must be so scared.

CUT TO:

CU. A PINBALL RATTLES THROUGH A MACHINE

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - DAY

Cole plays pinball. Rock music blares throughout the room.

INT. SPA ROOM - LATER

Cole does a cannon ball jump into the jacuzzi.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Cole's jumping on the bed as he eats fresh-made popcorn. He lands on his back, pops up, jumps high, then flies off!

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT - DAY

A 747 touches down in a raging blizzard.

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT, TICKET COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

Ken argues with a TICKET AGENT. April approaches.

APRIL

Any luck?

KEN

They're all cancelled.

APRIL

Every flight?

TICKET AGENT

I'm sorry, but until the storm passes all flights are grounded.

APRIL

There's nothing to New York?

KEN

There's nothing to New York, New Jersey, you name it. Everything's cancelled.

APRIL

What if we flew private?

TICKET AGENT

No, I'm sorry. All sold out.

KEN

The only thing they have is a booking for tomorrow night.

APRIL

Tomorrow night? No. Unacceptable. This storm will pass tonight.

KEN

Look you're worn out. I'm worn out. There's nothing we can do while it's snowing. Now, I say we get a hotel for the night and come back first thing in the morning.

APRIL

Ken, he could be in a bar jumping up and down on the stage drinking drugs and destroying amps.

KEN

I don't care what Henry does, my only concern is Cole.

APRIL

Oh, I see, I see now we're being funny. Well, if you can't be father of the year why be a father at all?

KEN

I'm standing right here, Apes.

APRIL

Don't call me that. You don't get to call me that. Not now. Not ever.
(to ticket agent)
I'm not leaving until I see a fasten seat belt sign.

TICKET AGENT

Miss, we can't control the weather. We're exploring all options to get you re-booked. Now if you want to stay here, there is a possibility things will clear up and we can get you on the red-eye.

KEN

You want to sit here for twelve hours?

APRIL

I was in labor for 25, sitting is not a problem.

KEN

(to ticket agent)
We'll be seated right over there.

Off the Ticket Agent smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUMEN FIELD - EVENING

Home of the Seattle Seahawks.

The Jumbotron at the entrance reads: **GOT COLE?**

Moments later Katrina's I.G. post pops up. It's Cole's face --

INT. KEN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Henry and Katrina debate intensely about the North Pole.

HENRY

Katrina, it just doesn't make sense. How can a child, in one week, visit a place across the world that doesn't even exist?

KATRINA

Everyone who celebrates Christmas believes in the North Pole. And I think there's some sort of portal between worlds that opens up once you reach Santa's workshop.

HENRY

What about space? A lot of portals could lead to other dimensions. How does Santa make it through?

KATRINA

He uses his special elf GPS and...
(blows)
The doorways kind of appear and he goes through it like this --

Katrina mimics G-force flight training with her hands & face.

HENRY

What about transportation? How would Cole fly there?

KATRINA

With the reindeer, silly. Look.

Katrina shows him her iPad. "Santa Tracker" is pulled up.

HENRY

I thought only certain reindeer could fly?

KATRINA

They have families and keep passing the names down. Once you get to New York, you're almost there.

HENRY

Well, I've never heard of that. Never seen it in any movies either.

KATRINA

Have you ever held a gold bar?

HENRY

No.

KATRINA

Just because you haven't seen it doesn't mean it's not real.

Henry is stumped. He tries thinking of a response, but can't.

The PHONE rings.

HENRY

(into phone)

McCarthy residence...oh hey hon...yeah we just finished dinner...what's that? You're kidding. Oh, that's terrible...when? Okay...
...no, no, it's fine, really. Call if you need anything. I love --

But the line goes dead.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(into phone)

...you.

He hangs up, trying his best to conceal how hurt he is.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - AFTERNOON

Cole is chocolate wasted from banana splits and cookies. He polishes off the rest of his soda and puts on sunglasses.

He pulls a rickety chair over to a trophy case attached to the wall. He stands on the chair and tries to reach a GUITAR at the top. Cole reaches up, woefully short-armed. He hops down and scans the room.

COLE POV:

Boxes, old furniture and a stool in the corner. He smiles.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Cole has stacked all of his new findings up. It's incredibly unstable. He begins to climb the stack. He gingerly steps up on the next item, then the next. He makes it to the top. His little fingers barely touch the GUITAR.

He finally gets a grip and unhooks it from the wall. The GUITAR slides forward into his hand as the stack of items pull away from the wall. Cole hurls the GUITAR to the couch.

The stack topples, throwing Cole to the floor.

CRASH!

Cole emerges stunned and shocked, but unscathed. He quickly rises and straps the GUITAR on. He crosses over to a massive SOUND SYSTEM with giant SPEAKERS and AMPS.

He Inserts keys into the POWER BOX. Flicks all the STEREO DRIVER switches on. Turns the dial on the AUTOTRANSFORMER all the way up.

INSERT: The PRIMARY POWER gauge slowly increases as --

Cole turns the PRIMARY DRIVER knob to maximum power. He turns the OVERDRIVE dial to full power.

INSERT: The PRIMARY POWER gauge shoots right to 100%. Same with the OVER-RANGE gauge and TUNING gauge.

He connects the AMPS to the system, plugs in the GUITAR and removes his lucky GUITAR PICK from his pocket.

The light shines off the GUITAR PICK and then -- he shreds!

BANG! The Speaker blows out, launching Cole off his feet!

CRASH!

He lands against the TROPHY wall and it topples, throwing everything on the shelves to the floor.

Cole rolls over emerging from the rubble. He's dazed and sore. He's taken a big hit. He sits up and takes off his sunglasses. He glances around slowly.

COLE
Rock n' roll...

A piece of the blown out SPEAKER falls down.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE, SPA ROOM - LATER

Cole lounges in the JACUZZI as VH1 CLASSIC plays on the TV. He's in the middle of booking TRAIN TICKETS to New York. The music video for "Roxanne" by Sting comes on. Now distracted, he doesn't finish entering the Credit Card info.

Then --

The PHONE rings. An answering machine clicks on.

UNCLE SONNY'S VOICE (V.O.)
 Howdy! We're not home right now.
 If you leave your name and number,
 we might get back to you! Aloha!

Beep.

RICH (V. O.)
 Hey Sonny. This is your overlooked,
 under-appreciated neighbor Rich
 Finstrom again. Hahaha, just
 joshin' ya! We got back early and
 would love those tickets for
 tonight's Bulls' game, if you still
 got 'em? We're leaving the airport
 now and will head over in a bit. Is
 the garage code still the same? Let
 me know! Thanks.

Cole's eyes go wide. He freaks out. Jumps from the jacuzzi.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - CONTINUOUS

He runs into the ransacked main room searching frantically for the BULLS TICKETS. He digs through the mess, tossing pictures, folders, documents, & food wrappers until --

He spots them. Buried underneath trophies. He grabs them.

INT. UNITED CENTER - LATER

The game is in full swing.

Cole sits court-side. He waves his giant FOAM FINGER as The Bulls' MASCOT - "Benny the Bull" hypes up the crowd.

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT, CHILI'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

A packed house. Everyone here had their flight cancelled.

Ken and April share CHIPS at a booth next to the bar. Behind them are TVs broadcasting different NBA Games. One is the Bulls. There's a time-out. The TV camera switches to a --

COURT-SIDE CAMERA POV

Cole screams into the camera decked out in BULLS merchandise.

COLE

Come on Bulls! Come on! This is Chi-town! Let's go baby! Let's gooooo!

As he says this, April spills SALSA on her shirt.

APRIL

Damn it.

KEN

You are your daughter's, mother.

Ken hands her napkins. April playfully grabs them. Smiles. Cole shows off his Pippen jersey. A WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

(off TV)

What a little cutie --

Ken glances at the TV as it cuts to commercial.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

You folks ready to order?

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - CONTINUOUS

The neighbor from the voicemail, RICH FINSTROM, (50's), surveys the damage of the Man-Cave. He pulls out his cell.

RICH

(sotto)

Terrible. Terrible. Just terrible.

(into cell)

I'd like to report a break-in.

INT. UNITED CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The Bulls race down the court on a fast-break. Cole wolfs down a giant plate of NACHOS.

COLE
I'm beginning to like the windy
city.

Demar Derozan throws down a dunk! The crowd goes wild.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Deeeemarrrr Derozannnnn with a
monster jam!

COLE
Yeah! Nice slam, D!

A HALF-TIME BUZZER SOUNDS

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And they take the lead! The Bulls
head into halftime, up by three.

Cole high-fives the players as they run into the locker room.

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

Two ANNOUNCERS spike their drinks with WHISKY. On the left is
ROCKY DAPHNE (40's), polished, clean-cut, and seated next to
him is COCO ALFIERI (30's), tipsy, in retro Bulls gear.

ROCKY
My name is Rocky Daphne and with me
as always is my partner in crime,
Coco Alfieri. Coke --

COCO
Psyched to be here Rock! My new
stage name is really taking off!

Coco gives him a fist bump.

ROCKY
For today's half time contest one
lucky fan will have a chance to win
a trip to New York to see the one
and only, Sting, live in concert!

ANGLE ON: JUMBOTRON

STING waves to the crowd from his SUITE.

COCO
Benny the Bull is hunting down his
opponent right now for a one-on-one
throw-down!

ANGLE ON: JUMBOTRON

Benny the Bull runs through the stands searching --

ROCKY

He's got three minutes to seal the deal, Coco.

COCO

Tres-minutos my dudes! Two scores gets you some prizes, with that 3rd score getting you the backstage tickets everybody wants!

ROCKY

In addition to attending the concert, our grand prize winner will also get to travel with Sting on his private jet!

ANGLE ON: COLE

Licking the last of his cheese nachos off his fingers. Benny the Bull passes by him. Stops. Turns around. Points at him.

ANGLE ON: JUMBOTRON

At first Cole doesn't notice the camera. He looks up and sees himself on the Jumbotron. Waves skeptically. Totally shocked.

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

The announcers are stunned Benny the Bull selected a child.

ROCKY

Holy Moly Guacamole...is this even allowed?

COCO

That's awesome.

ANGLE ON: CROWD

Laughing and cheering.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Standing at a lanky four-ten, please give a round of applause for Mr. Sonny McCarthy.

COCO (V.O.)

I'm loving that Pippen jersey, Rock! Feels like I'm watching a Bow Wow video.

INT. UNCLE SONNY'S MAN-CAVE - CONTINUOUS

Rich talks with POLICE as they survey the damage. The Bulls game plays on the TV in the background.

RICH
 ...and so when I never heard back
 from Sonny, I came to grab the
 tickets myself.

POLICE OFFICER
 Where are the tickets now?

RICH
 No clue. Probably being scalped.

He glances at the TV, as the CHEERLEADERS finish a routine. The TV camera zooms in on a boy taking a picture with the ladies. It's Cole. Rich crosses to the framed PICTURE of last year's snowboarding trip. He does a double-take at the TV.

RICH (CONT'D)
 (to Police)
 Detective? I think I found our
 scalper...

He shows the Police the PICTURE. Off their look to the TV --

INT. UNITED CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A CLOCK starts counting down from 3:00 minutes, 2:59, 2:58...

Benny the Bull guards Cole, waving his hands, taunting him.

BENNY THE BULL
 Woo-hooo! You like that, huh?

COLE
 Oh you think it's a game?

Cole dribbles between his legs, steps back.

COLE (CONT'D)
 Watch this --

BENNY THE BULL
 Hahahah. What you got?

Benny grabs him on the head, laughing. In a split second, Cole fakes going left, stops on a dime. Drains a jumper.

As the crowd cheers him on --

ANGLE ON: STING'S SUITE

His entourage claps enthusiastically. Sting barely looks up.

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

ROCKY

Little man draws first blood!

COCO

He strikes like a cobra, Rock!

(lowers headset, shouts)

Boom-town! Population, your face!

ROCKY

He just won himself a vintage '92
Bulls' sweatshirt. Let's see if he
can score again --

EXT. UNEEDA BURGER, SEATTLE - EVENING

A legendary burger joint in the heart of downtown Seattle.
The side of the building has a giant mural of Cole's face.
Underneath is a phrase in GRAFFITI that says: **GOT COLE?**

Candles & pictures of Cole sit on the ground under the mural.

INT. UNEEDA BURGER - CONTINUOUS

David and Katrina wait anxiously for their food in a booth.
Henry approaches the SERVICE COUNTER. Grabs a napkin. Behind
him is the kitchen and a TV set broadcasting the Bulls game.

It's a REPLAY in SLOW-MOTION. The TV camera follows the ball
swish through the net. SLOW MOTION ENDS. TV camera PANS to a
kid celebrating. Henry wipes his glasses off. The TV camera
zooms in on the boy triumphantly grabbing his rebound, hyping
up the crowd. It's Cole. He does a little celebration dance.
Henry wads up the napkin, tosses it at a trash bin. Misses.
The TV cuts to commercial. Henry glances at the screen.

HENRY

What's the score?

BURGER MAN

Tie game.

HENRY

Who's winning?

BURGER MAN

The Saints.

Henry nods as Burger Man hands him a tray of food. He exits.

CU TV.

A news commercial comes on.

ANCHOR

Coming up on tonight's top story,
we talk with local families as the
community rallies around a missing
youth...

INSERT: Cole's Yearbook Portrait

Accompanied with the graphic: **GOT COLE?**

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

This and more coming up at 7, right
after the game.

INT. UNITED CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Cole dribbles at the top of the key. Does a few moves --

BENNY THE BULL

Little man got some skills...

COLE

I'm just warming up.

He dribbles left, tries a jumper, but Benny blocks it!

BENNY THE BULL

Get that out of here!

A REFEREE blows the whistle.

REFEREE

Time!

He grabs a new ball. Approaches Cole.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Try this one. It's more your style.

The Referee bounces the ball to Cole. It feels different...

COLE

What kind of air you put in here?

REFEREE

Just keep your head up and eyes
open. Most importantly: Have fun.

The Referee winks at Cole and blows his whistle.

ANGLE ON: STING'S SUITE

Sting sits up in his seat, excited for what's next.

ANGLE ON: COURT

Cole dribbles circles around Benny by the three-point line.

COLE

I didn't know you were so slow --

Cole does a crossover right, Benny stops him.

BENNY THE BULL

Nah-ah. This bull bucks, baby.
Ain't going nowhere in the paint.

COLE

(dribbles)
Watch me work...

BENNY THE BULL

I'm a baller bro, I do this.

Cole does a crossover/step-back, launching a deep three.

CU. NET

Swish!

COLE

Whoahh...

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

Rocky and Coco are going wild.

ROCKY

Would you look at that!? What a
shot from deep!

COCO

Coco needs a new jersey!

ANGLE ON: STING'S SUITE

Sting claps wildly with his entourage.

ANGLE ON: COURT

Cole freaking out.

COLE
How did I do that?

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

Rocky tops off their drinks.

ROCKY
It all comes down to this next possession. He's gotta make a play here, Coke.

COCO
Word, Rocky.
(takes a pull of whisky)
He's just won an autographed basketball with that bucket and what's this? Oh my -- they're bringing out the bounce board!

ANGLE ON: JUMBOTRON

Cheerleaders bring out a TRAMPOLINE. Place it under the hoop.

ANGLE ON: COURT

Cole points at the replay on the jumbo-tron.

COLE
That one was cool, huh?

BENNY THE BULL
Ain't nobody embarrassing the bull.

Benny rips off his warm-ups. All business now. Pissed.

BENNY THE BULL (CONT'D)
Last shot, punk. Don't get scared.

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

ROCKY
One more shot and he wins it all!

COCO
The ball must go in first, Rock.

Rocky shoots him a baffled look.

ANGLE ON: THE TUNNEL

The Bulls' players emerge from the locker room.

ANGLE ON: STING'S SUITE

Sting and his entourage on their feet going nuts.

ANGLE ON: COURT

BENNY THE BULL
Game time, baby. You got what, ten
seconds? It's a wrap.

Benny shoves the ball into his chest. Cole toughens up.

BENNY THE BULL (CONT'D)
Come on. Show me something...

Cole dribbles at the top of the key, his eyes on the clock.

BENNY THE BULL (CONT'D)
This my house, baby. My house!

He dribbles between his legs, goes left. Benny's there. He goes right -- no chance. Cole looks at the Ref. He smiles.

COLE
(sotto)
Come on, Cole...

He dribbles between his legs, does a shimmy, steps-back, goes left, then right, fakes a jumper --

Benny bites on it --

Cole throws himself an alley-oop off the backboard, jumps on the trampoline, catching the ball mid-flight and dunks it!

Benny is shocked.

WIDE SHOT

The entire gym goes bezerk!

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

Coco and Rocky are ecstatic.

ROCKY
Ohhhhh! What a play!

COLE
Incredible moves, Rock!

ANGLE ON: STING'S SUITE

Sting's jaw is on the floor.

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT, CHILI'S SPORTS BAR - CONTINUOUS

CU. TV

Cole dangles from the rim smiling.

WIDE SHOT

The entire restaurant is going bananas! All eyes glued to the TVs. People block April and Ken's view from their booth.

APRIL

What's everybody looking at?

KEN

Think there's a UFC fight tonight.

He glances back but can't see the TV. Shrugs. April does too.

INT. UNITED CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The Bulls Team screams for joy.

ANGLE ON: STING'S SUITE

Sting on his feet clapping wildly.

STING

Alright! Nice shot, bruv!

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

As Rocky gathers himself --

ROCKY

Ladies and gentlemen I have been to the Eiffel Tower, I have seen the Taj Mahal, I've even witnessed a seal satisfy a dolphin; but never in all my years as a sportscaster have I seen something as unbelievable as improbable, as what we witnessed here today. The little dude that could, Sonny "cold world" McCarthy, stands before us, a true basketball champion.

WIDE SHOT:

The entire stadium screams, cheers, and claps for Cole. Cheerleaders dance with their pompoms hyping up the crowd even more. As people rejoice and sing in the stands --

CU. COLE

Still dangling from the rim. As he looks at Benny --

COLE
 (to Mascot)
 I guess this is a bad time for me
 to ask for your autograph, huh?

Benny the Bull is fuming. Cole drops down and is swarmed by PAPARAZZI. He locks eyes with the Referee, but loses him in the crowd.

ANGLE ON: PRESS BOX

Coco and Rocky cheers. As they drink, Coco sees Benny the Bull running off, disappearing into the tunnel --

COCO
 That bull is long gone, just like
 his ex-girlfriend who will never
 return! Game over!

ANGLE ON: COURT

As CAMERAS flash, Cole notices SECURITY trading him funny glances. The exits are all covered by POLICE. He thinks...

COLE
 (to cheerleaders)
 Can you hoist me up? My dad just
 got here!

The Cheerleaders hoist him up and carry him to the tunnel as the Police close in. They almost stop him, but it's too late.

Off the fuming Police --

CUT TO:

INT. UNEEDA BURGER - CONTINUOUS

David, Katrina and Henry have just finished eating.

HENRY
 Going to the loo. Be right back.

Henry gets up. A classmate of David's approaches. This is MARIO (13), chill. His brother DENNY, (11), scrawny, in tow.

MARIO
 Don't dick me around, David. How
 hostile is the situation?

DAVID
Well, did you see the Matrix when
Neo wakes up in a computer?

MARIO
Yeah...

DAVID
Cole's vacationing in a place like
that.

MARIO
Bullshit. He's in the Meta-verse?

DENNY
Are you serious?

KATRINA
He's always serious.

DAVID
Do I sound like I'm joking?

KATRINA
A computer kidnapped him.

Another kid approaches, JOE, (11) also scrawny.

JOE
You guys talking about Cole?

KATRINA
Yeah, you're in his class?

JOE
Yeah, he's getting me out of gym.

MARIO
We appreciate you keeping us posted
about his adventure. We'll spread
the word. Peace, my dude.

DAVID
Peace.

JOE
(to Mario)
I hope he doesn't disappear, can't
handle gym.

As soon as the kids' leave, Katrina & David bust up laughing.

CUT TO:

EXT. STING'S PLANE - LATER

A 747 soars through the night sky.

INT. STING'S PLANE

Cole and Sting eat a lavish dinner. They're mid-conversation as the entire entourage including Sting's GRANDMA listen in.

COLE

...and then my mom starts dating
this guy Henry who tells me Santa's
not even real.

STING

No way.

COLE

He said sometimes Santa forgets
presents for people who were bad
the year before, and that I was
probably still on the naughty list.

STING

Not cool.

COLE

I know my parents are still in
love, they just can't see it.

STING

I think love has something to do
with allowing a person you claim to
love to enter a larger arena than
the one you create for them.

COLE

I think you're right, Sting.
What kind of adult tells a kid
they'll never be good enough?

STING

Only the lonely seek to hurt
others.

COLE

He's gonna propose soon and ruin
everything. I can't let it happen.

STING

Yeah, Henry doesn't deserve her.
All he cares about are conquests.

(MORE)

STING (CONT'D)

Fancy degrees. iPads. Even people
are conquests to him.

COLE

See, Sting gets it. I don't know
why she doesn't see it.

STING'S GRANDMA

Oh, I hope you find him.

COLE

Santa Con is my last chance.

STING

What else could we do?

COLE

(thinking)
I got a few ideas.

EXT. PLANE

The 747 cruises over New York City.

CUT TO:

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

The venue is packed wall-to-wall.

Sting and The Police tear up the stage. They finish singing
"Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic".

Cole mimics the moves backstage as the CROWD goes wild.

STING

Thank you! Thank you so much. This
next song is one of our personal
favorites. It's a story about love
and the lengths we'll go to be with
the people we care about most...

ANGLE ON: BACKSTAGE

An ASSISTANT records Sting on her phone from backstage. A
notification pops up on her screen. She clicks it.

INSERT: CELL PHONE SCREEN

It's an AMBER ALERT featuring the Yearbook Portrait of COLE.
She looks down at him with a puzzling look. Cole smiles at
her, but senses something is off. He glances behind her --

More and more people look at their phones and stare at him. As the whispers spread throughout backstage, his CELL BUZZES.

INSERT: COLE'S PHONE

Cole's PORTRAIT stares back at him. As Amber Alert beeps --

COLE

Uh-oh...

ANGLE ON: MAIN STAGE

STING

And now we're going to bring up a very special friend of ours. He's one of our biggest fans who told us this was the song playing when his folks' said "*I do*". And since we let our fans do pretty much whatever they want, here he is. Ladies and gentlemen put your hands together for Mr. Cole McCarthy!

The crowd erupts in excitement. The Assistant tries to signal to Sting about what's happening, but it's no use. She lunges at Cole's BACKPACK, but he side-steps her and runs on stage.

ANGLE ON: CROWD

Brody, Ziggy and Damien go nuts --

ZIGGY

No way!!!

BRODY

Little dude! You freaking rule!

DAMIEN

(turns to a female fan)
I know that kid.

Female Fan smiles seductively at Damien. As the song begins --

ANGLE ON: MAIN STAGE

A ROADIE hands Cole a guitar and a stool. The beat kicks in and it's -- "*Every Breath You Take*". As they sing together --

STING

(singing)

*Every breath you take, And every
move you make, Every bond you break
Every step you take, I'll be
watching you...*

COLE

(singing)

*Every single day, and every word
you say, every game you play, every
night you stay, I'll be watching
you...*

STING

(singing)

*Oh, can't you see you belong to me?
How my poor heart aches, with every
step you take?*

COLE

(singing)

*Every move you make, and
every vow you break, every
smile you fake,
Every claim you stake, I'll
be watching you...*

STING (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Every move you make, and
every vow you break, every
smile you fake,
Every claim you stake, I'll
be watching you...*

As other band members play GUITAR and DRUM solos, Cole sees POLICE arrive backstage. He looks out in the crowd and sees more SECURITY and POLICE entering. Sting picking up on it --

STING (CONT'D)

Friends of yours, bruv?

COLE

Not exactly. What do I do now?

STING

(thinks)

Let your soul be your pilot.

Sting launches into his own solo, as Cole quickly gets an idea and takes off the guitar. He takes a breath, then jumps.

WIDE SHOT

Cole flies through the air and lands in the audience. SECURITY and POLICE fight their way through fans as Cole CROWD-SURFS. He and Brody lock eyes --

COLE

Brody! Help!

BRODY

Hang on, Cole!

Brody, Ziggy and Damien maneuver their way closer to him. They finally reach him and lower him down.

BRODY (CONT'D)

We got ya.

Cole lands on his feet. As the guys greet him --

BRODY (CONT'D)

How do you know Sting?

COLE

I don't. We met at the Bulls' game.

ZIGGY

You rocked it, man.

DAMIEN

Freaking legendary!

COLE

You guys gotta get me outta here.
The cops are after me.

DAMIEN

Dude, the Police are on stage.

COLE

The real cops, Damien. If they get
me, my mission is over.

BRODY

We got you, Cole. Follow us.

Brody, Ziggy and Damien zig-zag through the crowd looking for an exit. They're all blocked except one across the room. SECURITY spots them and gives chase. They create a diversion.

Ziggy and Damien run in opposite directions drawing the POLICE away from Brody and Cole. They make it to the door --

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Cole and Brody burst through a set of double-doors. Brody wheels a TRASH DUMP in front of the door. The POLICE and SECURITY are about to break through --

BRODY

Can't hold 'em off for long...

COLE

What about you?

BRODY

I'll be good man. Go get Santa!

Cole takes off down the alley and crosses the street to --

INT. SUBWAY - CONTINUOUS

He leaps down the stairs and hops a TICKET BOOTH --

TICKET AGENT
Hey! Stop right there!

A METRO COP spots Cole.

METRO COP
Freeze!

Cole weaves in and out of a packed SUBWAY TERMINAL. He slips inside a TRAIN CAR right before the doors close.

COLE
Just in time...

The METRO COPS chases after the train trying to open the doors. It's no use. As the SUBWAY vanishes into a tunnel --

COLE (CONT'D)
Suckers...

He laughs, trying to catch his breath, but his victory is short-lived. He looks left -- a METRO COP spots him.

COLE POV:

His head WHIP PANS RIGHT -- two more METRO COPS.

WIDE SHOT

Cole is trapped. Nowhere to go. The Subway approaches a stop.

INT. SUBWAY/PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

The doors open. As everyone exits, dozens of HOLIDAY WORKERS dressed as ELVES pour into the Subway.

It's a combination of ADULTS and KIDS. Cole's BEANIE matches their uniform so he blends in perfectly.

The METRO POLICE descend on him, but it's no use. They're blocked from all directions. Cole seizes this opportunity --

He rushes through an adjacent SUBWAY CAR, then bolts.

CUT TO:

EXT. KNICKERBOCKER HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Cole sprints into frame and walks into the hotel.

INT. KNICKERBOCKER HOTEL, FRONT DOOR

He comes through the revolving doors, looking around the massive lobby.

COLE
This is great.

COLE POV

A grand, old hotel lobby with crystal chandeliers, marble columns and potted palms lined with Christmas lights.

ANGLE ON: LOBBY KIOSKS

Cole approaches a wall of CHECK-IN KIOSKS. He pulls up his reservation on the phone and scans his QR CODE.

ANGLE ON: FRONT DESK

A RECEPTIONIST stares at Cole.

CU. COLE

He gives the RECEPTIONIST a smile. She flashes one back.

INSERT: THE KEY CARD IS PRINTED**INT. KNICKERBOCKER HOTEL, COLE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Cole opens the door. He slows as he enters. A huge smile. It's even better than his Uncle Sonny's man-cave.

COLE
New York, New York...here at last.

CUT TO:

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT - MORNING

Ken sleeps as April waits anxiously in the terminal.

INTERCOM (V.O.)
At this time we'd like to begin
boarding flight 2677 with non-stop
service to New York.
(MORE)

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

Everyone must hold their I.D. If
your kid can hold a chicken nugget,
they can hold their own passport.

April wakes Ken up from the make-shift bed he made on chairs.

EXT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

The Boeing 747 takes off.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

A GIANT BILLBOARD shows Cole's YEARBOOK PORTRAIT. The
tagline: **GOT COLE?**

INT. KNICKERBOCKER HOTEL, COLE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He combs his hair in front of a mirror, getting dressed. His
cell phone RECORDS him. As the red light clicks on:

COLE

I took a bubble bath after using
the bidet to clean those hard to
reach places, including all my
major blind spots. My phone is
charged and I brushed my teeth with
Sensodyne for that ultra fresh
feeling, so Santa knows I've been
taking care of business.

He unwraps a cologne bottle.

COLE (CONT'D)

This cologne says its a special
blend of the North Pole to help get
you down South. Only the real Santa
will know it's the best of both.

As he sprays the cologne on his shirt --

COLE (CONT'D)

Time to get this butt in motion.

He presses STOP and uploads the REEL to his INSTAGRAM.

EXT. SANTA CON - MOMENTS LATER

A gigantic red bow glistens on the entrance as snow falls. It
connects to the Knickerbocker hotel via SKY-BRIDGES.

Cole approaches the building.

COLE
Ho. Ho. Ho.

INT. SANTA CON

Santas are everywhere. All shapes and sizes. Fat. Tall. Big. Small. Big Beards. No Beards. It's quite the variety.

The space is composed of pathways connecting 50 city blocks. One of the largest continuous bridge systems in the world.

Cole walks in. Reindeer walk circles around the room.

COLE'S POV

Fake Snow falls from the ceiling.

COLE
Phenomenal.

An ELF scans his ticket.

ELF ONE
Come on in, little helper --

Cole hops in a SLEIGH near the entrance. Once all the seats are filled, a SKINNY SANTA takes them for a ride.

INT. SANTA CON, VARIOUS ROOMS - CONTINUOUS

The sleigh travels through different sections of the convention. They pass walkways built from candy canes, inner tube rides, Santa's workshop, play areas, cotton candy machines, and hot chocolate fountains. The sleigh stops.

Cole exits and ventures off into the venue.

CUT TO:

INT. LA GUARDIA AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Ken and April ride down an escalator with their bags.

EXT. LA GUARDIA AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Ken hails a TAXI. They get in.

INT. SANTA CON - LATER

Cole explores different attractions. He builds a custom cookie at Rudolph's kitchen, takes part in an epic snowball fight, and rides inner tubes on Mrs. Claus Mountains'. At each attraction, he studies the different SANTAS' features.

He then sticks his head under a hot chocolate fountain, inspiring other kids to do the same with disastrous results.

As he wipes his mouth, he scans the room for the REAL SANTA.

COLE

Where are you, Kringle?

COLE POV:

Nothing but imposters, until his eyes settle on --

FROSTY'S VALLEY

A winter wonderland obstacle course with bridges, caves, monkey bars, and swings. At the top, a giant look-out point.

COLE (CONT'D)

Jenga.

Cole enters Frosty's Valley. He blows through the first half of the obstacle course arriving at a LOOKOUT POINT.

COLE BINOCULAR POV:

He scans the room looking for the REAL SANTA CLAUS.

CU. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

A candy cane path leads through the gingerbread forest straight into Santa's workshop. It's lined with children. At the end of the path sits a mountain of presents and...

A JOLLY FAT SANTA, emerges from the Workshop --

SANTA ONE

Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas!

Kids scream at the top of their lungs.

ANGLE ON: COLE

Lowering his binoculars.

COLE

Got ya...

ANGLE ON: ENTRANCE

April and Ken arrive at the check-in. Two ELVES greet them.

KEN
(shows picture of Cole)
Have you seen this, kid?

ELF ONE
Santa sees all his children.

APRIL
You're not Santa.

ELF TWO
Today's been our busiest day yet.
We've seen dozens of kids.

APRIL
What kind of a convention allows a
child to walk in, alone?

ELF ONE
Magic brought him here and that's
all you need.

APRIL
You're a special kind of stupid,
you know that?

KEN
You didn't think to ask where his
parents were?

ELF TWO
It doesn't work like that, sir.
Look at all the helpers we have.

She motions to the main area and there are literally dozens upon dozens of adult and kid ELVES walking around.

ELF ONE
Each one, unique in their own
special way.

APRIL
Please shut-up. It's Christmas Eve
and because of you, our child is
lost at one of the biggest
conventions on the planet.

ANGLE ON: COLE

Reaching the top of the cookie mountain next to a zip-line.

ANGLE ON: ENTRANCE

KEN

I say we split up and cover every inch of the different areas. If he's here, we'll find him.

APRIL

And waste more time in the north pole? No! We don't even know if he's still here and it's going to be dark soon. I'm going out to look for him.

KEN

What?

ELF TWO

With all due respect mam your son is lost at one of the biggest conventions in the world.

KEN

Could you stop talking, please?

ELF TWO

I don't want to, but I will.

KEN

I don't think it's a good idea for you to start running around all over New York by yourself.

APRIL

I think if our son can travel three-thousand miles, a half-dozen bridges shouldn't be too hard.

KEN

April it's --

APRIL

Kenny, I'll be fine. You stay here and look for him while I'm out there. We'll find him.

Ken smiles at her in a way she hasn't seen in a long time.

APRIL (CONT'D)

What? Why are you smiling?

KEN

You haven't called me Kenny since we had Katrina.

APRIL

I didn't want too, until just now.

They lock eyes for a beat. Cole appears on the zip-line atop the mountain behind them, but they don't look.

ELF ONE

(leans in smiling)

Whatever's happening right now is
Santa's doing...Nama-sleigh...

Ken and April both look at the Elf with disgust. Cole jumps off the mountain and flies down the ZIP-LINE --

COLE

(screams)

AHHHHHH!

He lands in a giant Hershey kiss foam pit. Ken and April glance over at the commotion, but miss Cole by half a second.

APRIL

I'll call you once I find him.

KEN

Not if I find him first.

April smiles and exits left. Ken goes right as --

Cole emerges from the foam pit. A GIRL sits on Santa's lap.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

LITTLE GIRL

I want a MAC palette so I can be
prettier than my neighbor, Bailey.

SANTA ONE

Well aren't you precious.

She hops off his lap. Cole approaches. A boy sits on Santa.

COLE

Is it really you?

SANTA

What? Of course. I'm Santa Claus.

COLE

Yeah right.

SANTA

Who else would I be?

COLE
If you're Santa what did you give
me for Christmas last year?

SANTA
(thinking)
A lump of coal. The naughty ones
never change.

Cole wasn't expecting that. Is this the real *Santa*? Certainly
seems like the real deal. 60 years old, white hair, round
belly, red cheeks... Cole takes a step closer to investigate.

SANTA (CONT'D)
(to little boy)
So, how old are you little boy?

KID
Five and three quarters.

SANTA
You're a tall one, what's your
name?

KID
Brad.

SANTA
And what can Santa bring you for
Christmas?

COLE
Brad, keep quiet. If he was real,
he'd know your name. This man is an
imposter!

SANTA
Let the boy speak.

COLE
You disappoint me. How do you get
up in the morning?

SANTA
Just relax, sport.

COLE
You fly in a sleigh of deception.

SANTA
Look, I'm not messing around. Stop.

COLE
You're a phony.

SANTA
I'm a phony?

COLE
Oh yeah.

SANTA
How'd you like to drown? Huh?

COLE
Phony...

SANTA
Hahaha, he's just joking.

Cole takes a step closer, now inches away, and sniffs him.

COLE
(sniffing)
Your breath stinks.

Brad leaves. An Elf brings a new kid.

SANTA
(to Brad)
You have a merry Christmas okay!?

COLE
You smell like burnt bologna and
regret. Do you smoke herbs?

Cole grabs his hat. He's bald and his beard comes off.

COLE (CONT'D)
Whoah -- the deception!

The kids freak out! Everyone starts screaming.

COLE (CONT'D)
He killed Santa and took his hair!

SANTA
Give me that!

Santa jumps up and Cole takes off. A chase ensues --

COLE
He's a Claus killer! Murderer!

SANTA
Get over here!

Cole makes a break for it back into Santa's Winter
Wonderland. Other people take notice. SECURITY closes in.

COLE'S POV:

Santas and the Elves surround him. He has nowhere to go but down. An Elf lunges at him, but Cole ducks and sees a slide --

ANGLE ON: CANDY CANE SLIDE

Cole hops onto a massive two-story slide, closes his eyes as he flies around turns. He shoots out at the bottom --

ANGLE ON: FROSTY VALLEY

Ken catches wind of the commotion. Sees throngs of people rushing to a new area. He senses it's Cole. Takes off --

INT. SANTA CON, FOOD COURT AREA

Cole rounds a corner grabbing a ginger bread man off a cookie plate. He bites the head off, as a BURLY SANTA approaches. Cole cocks back and throws the cookie like a NINJA STAR.

BAM!

Right between the eyes. Santa crashes into a Milk fountain.

ANGLE ON: SANTA THREE, FOUR, AND FIVE

Closing in from the left. They are large and intimidating.

SANTA FOUR

Someone's on the naughty list.

COLE

You don't even have a list!

He rips a STRING OF LIGHTS off a banister and rounds a corner tying the lights to a pillar. Then takes off to an ICE RINK.

SANTA FIVE

Get him!

The LARGE SANTAS round the corner and trip on the LIGHTS sending them sliding across the --

ICE RINK

Crashing into kids, parents and other elves. A MEAN SANTA blocks the exit. Cole dives and slides through his legs. The MEAN SANTA lunges at him falling flat on his face.

Ken appears at the opposite side, catching a glimpse of Cole.

CUT TO:

INT. GINGERBREAD FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Cole cuts the line, running through the gingerbread forest with everything he's got; crushing through life sized gingerbread men and candy cane trees.

COLE POV:

An elevator at the end of the forest, next to a mountain of presents shaped like a magnificent tree.

COLE
Home stretch!

He approaches the elevator when suddenly -- a SECURITY GUARD appears from behind the mountain of presents. He blocks the elevator ready to grab Cole, arms out, legs spread.

Cole heads straight at the Security Guard as the Santas and Elves are inches behind him. At the last moment, Cole darts right and grabs TINSEL off a GIANT CHRISTMAS TREE. He jumps --

Swinging from the fourth story down to the 2nd. He lands.

SECURITY GUARD POV:

Shocked in disbelief at Cole's stunt. He turns around as the Santas and Elves crash into him hard. Ken right behind them.

INT. SANTA CON, LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Cole releases the TINSEL and leaps into a waiting --

ELEVATOR

A group of EMPLOYEES look at him strangely.

COLE
You guys going down?

The group shakes their head no.

INT. SANTA CON, TOP FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The doors open. There's life-size lego creations everywhere. All Christmas-themed. Cole blends in with different families.

He rounds a corner and stops dead in his tracks.

Santas and Elves are all around him. There's nowhere left to go. He starts backing up to the edge of a balcony as they creep towards him.

SANTA FIVE
We got you now.

SANTA SIX
We're always watching.

SANTA THREE
Let's teach him a lesson.

As Cole backs into the guard rails...

SANTA THREE (CONT'D)
That's a long ways down.

COLE'S POV:

Peering over the edge. A mountain of presents at the bottom.

COLE
I've jumped from higher.

He climbs on top of the guard rail.

SANTA FIVE
Get down from there, kid. You're
going to hurt yourself.

COLE
Come and get me, ya filthy animals.

Cole falls backwards, arms crossed Navy Seal style. The Santas and Elves rush to the edge of the balcony as Cole lands in the mountain of presents.

COLE (CONT'D)
That's a wrap.

He gets up and leaves as Ken appears at the balcony.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK, TIMES SQUARE - LATER

April runs up to different PEOPLE in Times Square with a picture of Cole.

APRIL
Have you seen this boy? It's my son
and if you just look here --

WORKERS, BUSINESSMEN, FOOD VENDORS... but nobody's seen him.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - COLE

Wandering down the street, stopping in front of a brownstone.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole is framed in the window of the house as a young family hugs and exchanges gifts. Great warmth and cheer. It's everything Cole yearns for. He fights back the tears and continues on. Carolers sing "Silent Night" next door.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL - MOMENTS LATER

Cole comes around a corner. CHURCH BELLS RING. He slows. Mass is in session. The SOUND OF THE CHOIR is leaking out. He feels lonely and sad. He lowers his head and enters.

INT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

Cole takes a seat in a back pew. He kneels down in prayer.

COLE

Hey, J.C. Me and you don't talk as often as I'd like, but I'm here now and I got a pretty big favor to ask you. I know I don't deserve any presents for Christmas, even if my heart was in the right place. I don't want a new snowboard or guitar or games. Instead, I wanna apologize for every crummy thing I ever did to my family. I love all of them, even David. If it's possible I just want to see my mom and dad happy again. I never want another thing as long as I'm alive. I just want my parents back. I know it's a lot to ask, but even if it's just for a few hours, I'd like to see them together, again. I just have to tell them I'm sorry. Thank you, God. This is your boy, Cole.

A long pause and he lowers his head. He makes the sign of the cross as the CHURCH BELLS RING and stands up to leave.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Ken is moving quick, searching, almost running, questioning strangers on the street, yelling out for Cole.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS

Cole exits the cathedral, and turns back staring up reverently at the massive church. The BELLS RING from above.

The wind picks up. A TINY BELL RINGS. Different from the church. Cole turns around slowly. SLEIGH BELLS RING.

COLE POV:

SANTA and his REINDEER in the park across the street.

COLE

Santa?

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

April frantically rushes down the street approaching people.

APRIL

Oh-- hey-- excuse me-- I'm looking for my son, have you seen him!?!?

She holds up a picture of Cole.

APRIL (CONT'D)

This is him right here.

The PEOPLE shake their heads. April stops in front of a TOY STORE, at the end of her rope. She looks at the window.

INSERT: A PUZZLE OF A BRIDGE

CU. APRIL

Something stirs inside her. She pulls her cell.

APRIL (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Ken! I know where Cole is!

Off April hailing a cab --

INT./EXT. SANTA'S SLEIGH - CONTINUOUS

Cole flies in the sleigh with Santa.

COLE

It's really you, isn't it?

SANTA

It really is. Are you okay?

COLE
Yeah. I think so.

SANTA
I'm really happy to see you, Cole.
I knew you'd find me, even if you
didn't think you could do it.

COLE
I never thought that.

SANTA
Not even at the Bulls game?

Cole looks at Santa closer. It's the REFEREE from earlier.

COLE
(realizing)
It was you who gave me the ball...

SANTA
Uh-huh.

COLE
I didn't mean to leave my Uncle's
house so messed up.

SANTA
Unforeseen circumstances are no-
one's friend. That's why I helped
you out.

COLE
Are you still gonna have time to
deliver all your presents? I don't
want to make you late.

SANTA
We'll manage, but first I need your
help.

COLE
I'm no good for anyone, Santa. I
can't do anything right.

SANTA
Cole, you've got more courage than
anyone I ever met.

COLE
Really?

SANTA
Really! Look at where you are!

Cole looks out at New York as they soar through the sky.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Now, would you say that you've been a good boy this year?

COLE

No. Not really.

SANTA

We all make mistakes. You don't live over a millennium without messing a few things up.

Cole feels a little better.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Mistakes are a part of life. If you don't make them, you'll never grow.

COLE

Was giving me coal last year one of those mistakes?

SANTA

(laughing)

Like I said, I've made many mistakes, but that my dear boy wasn't one of them.

COLE

Why is that?

SANTA

Because I believed in you. I believed that if I gave you coal, you'd set off on a journey that would change your life forever.

COLE

You knew I would come after you?

SANTA

Knew it? I was counting on it.

Cole looks at him inquisitively.

COLE

Why?

SANTA

What is this season all about?

COLE
Presents?

SANTA
(laughs)
Sure. But would you say it's also
about spreading joy?

COLE
Yeah.

SANTA
And cheer? Goodwill? Love?

COLE
Yes. All those things.

SANTA
Well, who do you share that with?

COLE
Used to be my family, but I don't
have one of those anymore. I really
messed things up.

SANTA
No family is perfect, Cole; but
don't ever think that it's all
because of you.

Cole stays silent.

SANTA (CONT'D)
You have a good heart.

COLE
Do I? My parents are probably
freaking out.

SANTA
It's your heart that led you here.
You take the time to listen, it
will always guide you in the right
direction.

Santa's sleigh comes to a stop on the peak of Gothic Bridge.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Your present's right down there.

Cole looks around the BRIDGE and doesn't see anything.

COLE
That's a lot of fog, Santa.

SANTA

(laughs)

Walk to the center and wait.
Remember to always keep your heart
clean and your mind open.

(then)

Merry Christmas, Cole.

COLE

Merry Christmas, Santa.

EXT. GOTHIC BRIDGE

Cole hops out and watches the sleigh vanish into the night.
He walks to the center of the bridge and stops.

All alone once again. He looks out at the city.

A long pause and he lowers his head. He hears the faint sound
of SLEIGH BELLS RINGING in the distance. A car approaches.

April exits on the left side of the bridge. Another car
approaches. It's Ken on the right side.

They both see Cole at the same time.

APRIL

Cole!

KEN

Cole!

Cole's jaw drops. He turns to see his mom. Then his dad.

COLE

Mom? Dad?

CU. COLE FROM BEHIND

He turns to see...

HIS POV

April and Ken rush toward him from opposite directions.

CU. COLE

He's in shock. As if he doesn't trust his eyes.

APRIL

Oh, Cole.

COLE

Mom, dad, I'm so sorry.

Ken smiles through the tears.

KEN
We're sorry, too.

They hold each-other's gaze a moment, then all embrace.

COLE
Merry Christmas.

APRIL
Merry Christmas, baby.

KEN
Merry Christmas, son.

Ken wraps his arms around both of them squeezing him tight.
Cole looks up to the sky.

COLE
(whispers)
Thank you...

April smiles at him.

APRIL
Let's go home.

They exit frame and WE PULL OUT above the bridge where a piece of coal sits atop the stone railing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MCCARTHY HOUSE - MORNING

A beautiful morning.

INT. COLE'S ROOM - MORNING

It's just past 6am and the sun is already out.

COLE is on top of the bed, asleep in his Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles pajamas with the footsies. Morning light leaks in through the bedroom window; he stirs and opens his eyes. He blinks a few times, as if he's getting his bearings, then sits up and looks around.

Yes, it's definitely his room, and everything seems the same, from the snowboarding and rock n' roll posters to his video game systems and action figure collection.

Cole looks at the clock: 6:15. He looks at the wall calendar: the second to last week of December is X'ed off -- today is the 25th. It's Christmas! *Could it have all been a dream?*

COLE

What a crazy Christmas dream...I
knew dad's eggnog tasted funny.

He gets out of bed and looks at himself in the mirror, then pulls at his cheeks to make sure he's real. He is. On the nightstand is a framed 5x7 version of the family Big Bear trip. It looks the same, except his clothes are different.

He reaches into his desk drawer and pulls out a Sharpie. He uncaps it, walks over to the calendar and crosses off the 25th, but he notices something. The date is wrong.

This is the calendar from LAST YEAR. He looks down at his pajamas, then it suddenly dawns on him:

WE'RE BACK AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MOVIE

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Cole comes flying down the hallway. He runs down the stairs and stops short as he enters --

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The entire house has been upgraded.

All the furniture, lamps, plants and artwork are brand new, the dining room table is beautifully set for breakfast, and the TREE is now humongous; filled with elaborate ornaments.

KATRINA and DAVID are seated on the floor next to the fireplace opening presents in matching ELF pajamas.

COLE

What's all this?

KATRINA

It's Christmas, silly!

DAVID

What, you too cool for our pajamas?

Cole's eyes dart around the room in confusion.

COLE

Uh...yeah, I didn't think you'd
wear 'em. What time's mom picking
us up?

KATRINA
 (confused)
 Picking us up?

David stands up and throws a bow in the garbage.

DAVID
 Cole, we picked these pajamas out
 together last week at the mall. You
 feeling okay?

COLE
 Yeah. Yeah, I'm okay.

Cole nods uneasily as he takes his place by the tree.

Now KEN and APRIL walk down the stairs. They're healthy and
 tanned with fresh haircuts in lush, silk robes. Ken carries
 himself with an air of confidence and April looks stunning.

This is a happy marriage. Cole can't believe they're here.

KEN
 Merry Christmas!

APRIL
 Merry Christmas!

COLE
 Mom! Dad!

Cole runs to hug them, but trips over wrapping paper.

APRIL
 Sweetheart are you alright?

KEN
 Did you hit your arm?

COLE
 (rising)
 You're back together!

KEN
 Hard to keep us apart --

Ken playfully grabs April's butt, pecks her on the neck.

APRIL
 (laughs pushing him back)
 Kenny McCarthy...

Ken walks over to the tree as April approaches Cole.

APRIL (CONT'D)
 (kisses him on the cheek)
 Merry Christmas sleepy head.

COLE
 Merry Christmas...

KATRINA
Look at these earrings!

APRIL
Very nice! David, what'd you get?

David pulls out a GIFT CARD to CULVER'S.

DAVID
Twenty bucks to Culver's!

KEN
Best butter burgers in the state!

DAVID
It's all about the cheese curds,
old man!

APRIL
What about you, Cole? Think I see
something in there...

Cole notices the bulge in his stocking and slowly rises.

VHS RECORDER POV:

Cole hesitantly approaches his stocking. He sticks his hand
in and digs around, then starts to pull his hand out --

His eyes go wide at the sight of --

A GOLD BOX

Inside is a: **CUSTOM GUITAR PICK with his initials on it.**

COLE
Wow...My own Fender pick...

April and Ken share a confused look. Cole reaches back in and
pulls out a CD with Brody, Ziggy and Damien on the cover.

DING-DONG! THE DOORBELL RINGS

EXT. MCCARTHY HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ken opens the door. A FED-EX delivery man stands there.

FED-EX MAN
Merry Christmas!

KEN
Merry Christmas to you.

FED-EX MAN
 (checks iPad)
 Have a delivery here for Cole
 McCarthy...

COLE (O.S.)
 That's me!

Cole runs up to the door and stops short as he sees --
 HENRY -- dressed in the FedEx uniform. His glasses are
 thicker and he now rocks a ponytail, but it's him.

FED-EX MAN
 Sign here, little man.

Cole is absolutely astonished.

COLE
 Sure...

He signs for the package and hands the iPad back to Henry.

FED-EX MAN
 Alright. Looks good. You folks
 enjoy the holiday!

As Ken inspects the package --

KEN
 Let's see what we got here...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ken enters carrying a GIANT BOX. As Cole opens it up --

INSERT - GUITAR

It's a FRETLESS MC900, an exact replica of Sting's guitar.

COLE
 Now THIS is a guitar.

APRIL
 (to Ken)
 You're just full of surprises
 aren't you, Mr. McCarthy?

KEN
 Nice try, Mrs. McCarthy.

APRIL
 I didn't do this.

KEN
Neither did I. Seriously.

APRIL
(thinking)
Well, if you didn't buy the guitar
and I didn't buy it, who did?

Ken looks over the guitar case, finds a POSTCARD.

INSERT - POSTCARD

A picture of the North Pole on the front. On the back, a picture of Cole and Sting on stage at Madison Square Garden. They're in concert together with a note that reads:

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)
"Dear Cole, Remember no kid is too cool to spend time with their family - Santa"

KEN
(laughing)
This has got my brother written all over it.

Katrina and David look at the picture.

KATRINA
When were you on stage with, Sting?

DAVID
It's not real, Kat. Uncle Jordan definitely used Photoshop.

KEN
That's pretty good.

APRIL
What a funny guy.

Katrina looks at the C.D. from Cole's stocking.

KATRINA
Who are the Three Wise Men?

COLE
It's a long story...

Cole looks directly at CAMERA and smiles.

FADE OUT.