SCROOGE

A Christmas Carol

by

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7TH DRAFT

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FADE UP ON:

1 EXT. NORTH POLE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Santa's Workshop -- a quaint "gingerbread" cottage nestled in a serene, snow-covered valley. Smoke curls from the chimney. MUSIC: Silent Night played on a celeste enhances the Christmas card peace and beauty.

WE MOVE CLOSER and isolate details:

A candy-striped column marked "NORTH POLE."

Below the glistening, icicle-trimmed eave, silhouetted on the shade of a frost-veiled window, ELVES put the final touches on some toys -- tapping an extra nail, adding that last dab of paint.

REINDEER nervously paw the ground, gently jangling their sleighbells as they shake the snow from their antlers.

Cheeks fat with acorns, a CHIMPUNK scampers across the yard to his home behind the woodpile.

A rusty, old weathervane CREAKS in the breeze. All the arrows are stamped "S."

In the sleigh sits a huge sack overflowing with gifts which include toy drums, bisque dolls, teddybears.

Backlit by the full moon, a SNOWY OWL hoots softly and shuts his eyes.

The sky sparkles with stars but one shines brighter than the rest. Is it a falling star? No, it's a flaming mortar shell that screams into the cottage and explodes in a teeth-jarring fireball of MULTIPLE BLASTS.

MUSIC changes to standard TV action fare as a gritty-voiced ANNOUNCER cuts in.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Seven o'clock. Psychos seize Santa's Workshop and only Chuck Norris can stop them in --

CUT TO:
VIOLENT MONTAGE

which includes an ELF knocking out a window with a gun butt, SANTA slamming a clip in an assault rifle, CLOSE UPS of AK-47s and M-60s FIRING, bullets shredding a Christmas tree, bullets splintering a coo-coo clock, bullets chewing up a row of candy canes.

MONTAGE ENDS on CHUCK NORRIS poised in "Road Warrior" arctic battle gear -- sleeves ripped off, white bandana around head -- brandishing a flame-thrower.

SUPER TITLE.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
-- "The Night the Reindeer Died."

CHUCK
Eat this!

Chuck pulls the trigger, unloading a fountain of fire.

CUT TO:

OMITTED

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

A tuxedoed BOB GOULET stands in a dugout deep in the bayou. He poles the boat while singing The Little Drummer Boy. Announcer turns syrupy.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Eight-thirty. And America's best-loved singer invites you to share a home-style holiday when it's --

SUPER TITLE.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
-- "Bob Goulet's Old Fashioned Cajun Christmas."

BOB
"Pa-rum pum pum pum,
Just me and my drum."

CUT TO:
GATOR

A hungry GATOR slides off the bank and heads for Bob.

BACK TO SCENE

BOB (O.S.)
"Me and my drum."

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT


ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Nine o'clock. Someone is killing sidewalk Santas and only Loni Anderson can stop him in --

SUPER: "FAT, JOLLY AND"...

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
-- "Fat, Jolly and" ...

MUSIC ENDS as we HEAR the SOUND of a lead pipe CRUSHING a skull o.s. Bell slips from Santa's hand and clatters to the gutter.

FINISHING SUPERING TITLE with word "DEAD" in dripping, red letters.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
... "Dead."

CUT TO:

INT. VICTORIAN PARLOR - NIGHT

JOHN HOUSEMAN sits in a wing chair in front of a crackling fire reading from a red leather-bound copy of Scrooge.

JOHN HOUSEMAN
"It was a cold, bleak Christmas Eve. The fog-draped streets of London were..."

FADE HIS AUDIO.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Ten o'clock. IBC presents --
live -- via satellite from New
York, Bethlehem, Helsinki, West
Berlin and the Great Barrier Reef
-- Charles Dickens' immortal
Christmas classic Scrooge.

SUPER TITLE.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Starring Marlon Brando, Barbra
Streisand, former Speaker of the
House Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill,
the Solid Gold Dancers, and Mary
Lou Retton as Tiny Tim. Scrooge.
It'll touch your every
heartstring.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

TV set with "SCROOGE" TITLE on screen. A Rockwell-esque
family is gathered around watching TV -- MOM and POP on
couch, JUNIOR on the floor with his PUPPY and a bowl of
popcorn. Their happy faces glow in the warm TV light.

JUNIOR
Hurry up, Gramps! It's starting!

GRAMPS hurries in to join family.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
That's right! It all starts on
Christmas Eve.

SUPER gleaming silver IBC Network logo FULL-FRAME.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Christmas Eve on IBC --

Under logo, SUPER "Yule love it."

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
You'll love it.
INT. FRANK’S OFFICE – DAY

REVEAL that we have been watching a TV screen in an office at IBC -- the International Broadcasting Company.

The lights come up. The same silver IBC logo is mounted on the wall. A table is ringed with network EXECUTIVES. At one end of the table is the big TV monitor. At the other end sits FRANK CROSS, president of IBC, who presides over the meeting.

Frank is trim, polished and good-looking. At thirty-eight, he is young for the powerful position he holds. The press still calls him a "TV wonderkind." Co-workers call him the "Smiling Viper."

MRS. GRACE COOLEY, his attractive black secretary, sits near him taking notes.

This is a power office -- bleak, modern and immense. It is on the 22nd floor with huge grid windows that look down on New York City. It's designed to impress and intimidate. There is futuristic design furniture, a wall of TV monitors, a private bathroom, a small kitchen, a bar. Above the ultra-modern desk hangs a Picasso from his 1907-8 "African-Negro" period. The walls are decorated with primitive masks, the closest thing Frank has to a hobby. The massive desk is littered with Scrooge miscellany -- drawings, models, posters, swatches, etc.

No one speaks, waiting for Frank's reaction. There are a few nervous coughs.

Finally Frank leans forward in the chair.

FRANK
It sucks.

EXECUTIVE 1
Yeah, something's missing...I don't know.

WAYNE, a smarmy sycophant, leaps on the bandwagon.

WAYNE
The Chuck Norris thing was way over the top.

FRANK
Chuck Norris was fine.

(CONTINUED)
WAYNE
But somehow it worked, I don't know why.

EXECUTIVE 2
Nah, it's something else. It's not uh...

WAYNE
Bob Goulet looked wrong. We should've lost the gator.

FRANK
The gator's great. Grace, refill.

Grace leaps for the coffee urn.

WAYNE
Of course my kids love the gator.

TED, aggressive young head of publicity, shakes his head.

TED
It's not the gator, it's not Chuck Norris...

WAYNE
Thank god Scrooge works.

FRANK
Scrooge stinks.

TED
(snapping his fingers)
There's your problem -- Scrooge.

FRANK
We spend forty million dollars on a live TV show and we've got an ad with some old fart reading a book by a fire.

ELIOT LOUDERMILK, a slightly nerdy junior executive, raises his hand.

ELIOT
Sir, we've been running that spot for a month and we're getting a terrific response.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
I'm the youngest president in the history of television for only one reason -- I know people.

ELIOT
But the people already want to watch the show.

FRANK
(giving Eliot a dead stare)
That's not enough. They've got to be afraid to miss it. Grace, kill the lights.

The room goes black.

A new TV promo begins. It is shot in high-contrast black and white, SCORED with heavy metal, and features grit-voiced ANNOUNCER #2. SFX: AMPLIFIED HEARTBEAT.

BLACK SCREEN.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Freeway killers.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT
ALL FIVE PASSENGERS of a speeding car open up on the moving CAMERA in a blaze of gunfire.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Arab terrorists.

EXT. SKY - DAY
A 747 EXPLODES in mid-air fireball.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Aids.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY
Ignoring o.s. screams, a grim sun-gun lit NURSE in starched white uniform stalks the CAMERA, brandishing a hypodermic needle like an icepick.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Teenage suicide.
INT. SCHOOL - DAY

An o.s. GUNSHOT splatters blood on a blackboard on which there is a childish drawing of a cat with "CAT" scrawled underneath.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Drug-crazed maniacs.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A knife-wielding INTRUDER with a stocking pulled over his face and a Nazi armband kicks in the door and lunges for the CAMERA.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Acid rain.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

HIGH-ANGLES ON shrieking MOB of people trying desperately to fend off the rain that burns smouldering in their umbrellas.

EXT. DESERT - PRE-DAWN

L.S. of an ominous black shape which stands in the sand like a towering mountain. MUSIC builds.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Now, more than ever, it is important to remember the true meaning of Christmas.

The o.s. rising sun illuminates the dark shape as the MUSIC builds.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Don't miss Charles Dickens' immortal classic -- SCROOGE.

It's evident that the shape is giant stark letters that form the title -- "SCROOGE". MUSIC peaks.

But suddenly a blinding atomic BLAST shatters the letters. A mushroom cloud rises high in the sky.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Your life might just depend on it.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CAMERA PANS DOWN. Atomic dust clears to REVEAL candy cane lying in the dirt.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Shell-shocked execs spill out of Frank's office. Ashen, open-mouthed, they drift away from the meeting.

Frank briskly moves through them, spitting out instructions to Ted. Grace is close on their heels.

TRACK them as they walk down office corridor. Illuminated posters of other IBC shows line the hallway.

FRANK
(to Ted)
I want that run every hour on the hour.

TED
Got it.

He peels off. Grace assumes Ted's position by Frank's side.

FRANK
Get Standards and Practices up here. And I'm gonna need to see Reese.

GRACE
Your attorney?

FRANK
No, the screamer in wardrobe. Which reminds me -

ELIOT (O.S.)
Excuse me, Mr. Cross?

Eliot rushes up to them.

ELIOT
Sir? What...uh...what exactly does that ad have to do with Scrooge?

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
Nothing. Why?

ELIOT
Well...it, uh, seems to pervert the whole..."spirit" of Christmas. It won't make people feel good and joyous. This ad will frighten them.

FRANK
(smiling coldly)
It'll scare the Dickens out of them!

Frank turns on his heels and heads back to his office. Grace gives Eliot a sympathetic smile and follows.

INT. AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

They reach Grace's desk, neat and impersonal save for a child's fingerpainting taped to her cubicle wall.

FRANK
And, Grace, would you ah...oh, what's the name of the kid I was just talking to? With glasses, bright kid, lot of guts?

GRACE
Eliot Loudermilk.

FRANK
Yeah, Loudermilk. Would you call security, have them clean out his desk, change his locks and toss him out of the building.

GRACE
He's fired? But- it's Christmas.

FRANK
Thank you. Call accounting and have his bonus stopped.

GRACE
(on phone)

He points at the fingerpainting.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
What's this?

GRACE
It's a painting one of my kids did. See, there's Santa and —

FRANK
How many fingers does Mrs. Claus have on her left hand?

GRACE
(studying it)
Four.

FRANK
On her right?

GRACE
Seven.

He yanks it off the wall and tosses it to her.

FRANK
Grace, it's crap. Lose it.

He heads for his office.

FRANK
Come in and bring your pad.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE — DAY

Frank is making himself a "Stab" - Stolichnaya and Tab — when Grace enters.

FRANK
Okay, let's get this over with.
Read me the list.

Grace takes out the Christmas list.

GRACE
Goldberg.

FRANK
Send him a VHS home video recorder.

Parker.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANK
VHS.
GRACE
Kaluta.
FRANK
The bath towel.
GRACE
Brock.
FRANK
VHS.
GRACE
Forristal.
FRANK
Towel.
GRACE
Whitacre.

Frank stands at the window, sipping his drink, staring moodily down at the street. It's snowing heavily.

FRANK
What was the last rating on Police Zoo?

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE IBC BUILDING - DAY

Eliot Loudermilk stands in the snow outside the IBC entrance, holding a tennis racket. Cardboard boxes filled with his stuff sit piled on the curb. A briefcase sails out and lands at his feet. WE HEAR sad violin MUSIC — "Eliot's Theme." Eliot looks up at the towering skyscraper and raises his fist.

ELIOT
(screaming)
I'll get you Frank Cross you son of a bitch!

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace reads the ratings for Police Zoo.

(CONTINUED)
GRACE
Five point two Neilson, seven share and a TVQ of three.

FRANK/GRACE
(together)
Towel.

GRACE
Your brother.

FRANK
Towel.

Frank's getting impatient. He grabs the list.

FRANK
Just gimme that. Towel, towel, VHS, towel... And Grace... put yourself down for a towel.

GRACE
What about my bonus?

FRANK
And a face cloth.

Grace answers the phone. He throws back the drink.

GRACE
Mr. Cross' office. Yes, I'll tell him.

She hangs up.

GRACE
Mr. Rhinelander's on his way down.

FRANK
What? He's coming here? Jesus Christ, how do L look?

She straightens his tie and fixes his hair as he shoves the vodka bottle in the desk drawer. He then assumes an "executive working pose" behind his desk, jotting down notes from a copy of Sport's Illustrated. Grace is about to leave when she notices the magazine is upside-down. She turns it right-side-up and exits as PRESTON RHINELANDER enters. Rhinelander, IBC chairman, is in his sixties with white hair and pale blue eyes. His manner is more than reserved. It's cold.

(Continued)
FRANK
Preston! What a surprise.

He holds up the Sports Illustrated cover with Mary Lou Retton in rags with crutches on the cover.

FRANK
I was just going over some of the great press we're getting on this Scrooge show. Mary Lou Retton as Tiny Tim.

Frank babbles nervously in the face of Rhinelander's stony silence.

FRANK
And here's the buy -- she doesn't just throw away her crutches and walk. She throws away her crutches, somersaults across the floor, vaults over a lamppost and lands in a full twisting --

Rhinelander leans across the desk.

Rhinelander
Frank?

FRANK
Yes?

Rhinelander
Do you know how many cats there are in this country?

FRANK
No, not ah --

Rhinelander
Twenty-seven million. Do you know how many dogs?

FRANK
In America?

Rhinelander
Forty-eight million. We spend four billion dollars on pet food alone.

Frank stalls for time, unable to grasp what his boss is driving at.

(Continued)
FRANK
Four billion?

RHINELANDER
I know this must sound crazy, Frank, but I have here a study
from Hempstead University showing that cats and dogs are starting
to watch television.

He holds up the report.

RHINELANDER
If these scientists are right, we have got to begin programming
for them now. In twenty years, they could be steady viewers.

FRANK
Programming... for cats?

RHINELANDER
Listen, I'm not saying build an
entire show around animals. All
I'm suggesting is that we
occasionally throw in a little
"pet appeal" -- some birds, a
squirrel...

FRANK
Mice?

RHINELANDER
Exactly. Mice. Remember 'Kojak
and his lollipops? How about a
cop who dangles string? That's
his gimmick. Lots of quick,
random movement. Frank, wasn't
there a doormouse in Scrooge?

FRANK
No, but now that you mention it,
I always felt it needed a
doormouse.

RHINELANDER
Better yet -- doormice. Walk
with me.
INT. ELEVATOR BANK - DAY

Frank and Rhinelander enter.

RHINELANDER
Frank, this show is the jewel in
the IBC crown.
(pinning Frank with an
icy stare)
Everything is riding on it.

FRANK
Preston, I'm personally
overseeing every stage of this
project. We'll own Christmas.

Rhinelander steps into an UP elevator.

RHINELANDER
That's all I wanted to hear.
Lunch tomorrow -- 21?

FRANK
Sounds great.

As the doors close on Rhinelander, the doors of another
elevator open and BRICE CUMMINGS steps out. Tan, sharp
and yuppie-handsome, he sees Frank and smiles winningly.

BRICE
Hi Frank. Brice Cummings. We
met at Spago.

FRANK
Yeah, right.

He turns to go.

BRICE
Have you seen Preston?

Frank turns back.

FRANK
He just went back upstairs.

BRICE
I just dropped by to say hello.
I went to school with the big
guy's son.

FRANK
Great.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Brice steps back inside the elevator.

BRICE
Gimme a call when you hit the coast.

The doors close on him.

OMITTED

INT. GRACE'S AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - DUSK

Frank blows past Grace.

FRANK
(over his shoulder)
Get me a full report on Brice Cummings.

GRACE
You're due at the Helmsley Palace
in five minutes. Can I ask you -

FRANK
Not now.

GRACE
I can't stay late tonight. I
have to take my little boy to the
doctor's.

FRANK
Then I suggest you get to work
on that report.

GRACE
But I made this appoint-

FRANK
Because the sooner you're done,
the sooner you can leave.

GRACE
Couldn't I -

FRANK
If it's a problem, I'm sure there
are lots of younger, whiter
secretaries who would just love
your job.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANK (Cont'd)
(softly)
Loud and clear.

GRACE
Yes sir. Your brother's waiting
for you inside.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DUSK

His younger brother, JAMES CROSS, has been sitting in the
office watching it all. James is a lanky, decent-looking
fellow. He renovates brownstones which explains why he's
wearing paint-flecked jeans and a beatup Shaggy Dog
sweater.

JAMES
Hey, Francis. You were a little
tough on her. You know what they
say "If you treat people badly
on the way up - "

FRANK
(impatiently cutting in)
you can also treat them badly on
the way down. It's great. You
get two chances to treat them
badly. Listen, I'm out of here.

EXT. IBC BUILDING/PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

James and Frank make their way through heavy holiday
CROWD. James rubbernecks, "oohing" at the sights. Frank
just plows through.

JAMES
I really like this time of year.
Even in New York people are nicer
to each other. I saw a cab
driver help an old lady with her
packages. Well actually it
wasn't an old lady, it was more
like a young, teenage... hooker,
but he did get out and help her
with her packages.
JAMES
Wow! Look at that tree.

Frank walks on, oblivious.

JAMES
You don't like Christmas, do you?

A CROWD has gathered around singing CAROLERS/SALVATION ARMY BAND blocking the sidewalk.

FRANK
Like it? I love it. It's cold. People are home watching TV. Ad revenues jump thirty percent. I'm the biggest fan Christmas ever had.

(elbows through crowd)
Jesus, think these idiots could take up more room?!

JAMES
Any chance you can make it for Christmas dinner? You can finally see my -

FRANK
Pointless life?

JAMES
Hey, back off. What's the problem -- I have friends? And a wife I'm crazy about?

FRANK
Fine, you have your dinner with your "concerned and involved" friends, okay? Send each other Christmas cards on recycled paper and string "real" popcorn and "real" cranberries for the "real" tree and babble about the "priceless gift of sharing" and kids with their eyes big as teacups and squeeze-toys for the dog and

(in falsetto)
"Oh, honey, it's just what I always wanted! This is the most wonderful Christmas ever!" But, James, count me out!

(Continued)
INT. HELMSLEY PALACE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

PAN DOWN dais PAST ARCHBISHOP and MAYOR KOCH HOLDING on Frank who speaks at a podium.

FRANK
...And he asked -- "What's old, wrinkled, and hangs out your shorts?"

ANGLE ON THE ARCHBISHOP

glancing at Frank apprehensively.

ANGLE ON FRANK

FRANK
The answer, of course, "your mother."

ANGLE ON ARCHBISHOP

bursting into laughter.

ANGLE ON AUDIENCE

New York's power elite laughing from their tables.

ANGLE ON FRANK

FRANK
But seriously, we are, when it comes right down to it, one big family. I got into broadcasting because I care about people. Sometimes I care a little too much -- and that hurts -- but I never forget something the Beatles once said -- "The love you take is equal to the love you make."

He holds up a trophy of a man leading a small boy by the hand.

FRANK
Thank you.
WIDE ANGLE

REVEALING a big banner behind him which reads: "HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR".

FRANK
I will always cherish this award.

EXT. EL SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Grace and CALVIN, Grace's five-year old son, descend the stairs from the elevated and head towards their street.

EXT. GRACE'S PROJECT BUILDING - NIGHT

Grace and Calvin walk hand-in-hand towards their graffiti-scarred project. They go inside and head up the stairs.

Feliz Navidad drifts out of a ground floor apartment.

EXT./INT. IBC BUILDING - NIGHT

A cab pulls up to the IBC entrance. Frank wordlessly gets out and walks into the building, leaving the Humanitarian Award on the seat. WE FOLLOW him past the TWO IBC SECURITY GUARDS manning the security systems console, past a display for Scrooge, across the vast marble lobby to the elevator bank.

Frank pushes the elevator button, the doors silently open, he enters and they close behind him.

EXT./INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Grace stands in her shabby hallway fumbling with her front door keys. Before she can unlock it, the door flies open. SHAISTA and RANDEE, seven-year-old twins, wrap themselves around her legs, squealing with joy.

TWINS
Momma's home!  Momma's home!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

A velvet painting of Martin Luther King hangs over a cardboard fireplace. Age-worn Christmas decorations and a peculiar Nativity scene which includes He-Man, Starlite and a Care Bear, bring some cheer to the dreary living room. The apartment is a little cramped for a family of four. Unfortunately, there are nine living there.

Randee runs over to Calvin, pulling him inside. As Grace enters, STEVEN, her fifteen-year-old, dread-locked son, bounds in from the kitchen, his younger sister, LANELL, on his heels.

STEVEN

Hi Mom!

Steven takes Calvin's coat and leads him over to the couch.

STEVEN

Calvin. Come here, man. Sit down.

Calvin stares blankly.

STEVEN


He tosses a sponge ball to Calvin who fails to react. It bounces off his chest.

RANDEE

Stupid, he doesn't wanna play catch. He wants to play She-Ra -- Princess of Power!

She dances the She-Ra doll up Calvin's leg. He doesn't respond.

EXT./INT. FRANK'S OFFICE — NIGHT

Frank exits the elevator. He unlocks the door to his office, walks in, switches on the lights, and locks the door behind him.

Frank takes off his coat, triggers a wall of TVs, and heads for the bar. WE CATCH the tail end of an ad and start into another IBC Christmas show.

WE SEE ON TV:
EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - DAY

A Nativity scene at the bottom of the ocean with FISH swimming through creche. John Denver's Calypso PLAYS.

SUPER TITLE "JACQUES COUSTEAU'S CHRISTMAS BENEATH THE SEA".

The TV continues o.s. while WE WATCH Frank settle in. He loosens his tie. He stirs his drink.

The flickering light from the TV screens makes the masks seem to come alive.

INT. GRACE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

GRAMMA, a loony "Koko Taylor" type blues mama, sets bowls of food down on the kitchen table. Grace comes out of her bedroom, drying her hair with an IBC towel. Shasta holds on to Grace's robe.

GRACE
What's for dinner, Gramma?

GRAMMA
Wheaties and olives.

GRACE
Again?

GRAMMA
Honey, after Calvin's doctor bills are paid, we're lucky to afford that.

GRACE
I know Mom but -- look, how about just the Wheaties?

SHASTA
Or olives!

Lanell enters the kitchen.

LANELL
Shasta, Steven needs you. Right now.

Shasta skips out the door.

(CONTINUED)
LANELL
So what did the doctor say?

GRACE
Same as all the others. He needs special treatment. It's gonna take a lot of money.

Gramma pours milk over the cereal and olives.

GRAMMA
I don't see what all the fuss is about. Calvin's a sweet child. He's just a little shy.

GRACE
Mom, he hasn't spoken a word in four years.

GRAMMA
Well, he's got a lot on his mind. He's a thoughtful little boy.

LANELL
Gramma, face it -- he's cat atomic.

GRACE
Catatonic, honey.

LANELL
Did you... did he give you the bonus?

GRACE
Yeah, I'm drying my hair with it.

Peals of high-pitched laughter erupt from the living room.

GRACE
What're they up to?

GRAMMA
They're just trimmin' the tree.

GRACE
We don't have a tree.
52 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Grace races in to find Calvin, wearing red and green pj's, standing on the coffee table. He is covered with tinsel, strings of blinking lights, dangling ornaments and a shiny silver star is stuck on his forehead.

GRACE
Oh no. Kids, get that stuff off him.

STEVEN
But Mom he looks so pretty.

GRAMMA
Even better than last year.

GRACE
Yeah, but still...

LANELL
Some day we got to get a real tree.

53 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

On TV, Denver continues to sing Calypso over SHOT of underwater manger with fish.

Drink in one hand, cigarette in the other, Frank shouts into the phone cradled on his shoulder.

FRANK
No, that won't do. Heat wave or no heat wave, you guys promised me the world's biggest snowman. No, I'm not cutting to Helsinki to see Hedwig, the ice skating goose... I don't give a fuck how fast she skates!

Intercom BUZZES.

FRANK
Get back to me.

(punches button)

What?!

MAN (O.S.)
(on intercom)
Mr. Cross. Visitor on the way up.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
(into intercom)
Hold it. I didn't authorize any visitor.

INT. IBC LOBBY - SAME TIME

IBC GUARD 1 talks to Frank on the phone.

IBC GUARD 1
Excuse me, sir?

FRANK (O.S.)
(on phone)
You told me you sent somebody up.

IBC GUARD 1
No sir. No one's gone up. Must be a crossed wire.

FRANK (O.S.)
Well fix it!

IBC GUARD 1
Yes sir. Right away.

He hangs up.

IBC GUARD 2
Who's that?

IBC GUARD 1
Der Fuhrer. Sounds like he's hitting the bottle pretty hard tonight.

They don't see the floor indicator lights change as the elevator rises and stops on the 22nd floor.

INT. AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

WE SEE the door to Frank's office. O.S. elevator doors open and WE HEAR ominous dragging FOOTSTEPS.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

There is a KNOCK on the door.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

Frank presses the intercom.

FRANK
Who's there?

He gets no answer.

Puzzled, he unlocks the door and steps out into the hall. The hall is empty.

He comes back inside and bolts the door. Immediately, KNOCKING STARTS, loud and getting louder, cracking the plaster, rocking the frame, denting the door itself.

The POUNDING STOPS.

FRANK
Who's there?!?

The door explodes off its hinges, sailing across the room. The force of the blast knocks Frank to the floor.

Frank stumbles to his feet, bleeding from a cut on the cheek.

The room is a shambles. As the dust settles, WE SEE a man standing in the smouldering doorway. Or what's left of a man.

It's LEW WEXLER, Frank's ex-boss and mentor at IBC. He wears rotting golf togs complete with checkered pants, tasseled shoes and a robin's egg blue alpaca sweater, and he drags a big, bulky golf bag crammed with clubs. Lew is a decayed corpse, a Rick Baker nightmare with moss growing on him and a mouse-hole in his forehead.

LEW
Hi, Frank. Do you mind if I help myself to a drink?

Swinging a rusted putter, Lew ambles across the room to the bar and pours himself a Scotch. His golf shoes click on the parquet.

Frank is not easily rattled. He opens a drawer and pulls out a revolver. Holding the gun police-style with both hands, he empties it into Lew's back. Five shots hit him with a dull "thek!" kicking up a little dust. It's like shooting an old pillow. The other shot shatters the glass of Scotch.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

Lew turns around holding the broken glass.

LEW

I don't mind if you hit me,
Frank, but take it easy on the
Dewar's.

He turns back to make himself a new drink.
Frank drops the gun. Now he's rattled.
Lew raises his glass in a toast ...

LEW

To old times.

... And downs it. The Scotch cascades out the holes in
his throat and forms a puddle at his feet.

Frank steps forward, recognizing him.

FRANK

Oh my God! It's...

LEW

Lew Wexler. Your old boss. And
your best friend.

FRANK

But you're dead!

LEW

For seven years.

Frank stalls as he moves across the room toward a red
"panic button" security alarm near the door.

FRANK

Has it been seven years? Gosh,
looking at you, I wouldn't say
more than three, tops.

LEW

You're in big trouble, Frank.

Frank edges closer to the button. A WHITE MOUSE peeks
out of the hole on Lew's skull.

FRANK

Let's say, for argument's sake,
that you're right, that I am in
big trouble.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
56 CONTINUED: (3)

FRANK (Cont'd)
What exactly would that mean, Lew?

LEW
Unless you change your ways, you will be doomed as I am to wander the earth forever.

FRANK
"Doomed to wander the earth?" What do you do there in Hell, Lew -- watch Masterpiece Theater?

Lew moans menacingly. Frank lunges for the button and slams it.

57 INT. IBC LOBBY - NIGHT

At the console, a shrill ALARM and flashing red light go off. IBC GUARD 1 switches off the alarm and answers the phone.

IBC GUARD 1
Yes sir.

FRANK (O.S.)
(on phone)
Help! Help!

58 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank babbling into intercom.

FRANK
There's something up here! He, he broke down my door! He's a corpse with a mouse!

59 INT. IBC LOBBY - NIGHT

IBC GUARD rolls his eyes.

FRANK (O.S.)
(into phone)
He's threatening me! He's scaring me! He's...
INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

FRANK
(groping for words)
He's ...

LEW (O.S.)
Setting fire to my Picasso.

FRANK
(repeating)
He's setting fire to --

Frank jerks a look at Lew who's holding his Picasso.

FRANK
MY PICASSO!!!

The Picasso spontaneously bursts into flames.

INT. IBC LOBBY - NIGHT

IBC GUARD 1
We're on our way.

He hangs up.

IBC GUARD 1
Whatta you think?

IBC GUARD 2
Let him sleep it off.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Lew rubs his forehead.

LEW
I have such a headache. Got any Tylenol?

Frank is beating at the smouldering painting with his hands.

FRANK
Do you know what this is worth?!

The mouse jumps out of the hole and perches on Lew's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)
LEW
Your life? You forgot just what
a precious thing life is. Worth
more than even a Picasso.

Lew addresses a golf ball with his putter.

LEW
One minute I'm standing on the
fourteenth hole at Wingfoot.
Lining up a putt. A heart attack
later, I'm a worm feast.

FRANK
Come on, Lew, you're not a worm
feast. You're...an hallucination.
I know, I've been drinking too much.

WE SEE a CLOSE UP of the white mouse.

FRANK
I'm under a lot of pressure with
this whole -

LEW
Silence! I had it all. I was
a captain of industry. Feared
by men. Adored by women.

FRANK
Adored? Lew, let's be honest,
you paid for the women.

Frank dabs the cut on his cheek with a handkerchief.

LEW
I've come to warn you -- don't
waste your life as I did mine.

FRANK
"Waste?!" How can you say that
-- the man who invented the
mini-series? You're a legend in
this business.

LEW
Mankind should've been my
business! Charity, mercy,
kindness, love -- that should've
been my business! Frank, for your
own sake, wake up! Get involved!

(CONTINUED)
The mouse scampers back to his hole.

LEW
(sighs)
It's too late for me but you can still save yourself. You'll be visited by three ghosts. Expect the first tomorrow afternoon at one o'clock.

FRANK
Tomorrow's bad for me, Lew. In fact, this whole week's no good. Why don't we take a lunch on ...

Lew lurches forward, backing Frank up against a wall.

FRANK
... Not Monday, Tuesday's out. How about drinks, Wednesday? You, me, the ghosts, say Trader Vic's around fou --

Lew suddenly grabs him by the throat. With frightening strength, he lifts him off his feet and carries him effortlessly across the floor toward the windows.

FRANK
Or tomorrow's fine! I could squeeze you in anytime, say break --

Lew thrusts him through a window, without breaking the glass, and holds him kicking the air twenty-two stories above the street.

FRANK
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!

In a LOW ANGLE, WE SEE one of Frank's shoes come off and plummet toward the pavement.

LEW
This isn't a joke, Frank! This is your last chance!

EXT. WINDOW - NIGHT

Frank is crazy with fear, clutching Lew's arm for all he's worth.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
I believe you! I believe -
But the arm...began to...give way. The sleeve rips.
The bone splinters. The flesh pulls apart.

FRANK
Oh God please don't! No!
The arm comes off in his hand. He's falling, hurtling
toward the street.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Frank sails through the air, slamming into his leather
lounge chair. He jolts awake. Panicked, gasping with
terror and confusion, he takes in the office. It is
completely intact. No trace of the nightmarish Lew
Wexler at all -- the Picasso hangs unharmed, the door is
undamaged. Even the cut on his cheek is gone.

Frank runs to the phone, frantically dialing.

FRANK
(into phone)
Doctor Rosenblum?* 

DR. ROSENBLUM (V.O.)
(recording on answering
machine)
Hello. This is Dr. Rosenblum.
I'm unavailable right now but if
you leave your name and number,
I'll return your call at my
earliest possible convenience.
Until then, remember that life
is like an elevator -- with an
up button and a down button.
It's up to you which one you push.

FRANK
This is Frank Cross goddammit and
I need to talk to you right now!
I need to talk to somebody! I
think I'm having a nervous -

The "BEEP" cuts him off. He slams the phone down and
scrambles across the room to his desk.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Yanking the drawer out completely, he dumps its contents on the floor. Frank grabs a leather address book stamped "BUSINESS" and wildly tears through its densely filled pages including countless business cards paper-clipped to edges.

He tosses it aside and snatches a matching address book stamped "PERSONAL". As he flips through it WE SEE its pages are blank.

He throws it aside and digs into the pile of papers, letters, finally pulling out a ragged scrap of paper.

CLOSE ON THE PAPER

A ripped paperback cover of The Hobbit. He turns it over. WE SEE written on the other side -- "For my preciousssss - love, Claire CH 3-3092".

ANGLE ON FRANK

dialing the phone number. WE HEAR the phone RING several times and finally be picked up. ELECTRONIC TONES.

RECORDED OPERATOR (V.O.)
243-3092 has been disconnected.
243-3092 has been disconnected.
If you require further -

Frank hangs up and quickly dials information.

FRANK
(into phone)
Yes. For a Claire Phillips.
P-H-I-In Manhattan. Uhm. Try downtown. Oh great, that's it!

He hangs up and immediately dials the number.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
(on phone)
Hi...

FRANK
Claire! It's me -

(CONTINUED)
CLAIRE (V.O.)
(on phone -- a Christmas 
song plays behind her 
answering machine 
message)

...This is Claire. I've gone 
a wassailing. Leave a message 
and I'll call you right back. 
Merry Christmas.

FRANK
(on phone)
It's Frank. Cross. I uhm I know 
it's been...

(checks his watch)

...fifteen years since we spoke 
but I didn't know who else to... 
I... Something just happened. 
Or maybe...I don't know. I 
really need to talk to you! It's 
urgent! Please, please call me 
as soon as you get this. My 
number is uhm area code 
212-877-4191. That's 877-41-

The phone machine "BEEP" cuts him off. He slowly hangs 
up.

His gaze sweeps the quiet office. He walks to the door, 
and runs his hand along the door frame, trying to 
convince himself that it was only an hallucination. 
After a moment, he shrugs and turns for the bar.

His legs suddenly shoot out from under him and he crashes 
hard to the floor. The object he slipped on bounces off 
the wall and rolls back to him. Frank picks it up.

CLOSE ON

what he holds in his tremblings hand -- a golf ball!

With ADVANCED TRACK, WE HEAR the VOICE of Jacob Marley.

MARLEY (V.O.)
Mark well this warning -- you may 
yet have a chance and hope of 
escaping my fate.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. SCROOGE'S BEDROOM IN STUDIO 3H - DAY

"TIP" O'NEILL as Jacob Marley and MARLON BRANDO as Scrooge rehearse their scene for that night's performance.

SCROOGE
Leave me, spirit. Haunt me no more.

WE HEAR SAWING o.s.

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
Rehearsal in progress! Keep it down!

The SAWING STOPS.

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
Go ahead, Marley.

MARLEY
For your own sake, Ebenezer, remember what has passed between us and shun the path I've tread.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - MORNING

REVEAL that WE ARE WATCHING this on a monitor in Frank's office.

TV continues in b.g.

Frank is sitting at his desk staring at a front page. Ted stands behind him.

ANGLE ON New York Post front page. The headline reads -- "IBC KILLS OLD WOMAN!" Beneath it is a B&W photo of a sweet-faced granny.

TED
Apparently this eighty-year-old grandmother was watching your Scrooge promo and, uh, just keeled over. It scared her to death.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

On TV, Marley rattles his chains and moans.

FRANK
Boy I knew that ad worked! You can't buy publicity like this!

He spins his chair, facing Ted.

FRANK
Okay, here's what you do. You run the same ad every half hour and you stick a warning at the top telling anyone with a heart condition to leave the room. This is terrific!

Grace rushes over.

GRACE
I have that report you wanted on -

FRANK
Read it.

GRACE
"Brice Cummings, 27, graduated top of class at UCLA. Made a name in live TV, sports. Won three Emmys for Olympics. One Emmy for Super Bowl. Made vice-president -"

FRANK
I know all that.

He snatches the report from her, scanning it.

FRANK
Gimme some dirt. Drugs, booze, guys -- what's his problem?

TED
What do you want me to tell the reporters downstairs?

Frank balls up the Brice resume and flings it into the trash.

FRANK
Let me think...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

He gets up, walking to the window.

FRANK
Okay, Grace, take this down: "We
at IBC are shocked...and appalled
by this...tragedy."

He puts his hand on his hips, deep in thought.

FRANK
"A network is made up of people
-- ordinary Americans like you
or me. It is only through caring
for each other - "

TED
In other words the standard
statement.

FRANK
Yeah. But make it Christmasy.

INT. IBC TV STUDIO 8H - DAY

TIGHT SHOT of an aged, carved sign that reads -- SCROOGE
& MARLEY. A hand comes into the SHOT holding an aerosol
spray can. A blast of brown paint hits the sign's
border.

CAMERA CRANES UP to REVEAL the 19th century London street
being created. CARPENTERS hammer frantically building
the "Scrooge" set, a poulterer's storefront is hoisted
into place; the grocer's stall stocked with fake produce,
the windows of the toy store sprayed with frost.
TECHNICIANS snake cables through the set dodging the
PAINTERS and carpenters.

Ted runs over to Frank who's reeling off orders to Grace.

TED
We've got a real situation
downstairs. There must be three,
four hundred protestors.

FRANK
What's their problem?

TED
They blame us for killing that
old lady.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
Well get the cops and clear 'em out.

TED
That's really not the best PR, sir.

FRANK
Okay, tell 'em we share their concern and that the executive responsible has been fired.

TED
What executive?

FRANK
Eliot Loudermilk of course. And tell them -- even better -- find a spokesman and I'll meet with him personally.

Ted turns to go. Frank grabs his arm.

FRANK
Pick somebody small and old.

A dour LADY CENSOR comes over with a sexy SOLID GOLD DANCER in tow. The Dancer wears a terry robe over her shoulders.

LADY CENSOR
She's not going on the air.

FRANK
Why not?
(to Grace)
Did you set up my shrink appointment for one o'clock?

GRACE
You've got that lunch with Mr. Rhinelander.

FRANK
Then make it for after lunch.
In my office.

Frank turns back to the Lady Censor.

(CONTINUED)
LADY CENSOR
I'm sorry but Standards and Practices can't allow this costume on the air.

FRANK
What's wrong?

A PROP MAN, balancing a fake Victorian street lamp on his shoulder, totters through.

PROP MAN 1
Watch your backs!

LADY CENSOR
(to Frank)
Well ... specifically, you can see her nipples.

FRANK
I want to see her nipples. America wants to see her nipples.

LADY CENSOR
But it's a Christmas show.

Frank rips the robe from the Dancer's shoulders revealing a sheer, sequined, "chimney sweep" outfit.

The Prop Man stops dead in his tracks, swinging around for an eyeful.

FRANK
Charles Dickens would've wanted to see her nipples!

Frank notices the panting Prop Man.

FRANK
Hey! What're you lookin' at?

PROP MAN 1
Sorry.

He whips around, slamming the Censor in the back of the head with the lamppost.

She drops OUT OF FRAME.

CLAIREE (O.S.)
(from behind Frank)
Lumpy?

(Continued)
Big romantic MUSIC STING.

Frank turns to see CLAIRE PHILLIPS -- a striking woman in her early thirties. She is out-of-breath, her face flushed, second-hand coat buttoned wrong, her hat askew.

CLAIRE
(panting)
I'm sorry. I didn't get your message until this morning. I called your office but they said you weren't in yet so then I called later and they said you were busy so I just decided to-

She stops, really seeing him for the first time.

CLAIRE
Boy, you look different.

FRANK
Yeah, well, it's been a while.

CLAIRE
It's your hair! I've never seen you with short hair before. It makes you look so... "grown up."

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
(over P.A.)
Frank, check this out.

Raucous rock TRACK fills the studio.

ANGLE ON SOLID GOLD DANCER
wearing spiked heels and the sheer costume, gyrating to the MUSIC. Fake snow falls.

BACK TO SCENE

Frank kneels by the fallen Lady Censor. She lies on the floor, dazed and groggy, as the IBC NURSE bandages her head.

FRANK
That works. You just had to see it in context.

(CONTINUED)
CLAIRE
Is she gonna be alright?

FRANK
Oh yeah. She's a pro.

CLAIRE
What about you? You sounded like you'd seen a ghost.

FRANK
Ghost? Ha, ha! Oh, you mean that phone call last night? I, ya know, ran across your number so I just thought I'd check in and see how you were doing.

A burly PROP MAN walks over, waiting a few feet away.

CLAIRE
I know you. I know that voice. That was the frightened Lumpy I heard.

The Prop Man steps up to Frank holding a wriggling live MOUSE in one hand and a pair of tiny antlers in the other.

PROP MAN 2
Excuse me, Lumpy?

FRANK
(snapping)
Mr. Cross!

PROP MAN 2
Sorry. I just started here. I didn't -

FRANK
What?!

PROP MAN 2
Sir, we're havin' a helluva time gluing antlers on these mice. We tried Crazy Glue. We tried -

FRANK
Try staples.

(CONTINUED)
The Prop Man looks at the mouse, shrugs and exits.

FRANK
(to Claire)
Anyhow, I'm... listen I apologize for calling so late. I hope I didn't wake your husband or -

CLAIRE
No problem. I'm still single.

They look at each other for a moment. "Tip" O'Neill rushes past still in his Marley makeup.

CLAIRE
Was that "Tip" O'Neill who just walked by?

FRANK
Yeah.

CLAIRE
I wonder if he'd remember me?

FRANK
You've met him?

CLAIRE
I chained myself to his bumper.

FRANK
Still trying to save the world?

CLAIRE
(gently)
Still trying to run it?

FRANK
(suddenly angry)
Get the hell outta here!

CLAIRE
But, but you called me.

FRANK
(pointing over her shoulder)
Who're you?!

Claire turns to see -- Calvin, Grace's little boy, peering from behind the poulterer's display window.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
How'd you get in here?

Frank grabs Calvin by the collar. The little boy stares mutely up at him.

FRANK
Fine, don't talk to me! Talk to the police!

He hauls Calvin out of the store.

FRANK
Security!

Grace dashes into the room.

GRACE
Wait! Wait! That's my little boy!

FRANK
Well...what's he doing here?

GRACE
I thought it'd be fun for him to see a real, live -

FRANK
This is a network not a daycare center! Keep him out of the way!

Grace leaves with Calvin.

CLAIREE
Why are you so angry?

FRANK
Why can't you button your coat?

Embarrassed, Claire fumbles with the coat, rebuttoning it.

CLAIREE
Sorry, I was in such a hurry this -

It's still buttoned wrong.

FRANK
No. Just, come here.

(CONTINUED)
Frank starts buttoning her coat. It's the first time he's touched Claire in fifteen years. He realizes it.

FRANK
Your eyes are so... green.

CLAIRED (blushing)
I, uh, got those new tinted contacts. They look stupid, right? You can see the brown in the -

FRANK
No. They look -

Loud HAMMERING begins o.s.

FRANK (to Carpenter)
Think you could do that later?

Ted hustles over.

TED
Frank, I found your spokesman.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
(over P.A.)
Frank, Zulu Nation on line one.

CLAIRED
Listen, I'd better go.

FRANK
Tell them to hold.

Frank and Claire look at each other.

CLAIRED
Frank, what did happen last night?

FRANK
Oh, something I ate. A bad clam. I don't know.

CLAIRED
Well if it ever happens again,...

(handing Frank her card)
... Give me a call.

(Continued)
CONTINUED: (5)

She looks at him for a moment and leaves. He watches her walk away. The hammering resumes.

Frank glances at the card.

It reads -- "OPERATION REACH OUT - CLAIRE PHILLIPS, DIRECTOR -514 W. 43rd St. - 975-1440."

MAN (O.S.)
Excuse me, Mr. Cross?

Frank pockets the card as he wheels on the small, ELDERLY MAN standing beside him.

FRANK
Oh you! I know what you're gonna say. It's my fault. Well let me ask you something. What about the hundred million people who watched that ad and didn't die?! What about them?

MAN
I don't think -

FRANK
That's right, you don't think!

TED (O.S.)
Frank.

FRANK
Not now. I'm running a business here! I'm just trying to get people to watch my show! Sometimes I gotta slap 'em in the face just to get their attention!

TED (O.S.)
Frank.

FRANK
Get away. People want to see car bombs! People want to see death squads and drug wars! They want to see 747s slam into a mountain and mud slides and heads on poles! Am I right?! Or am I crazy?!

(CONTINUED)
MAN
Jeez, I don't know, mister. I'm just from the cab company. One of our drivers found this in the back seat.

He hands Frank the "HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR" trophy.

FRANK
(to Carpenter)
'Stop that goddamn hammering!'

TED (O.S.)
Frank!

Frank turns to see Ted standing with a sweet, white-haired NUN holding a picket sign that reads: "MERRY CHRISTMAS NOT SCARY CHRISTMAS!" She stares at Frank in horror.

TED
Uhm, I'd like you to meet Sister Mary Margaret from the Concerned Viewers of America.

FRANK
I said, KNOCK IT OFF!!!

The Carpenter looks up from his work and shrugs.

CARPENTER
Okey doke.

The support he had been bracing snaps; setting a chain reaction which causes the entire set to CRASH to the floor in a cloud of dust.

ANGLE ON LADY CENSOR
her head wrapped in gauze, looking up helplessly as the last flat inevitably topples toward her.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The wood-paneled, conservative restaurant is crowded with New York's BUSINESS ELITE. Frank and Preston Rhinelander sit at a power table set for three.

RHINELANDER
So how's everything going?

FRANK
(brushing dust off his shoulder)
Couldn't be better.

HEADWAITER
Can I get you gentlemen something from the bar?

RHINELANDER
Yes, I'll have a highball.

FRANK
Make that two.

The HEADWAITER exits.

RHINELANDER
Did you hear from the Embassy?

FRANK
Everything's fine. We'll be cutting back and forth between Scrooge in our studio, Leroy Neiman painting the Berlin Wall, and the Holy Father blessing the Zulu Nation.

RHINELANDER
That's just the point, Frank. I'm worried you're spreading yourself a little thin. So I've taken the liberty of hiring somebody to work with you.

FRANK
Uh...great.

RHINELANDER
I knew you'd be pleased.

FRANK
Couldn't be more pleased. Who is it?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Rhinelander calls out to someone across the room.

RHINELANDER

Brice!

Standing in the doorway, Brice Cummings waves
acknowledgingly and strides to the table.

BRICE
(to Frank)
Well, we meet again.

He shakes Frank's hand and sits.

BRICE
Frank, I know this is coming at
you pretty damn fast. But I want
you to understand my only
function here is to take some of
the burden off your shoulders.

Frank looks from Brice to Rhinelander, totally confused.

BRICE
A lot of men in your position
would see me a threat. It's only
natural ...

Stunned and speechless, Frank can only watch Brice babble
on. The CLOCK STRIKES one. Frank stiffens, remembering
Lew Wexler's warning.

LEW (V.O. WITH ECHO)
You'll be visited by three
ghosts. Expect the first at one
o'clock.

Frank jerks a look at the grandfather's clock in the
corner. It reads one.

BRICE (O.S.)
... But when Preston hired me
this morning as sort of, a, oh,
"consultant" I suppose you'd call
it, I said to him, "Consider me
just one of the team."

Frank looks down at his digital watch. It reads -- 1:00.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

BRICE (O.S.)
My lacrosse coach had a saying
that I thought was really stupid
at the time ...

Frank nervously scans the restaurant, searching for Lew's
promised apparition.

BRICE (O.S.)
... He used to say, "There is no
'I' in T-E-A-M."

The Headwaiter arrives, serving them their drinks. Frank
reaches for his.

CLOSE UP – FRANK'S GLASS

A human eyeball, bloody veins trailing behind it, floats
in the glass.

BACK TO SCENE

He screams.

HEADWAITER
I'm sorry, I thought you ordered
an eyeball. I'll take it away.

The Waiter immediately snatches the glass and walks to
the kitchen.

The other BUSINESSMEN in the restaurant stare at Frank,
muttering, shaking their heads.

Rhinelander reaches across the table grabbing Frank's
wrist.

RHINELANDER
(softly)
Don't fall apart on me now,
Frank.

Beads of sweat form on Frank's brow.

FRANK
No, no, I'm ... I'm just a little ...
(to Brice)
Your lacrosse coach said ... what?!

(CONTINUED)
BRICE
The point is, Frank-

The Headwaiter returns to Frank's table.

HEADWAITER
Excuse me, are you gentlemen ready to order?

In the b.g, over Rhinelander's shoulder, WE SEE a WAITER bring a baked Alaska to another table.

BRICE
Great. Yes, I'll have the mixed grill.

RHINELANDER
Bobby, how's the rack of lamb today?

HEADWAITER
Excellent choice. (to Frank) Sir?

At the other table, the Waiter sets the match to the baked Alaska and explodes into flames.

Only Frank sees this.

FRANK
Uh ... uh ... I ... uhh ... .

HEADWAITER
May I suggest a veal chop?

FRANK
No! No veal!

No one else in the restaurant takes the slightest notice of the human torch Waiter as he reels shrieking through the room.

Frank forces his attention back to his table trying to ignore this newest nightmare.

FRANK
I'll have the uh ... The uhm ... the ...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

The Headwaiter, Brice and Rhinelander exchange curious/worried looks.

The fireball Waiter runs into the kitchen screaming.

FRANK
I've ... I'm gonna step outside.
I could use some air.

Frank knocks over his chair as he stumbles from the room.

BRICE
He's under a lot of pressure.
I'm sure he'll do just fine.

EXT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Frank reels out the door. He spots a battered Checker cab and hails it. The taxi pulls over.

FRANK
(as he gets in)
Take me to -

INT. TAXI - DAY

The door locks slam shut. Window bars fly into place. WE HEAR the SOUND of HEAVY BOLTS BEING THROWN. Frank is trapped.

FRANK
What the hell is -

The cab rockets from the curb, knocking Frank to the floor. The CABBIE laughs wildly as he swings a U-turn into opposing traffic.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The cab narrowly avoids a head-on collision.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Fighting the G forces, Frank leans forward.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANK
Look out!

CABBIE
Relax Frank, enjoy the ride.

FRANK
How'd you know my name?

CABBIE
I know everything, Frank. I'm the ghost.

The Cabbie's head turns, Exorcist-like, to stare at Frank. He's an albino imp -- snow-white shoulder-length hair, ghost-white skin, point ears and red-tinged eyes. He grins demonically, flashing sharp little teeth.

Frank looks at the hack license on the dashboard. Beneath the Cabbie's grinning picture it reads: "GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST".

With the Cabbie still staring at Frank, the cab runs a red light. Two cars skid to miss a pileup.

FRANK
(forced casual)
Listen, this is great. It's such a nice day, I can get out here and walk.

The Cabbie floors it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Eliot has just exited a liquor store with a new bottle of Rebel Yell. He cracks the top, licks his lips and is just about to try to sip when the taxi jumps the curb, screams down the sidewalk and the Cabbie snags the bottle from his hand. As it roars off into the distance, Eliot is left spinning.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Frank pounds frantically on the windows, yanking on the doors to no avail.

FRANK
Are you crazy?!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The Cabbie takes a big swig from the bourbon.

CABBIE
Here's the thing Frank: -- I'm a ghost; I'm dead; I just don't care.

He tosses the bottle out the window where it smashes on the pavement.

CABBIE
Mind if I smoke?

Black smoke churns out his mouth, nose and ears, filling the cab.

Frank doubles over, choking in the back seat.

The taxi shoots through a cloud of steam, suddenly appearing right in the path of a Saturday Evening Post truck.

OMITTED

EXT. SUBURBAN SUB-DIVISION - NIGHT (DATE 1957)

The truck swerves, just in time.

CABBIE
Go back to Jersey, ya moron!

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Frank picks himself up off the backseat floor.

FRANK
(still coughing)
Where are we?

CABBIE
When are we is the question.

CLOSE ON meter as it clicks from "1957" to "1956".

FRANK
Please, take me home.

CABBIE
You got it.

With a nasty chuckle, he hits the gas.
EXT. ANOTHER SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

The Checker tears down the quiet track-house-lined street and skids into the back of a delivery truck parked in front of the only house on the block without Christmas lights. Meter registers "1955".

Painted on the back of the truck -- "CROSS BUTCHER SHOP".

EXT. TAXI - NIGHT

The Cabbie jumps out and opens Frank's door.

Frank falls out, crawling from the cab.

CABBIE

Welcome home.

FRANK

(looking around)

Oh my god. This is where I grew up. I thought they tore this place down.

CABBIE

They did.

Frank slowly gets to his feet.

FRANK

Right. Okay, I know the deal. I'm gonna go back in time, see Mom and Dad, get all goosy and start blubbering. Well you got the wrong guy.

The Cabbie and Frank start walking through the snow to the house.

CABBIE

That's exactly what Attila the Hun said, but when he saw his mom -

FRANK

Yeah, save it for the Donahue Show. Can we get this over with?

They reach the front door.

CABBIE

Follow me.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

He takes Frank's hand and, as he steps right through the solid wooden door, Frank smacks hard into it, bouncing back onto the stoop.

The Cabbie giggles hysterically from inside as Frank stumbles to his feet.

FRANK
(whispering)
That was a dumb joke.

The Cabbie pokes his head through the closed door.

CABBIIE
(bellowing)
Made me laugh!

FRANK
Ssshhh! They'll call the cops on us.

The Cabbie opens the door letting Frank into the bare foyer.

CABBIIE
Calm down. They can't see us and they can't hear us. They're not real. They're sort of like... reruns.

INT. FRANK'S PARENTS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

This is a bleak, no-frills, working-class Fifties tract-house. LITTLE FRANK sits inches from a B&W Magnavox TV set watching the end of the Howdy Doody Show. The show's theme and end credits roll.

DORIS, Frank's mother, is pregnant with James. She lies on the couch, chain-smoking Chesterfield's and frowning over her cross-word puzzle magazine. EARL, Frank's big, barrel-chested father, still wearing his blood-stained butcher apron, comes over and turns down the TV volume. He towers over little Frank.

EARL
Here Francis, I've got something for you.

LITTLE FRANK
(looking up hopefully)
A choo-choo train?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

EALR
Nah, it's ten pounds of veal.
Merry Christmas.

He drops a butcher-wrapped lump onto the floor beside his son.

Little Frank looks at it sadly.

LITTLE FRANK
(quietly)
But I asked Santa for a choo-choo.

EALR
Then go out and get a job and buy a choo-choo.

Doris glances up from her puzzle.

DORIS
Earl, he's only four.

EALR
All day I hear excuses why people don't wanna work -- "My back aches," "My legs hurt," "I'm only four." The sooner he learns they don't hand you life on a silver platter, the better.

Little Frank silently returns to the TV set, turning up the volume. Sergeant Bilko begins. Little Frank watches; mouth opened, totally zoned.

DORIS
What's a four letter word for affection, begins with "L"?

EARL
Who cares?

EXT. FRANK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT
Frank and Cabbie exit house.

CABBIE
So you spent the next fifteen years sitting on your ass, alone, watching TV.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
That's not true. I did things.
I played baseball. I remember
back in seventh grade I hit a
home-run and won the big game.

CABBIE
No you didn't.

FRANK
Oh right, I'm sorry, that was a
TV show I saw -- The Courtship
of Eddie's Father.

CABBIE
We're outta here.

FRANK
But there was this time I ran
through all these wildflowers and
the sky was blue, the sun was
streaming down...

CABBIE
Frank?

FRANK
No, wrong again, that was Little
House on the Prairie.

CABBIE
Face it -- garden slugs got more
out of life than you did.

FRANK
Can I go back to the office now?

CABBIE
Hop in.

They get in and the taxi peels off into the night.

CLOSE ON TAXI METER

ticking away years from 1955 to 1967. WE HEAR o.s. SFX
of taxi skidding through corners, bashing fenders, then
horn honking, the Cabbie cursing, etc.
EXT. IBC BUILDING - DAY (DATE - 1968)

The Checker swerves up to the curb, slamming into a '68 Cadillac limo.

INT. IBC MAIN OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON sheets of paper sliding from a Xerox machine. Copied on each sheet is a B&W image of a woman's behind.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL TINA, a cute young secretary perched on the Xerox glass, panties around her ankles and a bottle of champagne in her hand. She giggles with an IBC PAGE as the copier's light passes beneath her.

WIDEN TO SEE wild IBC office party in full swing. A banner hung across the room reads "COOL YULE '68". Lew Wexler, in his prime and wearing a red alpaca sweater, kisses a SEXY GIRL dressed as a mini-skirted Mrs. Claus. Rowdy IBC STAFF sing, dance, drink and cut loose as Phil Spector's Christmas Album BLARES from a stereo.

The far door opens and Young Frank, now about twenty with long hippie hair, wheels his IBC mail cart into the room, oblivious to the party. He takes handfuls of mail and carefully but efficiently tosses it into the appropriate slot. Present-Day Frank and Cabbie watch from doorway.

Lew breaks free of Mrs. Claus and saunters over to Young Frank. He takes a sip from his scotch, watching Young Frank diligently at work.

LEW

Excuse me, Fred?

FRANK

Frank, sir.

LEW

Frank. You didn't happen to notice a big Christmas party around here did you?

YOUNG FRANK

(laughing nervously)

Yes sir. I'm almost done.

Tina skips over and hands Lew her Xerox copy.

LEW

(taking it)

Thanks, Tina. I think we've all seen your Christmas card.

(CONTINUED)
MAN (O.S.)
Lew, the beer's getting warm.
Where's the ice?

TINA
(to Young Frank)
Wanna dance?

YOUNG FRANK
No. Thanks. I think I'll just
finish up and head home.

Tina shrugs, grabs a nearby IBC EXEC and dances with him.
Lew watches workaholic Frank sort mail.

EXT. IBC BUILDING - DAY

Young Frank exits followed by Cabbie and Present-Day Frank.

PRESENT-DAY FRANK
(holding the Christmas card)
I must have been nuts. That Tina
was a little minx.

CABBIE
What could you do? -- You had
mail to sort.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Young Frank strolls along the path, trailed by Cabbie and
Present-Day Frank. He hears waltz MUSIC drifting from
Wollman Rink and follows it.

EXT. WOLLMAN ICE RINK - DAY

Young Frank walks up to the railing and leans against it,
watching the SKATERS.

A blonde BEAUTY twirls on the flood-lit ice. Her brief
silver skating outfit sparkles with every perfect move.

Suddenly a figure blurs INTO FRAME blindsiding the golden
girl.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

It's YOUNG CLAIRE in jeans, a flannel shirt and a too-long scarf. This sets off a chain-reaction collision toppling skaters right and left but somehow Young Claire is left standing, now skating backwards towards the railing.

ANGLE ON YOUNG FRANK

He shouts a warning as does Present-Day Frank REVEALED standing behind him.

YOUNG FRANK
PRESENT-DAY FRANK
Look out!
Look out Claire!

ANGLE ON YOUNG CLAIRE

as she sails headlong over the railing, decking Young Frank who smacks his head on the ground.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Are you alright?

YOUNG FRANK
(rubbing his head)
Ow! You skate like --

YOUNG CLAIRE
An angel?

YOUNG FRANK
No, a truck.

She untangles herself from him and lurches to her feet.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Thank you. I'm sorry...

He stands, still rubbing his head.

YOUNG FRANK
I didn't need that lobe anyhow.

She smiles. They look at each other for a moment.

YOUNG FRANK
Well, see ya.

(CONTINUED)
YOUNG CLAIRE
Merry Christmas.

YOUNG FRANK.
Yeah, you too.

She turns, waddling on her skates toward the rink. He starts to walk away, then gets an idea.

YOUNG FRANK
Hey! You wanna go to a big Christmas party?

YOUNG CLAIRE
No, not really.

YOUNG FRANK
Nah, me neither. Well, goodbye.

He turns and walks toward the CAMERA.

YOUNG CLAIRE
How about Chinese food?

Young Frank breaks into a wide smile.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK PATH - DAY

Young Claire and Young Frank walk together. She holds a copy of The Hobbit.

YOUNG CLAIRE
...Except he's not really evil. I mean, in the end Gollum bites off Frodo's finger and falls into the Crack of Doom. Oh great Claire, tell him the whole ending. I'm sorry.

Young Frank scoops up some snow and puts it to his head.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Does it still hurt?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

YOUNG FRANK
Yeah, I've got a big lump right here.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Let me feel it.

She gently touches his head.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Oh yeah.

YOUNG FRANK
(moving her hand)
Not there. Here.

YOUNG CLAIRE
(rubbing the spot)
Oooh, wow. That is a lump.
(moving her hand a bit)
Hey, what's this? You've got another -

YOUNG FRANK
(shaking off her hand)
It's a sign of intelligence.

Young Claire dashes out into the street.

YOUNG CLAIRE
(waving at a taxi)
Hey Lumpy, there's a cab!

The Checker whistles past.

INT. CHECKER - DAY

Present-Day Frank watches her through the rear window.

CLOSE ON TAXI METER

Clicking from 1968 to 1969, with o.s. CAR SQUEALS, etc. ending in a resounding CRASH.
INT. EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT - NIGHT (DATE - 1969)

This living/bedroom is decorated inexpensively but with youthful, exotic, hippie flair. The bed is a paisley-draped mattress on the floor. The room is lit by dozens of candles.

Young Frank stands over a small scraggly Christmas tree which has been decorated with Christmas cards, peace symbols and a solitary strand of lights. He holds a treetop angel.

YOUNG FRANK
(to Young Claire o.s.)
Where's the angel go?

Young Claire walks in, fresh from the tub, a towel wrapped around her.

YOUNG CLAIRE
On top. Haven't you ever trimmed a tree before?

He sticks the angel on top.

YOUNG FRANK
Uh...no.

YOUNG CLAIRE
My poor Lumpy.

She throws her arms around Young Frank and kisses him.

In the b.g. WE SEE Present-Day Frank and the Cabbie watching through a window at the fire escape.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - SAME TIME

Present-Day Frank stares at Young Claire as her towel falls off revealing her bare back.

PRESENT-DAY FRANK
(to himself)
I forgot how beautiful she was.

The Cabbie pushes past Frank to leer at her.

CABBIE
Are you kidding? She's a total taste!

Frank shoves the Cabbie away from the window.
INT. APARTMENT

Young Claire slips on a shimmery silk kimono.

YOUNG FRANK
Can we give the presents now?

She nods.

YOUNG FRANK
Here.

He hands her a large gift-wrapped box. She carefully unwraps it.

ANGLE ON BOX OF GEN SU KITCHEN KNIVES

YOUNG CLAIRE

stares down at them, a strange smile on her face.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Oh, how... wonderful. Knives. Lots and lots of knives. How...how did you know?

YOUNG FRANK
(proudly)
Well I saw how you always chopped those vegetables.

YOUNG CLAIRE
They really look sharp.

YOUNG FRANK
They are. They're Gensu knives. I saw 'em on TV. They can cut through a can. Here, I'll show you something, you got a can and a tomato?

YOUNG CLAIRE
(hugging him)
I just love them. Now, here, your turn. Open mine.

She gives him a beautifully wrapped gift.
(tearing the paper to bits)
Ya know, I just got those in time because the offer expires at midnight...

He looks down at the gift -- a book.

The Kama Sutra -- "ancient Indian love guide." Far out!

Read the inscription.

He holds the book up to the light.

All I can make out is "Christmas 1969." the rest is just a bunch of wriggly lines.

It's Sanskrit.

What's it say?

She leans over the book.

(pointing at each word)
This says "wet" and this is "hot." That's all I'll tell you.

Young Frank opens the book, turning it slowly as he studies the illustrations.

You know the Peace Corps expects you to at least speak the language.

(brow furrowed, holding book sideways)
You can't do that. That's impossible. These guys gotta be double-jointed.
YOUNG CLAIRE
Maybe when we get to Nepal we can rent one of those houseboats right on the lake.

YOUNG FRANK
(totally absorbed in the book)
That sounds nice... Wait a minute. Hold on. I don't believe this.

YOUNG CLAIRE
What?

YOUNG FRANK
They say there's a secret place you can touch on a woman that will make her bark like a dog.

She moves closer to read over his shoulder and he puts his arm around her.

YOUNG CLAIRE
That's the silliest thing I ever -- Ruff! Ruff!

Claire begins howling and barking like a wild dog. Young Frank leans over and kisses her. A long, passionate kiss.

They both begin howling and baying.

ANGLE ON PRESENT-DAY FRANK AND CABBIE
standing on the windy fire escape, a few feet away from the embracing couple.

FRANK
(quietly to Cabbie)
I'm cold. I want to go home.

PAN UP to the full moon. WE HEAR Young Frank and Claire's howling echo in the night.

CROSS DISSOLVE TO:
INT. IBC TV STUDIO - NIGHT (DATE - 1971)

A white overhead klieg light. The howling continues as WE PAN DOWN to a MAN in a dog suit, on all fours, howling at a cartoonish MIKE THE MAILMAN who wears an exaggerated, corny mailman suit, bow tie and carries an over-size mail pouch. WE ARE WATCHING a children's TV show in progress.

The dog chews Mike's pant-leg, growling in front of a whimsical dog house hand-lettered -- "KIDDIEKENNEL".

MIKE THE MAILMAN
Let go of my leg! I've got something in my mail bag for ya.

The dog still clings to his leg.

MIKE THE MAILMAN
It's a Christmas present from Lassie!

Mike pulls out a big, bone-shaped object wrapped in Christmas paper with a red bow. A tag reads "MERRY CHRISTMAS 1971".

O.S. applause and children's cheers.

The dog sits up, tongue out, begging for the bone.

ANGLE ON AUDIENCE OF CHILDREN

sitting on bleachers screaming and laughing at the show. Seated dead center in their midst is a stone-faced Present-Day Frank and the delighted Cabbie.

ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG

Mike studies the gift.

MIKE THE MAILMAN
What could it be? Is it a book?

ANGLE ON KIDS

KIDS
(shouting)
It's a bone! It's a bone!
122 ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG
MIKE THE MAILMAN
Is it a...basketball?

123 ANGLE ON KIDS
KIDS
(shouting)
It's a bone! It's a bone!

124 ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG
MIKE THE MAILMAN
Is it...a pair of mittens?

125 ANGLE ON KIDS
KIDS
(shouting)
It's a bone! It's a bone!
The Cabbie leaps up from the crowd of children.

CABBIE
IT'S A BONE YA FUCKIN' DORK!
The Kids, of course, can't see or hear him but Frank
buries his face in his hands.

126 ANGLE ON MIKE AND DOG
The Mailman pulls a huge bone from the gift-wrapping.

MIKE THE MAILMAN
Oh look, it's a bone!
He sticks it in the panting dog's mouth as the o.s.
children cheer.

STAGE MANAGER
And we're in commercial.

WE HEAR the top of a Seventies Hasbro Toy commercial as
Young Claire runs up to the dog, hugging him, waving a
letter.

YOUNG CLAIRE
We made it! They took us! We're
in the Peace Corps.

(CONTINUED)
The dog takes off his costume head to REVEAL Young Frank.

YOUNG FRANK
(without emotion)
Really? We're in? That's great.

YOUNG CLAIRE
Of course we didn't get Nepal.
They're sending us to Africa but
here's the best part -- they want
us there the first week in -

Lew Wexler, wearing a pumpkin-colored alpaca sweater,
saunters over.

LEW
Listen, I got an idea.
(winking at Claire)
Hi sweetheart.
(to Frank)
Why don't you eat the dog food.

YOUNG FRANK
I thought I was gonna throw the
dog food.

LEW
Well eat it and then throw it.

YOUNG CLAIRE
You can teach irrigation and
contour plowing and I'll show the
women how to prepare well-balanced -

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
Thirty seconds to air!

YOUNG FRANK
Contour plowing. Ya know, honey,
I'm not so sure -

Lew cuts in.

LEW
I got a better idea. You try the
dog food, it tastes like crap,
and then you throw it.

YOUNG FRANK
Well wait, if it tastes like
crap, why don't I do a spit-take?

(CONTINUED)
LEW
Perfect.

YOUNG CLAIRE
It'll be so cool. Maybe we can sail down the Nile -

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
(yelling)
Fifteen seconds!

YOUNG FRANK
(to Young Claire)
I'm sorry. Floating down the Nile? What?

YOUNG CLAIRE
Frank, we've been talking about this trip since the day we met.

YOUNG FRANK
I can't just walk out of here at the drop of a hat. I owe a little something to the kids. Look, why don't you go and as soon as I can, I'll meet you there.

LEW
Are we clear on this?

A shapely PROP GIRL sidles over holding a big dog bowl brimming with dog food.

PROP GIRL
(smiling flirtatiously)
Frankie, here's your bowl.

YOUNG FRANK
Yeah. I try the dog food, it tastes like crap, I do a spit-take, then I throw the dog food.

YOUNG CLAIRE
I've got an even better idea. Why don't you wear the dog food?!

She grabs the bowl and dumps it over his head. The Kids go wild.

(continued)
YOUNG CLAIRE
Merry Christmas.

She turns on her heel and leaves.

Young Frank watches her go, the brown, lumpy dog food crawling down his face.

YOUNG FRANK
Honey? What's wrong? You angry?

STAGE MANAGER
Frank! Your head! Three-two-one--

ANGLE ON KIDS
squealing with laughter. The Cabbie is doubled over, wailing. Frank grimly gets up to go. The Cabbie follows.

CABBIE
(catching his breath)
That was great! What was that show?

FRANK
Huh? Oh, it was just a children's thing.

CABBIE
(wiping away tears of laughter)
Yeah, but what was it called?

FRANK
(reluctantly)
Uh..."Frisbee The Dog."

CABBIE
You left her for the "Frisbee The Dog Show?" You must be insane?

FRANK
Hey, I made a few mistakes, okay? I'm only human. Well, fine, I can live with that. I know who I am, I know what I want, and I know what's going on. I am not insane!

(Continued)
CONTINUED:
To drive home his point, he whirls around and slams his fist into the wall.

DR. ROSENBLUM (O.S.)
Of course you're not, Frank.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY (DATE - THE PRESENT)
A balding middle-aged man, DR. ROSENBLUM, pats Frank on the back. Frank cradles his bruised hand.

DR. ROSENBLUM
You're just a little upset.

Frank desperately tries to get his bearings.

FRANK
What ... is ... going ... on?

DR. ROSENBLUM
(examining the broken wall)
You're just experiencing a little stress. Which is perfectly natural. Frank, you are in a high pressure job and Christmas is a particularly stressful time of year.

Frank leans toward the Doctor.

FRANK
But ... there was this ... ghost.

DR. ROSENBLUM
That's what psychiatry is all about, Frank, dealing with ghosts.

FRANK
But Doctor Rosenblum, he took me -

DR. ROSENBLUM
My god, you're doing a TV show about a man who's visited by ghosts. I'd be worried if you weren't dreaming about them. Look

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Dr. Rosenblum grabs the remote control and clicks on the monitor.

ON SCREEN

INT. SCROOGE'S OFFICE - DAY

YOUNG EBENEZER SCROOGE stands mutely as BELLE, his fiancée, ties her bonnet and readies to exit.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
(over P.A.)
Alright just give me a sound level on that.

BELLE
(to Young Ebenezer)
I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the masterpassion -- Greed -- engrosses you. Farewell, Ebenezer. May you be happy with the path you have chosen.

ANGLE ON FRANK

watching the TV.

FRANK
Well I am happy with the path I've chosen you little bitch! I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER!!

DR. ROSENBLUM
(calmly)
Now Frank, I'm going to double your prescription and I suggest --

FRANK
(to TV)
Let's just see how your life turned out!

He storms from the office.
131 OMITTED

132 EXT. IBC BUILDING - DAY

Frank exits the building, still ranting at Claire, and heads west on foot. An IBC Guard regards him suspiciously.

FRANK
Just for the record, you left me!
You're the one who ran off to Africa! Not me!

DISOLVE TO:

133 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MOBILE BLOODBANK - DAY

Big signs on the truck offer top dollar for pints of blood. WE HEAR "Eliot's Theme" played on a violin. It's snowing.

Unshaven and wild-eyed, Eliot Loudermilk exits holding a fistful of cash. Walking unsteadily toward the curb, he counts the money, grins, and pitches forward into the snow, passed out cold. The violin MUSIC STOPS.

REVEAL who's been playing the MUSIC -- a STREET VIOLINIST with his upturned hat sitting empty on the sidewalk. He picks up the hat, comes over to Eliot, plucks the money from Eliot's hand, puts on the hat, and strolls away.

Frank passes by, not noticing the man in the gutter, caught up in his rant.

FRANK
I stayed right here! You're the one who had to help the Hottentots or whatever the hell they're called.

134 EXT. HOMELESS SHELTER - AFTERNOON

The shelter, once a Cadillac showroom, has papered the big windows over with bright murals painted by the inner-city children of the community. The name of the project -- "OPERATION REACH OUT" -- is spelled out in giant multi-colored letters.

Collar up, shivering in the wind, with Claire's card in his hand, Frank strides toward the one-story building.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANK
I couldn't just go traipsing off somewhere! I had commitments!
I had obligations!

OMITTED

INT. SHELTER - DAY

The large room is warm and busy with Christmas activity.
PEOPLE hang crepe-paper bunting, decorate folding tables,
string Christmas lights.

Several cafeteria tables set up in the center of the room
feed the HUNGRY and the HOMELESS of every age and color.

Frank enters still babbling.

FRANK
What about my needs? Face it
lady, you treated me like dirt.

HAZEL, a middle-aged black woman who works at the
shelter, notices Frank.

HAZEL
Honey, you look frozen. Lemme
get you a nice hot cup of coffee.

FRANK
...Thanks.

HAZEL
You go ahead and sit over there.
I'll bring it to you.

Frank goes to the nearest table and sits down with the
HOMELESS. Sitting beside is HERMAN, a dirt-caked, wino
mess, who stares into his soup. He wears a grimy t-shirt
that reads "FRANKIE SAY RELAX". Above the table, a
remnant from the showroom days, is a glittery sign on the
wall which reads -- "THE STYLE YOU DEMAND. THE LUXURY
YOU DESERVE."

Hazel brings Frank's coffee, wraps a blanket over his
shoulders and bustles off. Frank clutches the steaming
styrofoam cup.

(CONTINUED)
Herman edges closer to Frank. He pulls an old "music box" pocket watch from his soiled jacket and opens it. Beautiful Dreamer PLAYS as he checks the time.

HERMAN
Ah, the cocktail hour!
(sidling against Frank)
Now, Dick, you know your fine wines -- your Great Westerns, your Lancers, your Mateus. But for my money, you can't buy nothin' better than --

He slams a half-empty bottle of Mogen David concord grape wine on the table.

HERMAN
Mad Dog 20/20.

He snaps the pocket watch shut, Beautiful Dreamer STOPS. Herman takes a long swig and passes the bottle to Frank.

HERMAN
C'mon Dick, drink up!

FRANK
Why do you keep calling me "Dick?"

HERMAN
I'm sorry, Mr. Burton, maybe I don't know you good enough to call you Dick but after Exorcist II and Night of the Iguana I thought we had a certain -

FRANK
Listen, I am not Richard -

HERMAN
And if you could just do a line or two from Hamlet -

FRANK
Leave me alone.

HERMAN
(breathing Mad Dog fumes in Frank's face)
Or The Sandpiper.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
No!

HERMAN
Cleopatra?

FRANK
(in perfect Richard Burton voice)
"I am Marc Antony and you shall be my queen, Cleopatra, and together we will bring Egypt to her knees!"
(regular voice)
Now beat it ya old lush.

Claire suddenly appears, reaching over and snatching the wine.

CLAIRE
Herman! Make yourself useful.
Go help hang the lights.
(noticing Frank)
Frank?! What're you doing here?

FRANK
I'm having a real bad day.

Frank stands. Claire fixes his collar.

FRANK
You said if it ever happened again I should drop by, and it did.

Claire scoops up an armload of balloons.

CLAIRE
Here, give me a hand with these.

They cross the crowded shelter to a pyramid of gifts topped by a new TV set with banner "GRAND PRIZE". A sign tacked across the base of the display reads: "CHRISTMAS FAIR RAFFLE -- Save Our Shelter!"

Claire scampers up a rickety step-ladder and begins taping balloons to the TV set. Frank, bracing the ladder, has misgivings.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
Do you want me to do this?

CLAIRE
(leaning on one foot)
No, I'm fine.

FRANK
I've been thinking a lot about
the past lately.

CLAIRE
Why?

FRANK
You know how you make choices and
at the time they seem like the
only choices. But then, later,
you wonder what would've happened
if you'd made different choices.
You know what I mean?

CLAIRE
...No.
(suddenly realizing)
Frank, are you talking about
regret?

FRANK
Yes! Exactly. Regret.

CLAIRE
How does that look?

FRANK
You could use a few more on the
other side.

Claire teeters precariously as she adds balloons to the
other side.

CLAIRE
You know Frank, the only good
thing about regret is that it's
never too late. You can always
change. If you want to. Believe
me, I deal with that every -

BLAM! The balloon she's taping pops, startling her,
causing her to lose her footing and fall on top of Frank.
They land on the floor in a giggling heap.

CONTINUED)
They lean on each other trying to stand. Frank puts his arms around Claire, holding her, hugging her. Their laughter fades as they become aware of the contact. They step back.

CLAIRE
Are you okay?

FRANK
(rubbing his head)
I think so. Hey, ah, let's get out of here. You wanna get some Chinese food?

Hazel rushes up.

HAZEL
We got a problem. Do you know where the fuse box is?

CLAIRE
Uh...yeah. (to Frank)
Right now?

FRANK
Sure. Why not? We could -

HAZEL
And you better call the A&P about the turkeys.

CLAIRE
They're not here yet? (to Frank)
Wait a minute. I'll be right back.

FRANK
(straightening himself out)
Listen, don't bother.

CLAIRE
It'll only take a second.

FRANK
You know these people are just using you.

(CONTINUED)
CLAIRE
I hope so. That's why I'm here.
What's wrong?

FRANK
Nothing. I'm just sad to see you wasting your life. Again.

CLAIRE
(indicating people in shelter)
What about them?

FRANK
Scrape 'em off. If you wanna save somebody, Claire, save yourself. Thanks for the coffee.

He walks away.

ANGLE ON HERMAN

He clutches his Mad Dog to himself.

HERMAN
(singing Jingle Bell Rock)
"Giddyap jingle-horse, pick up some speed..."

Frank walks by.

FRANK
(to Herman)
You're in my way.

HERMAN
(putting out his hand)
Listen, Dick, think you could lend me a few bucks so's I -

FRANK
I give at the office.

CUT TO:

OMITTED
INT. IBC STUDIO 8H - A LITTLE LATER

It's snowing on the London street of the Scrooge set. For a moment WE DON'T REALIZE that we are now watching the rehearsal of the television show.

SCROOGE
(to an URCHIN)
Now be off with you or you'll feel my stick across your back!

WE TRACK Marlon Brando as Scrooge as he strides down the cobblestone street, waving his cane, scattering the STREET URCHINS who beg for handouts. John Houseman narrates.

JOHN HOUSEMAN (V.O.)
"Ebenezer Scrooge hurried past the ragged boys who stood shivering in the snow, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs."

URCHIN 1
Spare a penny, sir? A ha'penny?

URCHIN 2
A crust of bread?

Scrooge buttonholes a BOBBIE standing under a lamppost. CAROLERS sing Good King Wenceslas in b.g.

SCROOGE
Excuse me, my good man! Can't something be done about them? Must I be constantly harassed by these damned sea urchins?

BRICE (O.S.)
Marlon, buddy, ...

REVEAL Brice on edge of set with TV cameras, TECHNICIANS, Censor with gauze-wrapped head, etc. The rehearsal halts, Carolers break off singing, snow stops falling.

BRICE
...That's street urchins, not sea urchins.
(to set)
Guys, that's it, dinner break.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
BRICE (Cont'd)
Let's be back in one hour. And I don't mean an hour and five minutes.

Frank storms up to Brice.

FRANK
Excuse me, I call the dinner breaks around here.

BRICE
Well Frank, if it means that much to you, I'll get them back and then you can say it's time for dinner.

FRANK
I think it's time you and I had a little talk.

BRICE
You're right. But I promised Preston I'd drop by and have a drink with him so lemme take a raincheck on that, okay champ?

Brice squeezes Frank's arm, winks and joins the other cast and crew exiting the set.

Frank stands bewildered as the BOBBIE, STREET URCHIN 1 and SOME SOLID GOLD DANCERS pass by.

URCHIN 1
I gotta call my service.

SOLID GOLD DANCER
If you're goin' downstairs, pick me up a pack of Merits.

Frank wanders down the now-deserted 19th Century London set. He passes the cobbler's, the ladies' emporium, the tobacconist's, the candlemaker, till he reaches Scrooge & Marley's and goes inside.
INT. SCROOGE'S OFFICE

The office is musical comedy real with period furniture and low dark-beamed ceiling. A frost-edged, many-paned window looks out on the studio/London street. Frank slumps wearily at Scrooge's massive desk.

Grace arrives holding papers and a mobile phone.

GRACE

Mr. Cross, I've been looking all over for you! They've shot Leroy Neiman!

Frank ignores her, lost in thought.

GRACE

The East German border guards just opened up on -

He whirls around.

FRANK

Get me Preston Rhinelander on the phone.

(grabs the phone from her)

In fact, forget it. I'll get him myself.

(starts dialing)

Don't you have something to do?

She leaves. Frank is the only one left in the studio.

FRANK

Judy, it's Frank, is he in? Yeah, I'll hold. Preston, this kid Brice is really getting on my nerves. Yes, yes, no I understand that. But he's not helping. I'll tell you what he's doing -

The studio goes black.

FRANK

He...uh...I...uh...

Through the window, he sees a follow spot cut on, throwing a bright circle of light on a golden easel in the center of the darkened London street.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK

...Wait a minute...

A woman's hand enters the circle of light and places a big artcard on the easel that reads, in a flowery style: "THE BALLBREAKER SUITE".

FRANK

...Hang on just a second...

He puts the phone aside and goes to the doorway to get a better look.

INT. LONDON STREET SET - SAME TIME

WE HEAR an o.s. celeste begin the familiar strains of the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from the Nutcracker Suite and, indeed, an exquisite SUGAR PLUM FAIRY with translucent wings and shimmering tutu tip-toes into the light.

Frank can scarcely believe his eyes.

She dances superbly, gracefully executing leaps and spins and twirls and arabesques and pirouettes and lots of other things with fancy French names. Her wings quivering excitedly, she glides over to Frank and, at a key point in the music...

WHUMPH! ...Kicks him solidly in the balls.

His eyes cross. He staggers, barely able to stand.

As the MUSIC starts up again, she gaily flounces off, finishes with a flourish, does a little curtsy, and introduces herself to Frank.

FAIRY

Hello, Frank. I am the Ghost of Christmas Present.

She speaks somewhat like Glenda, the Good Witch, with a delicate British accent in a sing-song falsetto.

FRANK

(hoarsely)

Why'd you do that?

(CONTINUED)
FAIRY
(sweetly)
"Sometimes you have to slap them
in the face just to get their
attention."

FRANK
Fine. Slap me in the face,
that's fair enough, but you
kicked me in the -

FAIRY
Oh hush, Frank. It's time to
begin our journey. Now close
your eyes.

FRANK
You close your eyes. I'm
through -

FAIRY
Don't be quarrelsome. Close your
eyes...

He reluctantly closes his eyes.

FAIRY
...And think of snowflakes and
moonbeams and whiskers on
kittens...

He sneaks a wary look at her.

FAIRY
There there, no peeking. Of
rainbows, forget-me-nots, of
misty meadows and sun-dappled
pools. Oh look, there's Mister
Hedgehog! I wonder where he's
going? Perhaps to...dreamland!

She leans back and unloads a freight-train right to
Frank's jaw.

In a shower of pixie dust, WE

CUT TO:
INT. GRACE COOLEY'S LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS EVE

Frank lands on the floor. WE HEAR angelic, bluesy electric GUITAR playing Away in a Manger.

He groggily sits up.

FRANK
Where am I, in heaven?

The Fairy stands over him, smiling serenely.

FAIRY
No, in Harlem.

Gramma sits on a threadbare sofa, playing the soulful, string-bending guitar. She is surrounded by six of Grace's children who all sing along. The shabby living room is bright with Christmas lights and decorations. An electric space heater adds to the cheery atmosphere.

FRANK
(rubbing his jaw)
Ow! That really hurt.

FAIRY
Sometimes the truth is painful, Frank. And besides, it's made your cheeks rosy and your eyes bright as stars.

Frank slowly gets to his feet, shaking his head to clear it.

The front door opens and Grace and Calvin enter.

GRACE
Merry Christmas Cooley family!

Some of the kids rush over and hug her, helping Calvin out of his coat.

LANELL
Oh mom, you didn't have to come get me. I can -

GRACE
I'm not having you ride that subway alone at night. You almost ready?

Lanell nods.
ANGLE ON THE TWINS

Shasta and Randee, huddle over a top-like plastic puzzle trying to get all the metal balls into the holes.

Frustrated, Shasta pulls it away from her sister.

SHASTA
Get away! You don't know how to do it!

RANDEE
(trying to grab it back)
Gimme that! It's mine! Gimme!

Shasta hits her with the puzzle and Randee bursts into tears.

FAIRY
Good gracious, what a fuss!

She sprinkles a little pixie dust over them and instantly they're all smiles.

SHASTA
Here take it. You try.

RANDEE
No, it's your turn.

Frank notices Calvin sitting near them, eyeing the puzzle.

FRANK
Cute little guy. What's wrong with him?

FAIRY
He saw his father killed and just drifted away. Like Sleeping Beauty.

Frank
I didn't know her husband died.

FAIRY
Do you remember that period she wore black for a year?

FRANK
Yeah, but I always thought it was just a new look; some fashion thing.
Gramma bends over, cranks up the volume on her battered Pignose amp, and tears into Three Dog Night's *Joy to the World*.

The twins go off to dance, leaving the puzzle on the floor. The Fairy prances off to join them. Frank is alone with Calvin. Unseen, he watches him.

The little boy stares at the puzzle. Suddenly he reaches over and, with a flick of the wrist, spins it.

as all the metal balls click into place.

Calvin blankly moves away.

Frank crosses the room to the dancing Fairy.

That kid -- the little one -- is he gonna be okay?

It's his choice. Only he can break the spell.

Frank glances back at Calvin, sitting by himself on the floor.

My this is a merry tune! Come, join the dance!

She does a quick pirouette.
FRANK
Huh? No. No thanks.

Gramma wails, singing the chorus.

GRAMMA
"Joy to the world,
All the boys and girls.
Joy to the fishes in the deep
blue sea..."

Steven joins her, drumming on the phone book. Shasta and Randee grab Grace and rock around the room. All the Kids are dancing now. The Fairy leaps onto the coffee table and does a grande jeté over the Barcalounger. Everyone is swinging heavily.

CLOSE ON A KITTEN

curled up in the middle of the Nativity scene, opens a drowsy eye, yawns, and goes back to sleep.

BACK TO SCENE

Frank begins tapping his foot, shyly snapping his fingers.

Gramma jumps up, windmilling her beat-up Telecaster for all she's worth.

FRANK
(to Fairy)
You sure they can't see me?

He finally surrenders to the beat and dances, timidly at first but quickly progressing to full-out party beast.

The Fairy prepares to depart.

FAIRY
Come, we've tarried long enough.
We must be -

FRANK
(frugging wildly)
Lighten up Mama! Let's get into the zone! Let's get ill!

(CONTINUED)
150 CONTINUED:

FAIRY
This is a disgrace, Frank. Look
at that ceiling. A woman in your
employ living like this. Shame
on you!

Still dancing, Frank glances up at the crumbling ceiling.

FRANK
You're right. When I get back,
I'll give her a -

The Fairy sucker-punches Frank with a Mike Tyson right.

In another burst of pixie dust, WE

MATCH CUT TO:

151 thru
152

OMITTED

153

EXT. JAMES CROSS' BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

ESTABLISH a brownstone under renovation. A large
dumpster sits outside. O.S. NOISE brings us to:

154

INT. JAMES CROSS' BROWNSTONE LIVING ROOM -
CHRISTMAS EVE

The blow sends Frank crashing into a bar trolley loaded
with glasses and party snacks. He struggles to get up,
picking cocktail cherries off his lapels. A big MONGREL
DOG growls at him.

FRANK
Fairy or no fairy you do that one
more time and I'm gonna rip your
wings off!

WENDIE CROSS (O.S.)
Cujo! Bad dog!

WENDIE, James' wife, a long-limbed stunner with an easy
smile, rushes over to the trolley and begins cleaning up.
A GUEST lends a hand.

GUEST 1 (O.S.)
It's your turn, Wendie.

(CONTINUED)
Go ahead, I can hear you.

The Fairy helps Frank to his feet and gestures around her.

Ah, what a gay feast!

WE SEE a warm, homey place full of FRIENDS and food. Cujo curls up in front of a roaring fire. WE HEAR medieval Christmas carols played by a chamber quartet on the stereo. A bushy Christmas tree, strung with real popcorn and real cranberries, soars to the ceiling of this lovingly restored Victorian room. Strewn at the foot of the tree lie opened gifts.

This looks like a Lowenbrau commercial.

Okay, all set? "On Gilligan's Island, what was the name of the shipwrecked boat?"

Do not vex me Frank or I'll fix your mouth so it won't hold soup.

The S.S. something.

Minnow!

As Frank looks at her apprehensively, Wendie notices an unopened present under the tree and brings it over to James.

You haven't opened your brother's gift yet.

of living room with everybody gathered around James opening gift. In the b.g. is Frank and the Fairy.

This oughta be great. What'd he get you last year?

I don't remember ...

(continued)
WENDIE
A shower curtain.

They all laugh.

FRANK
(to Fairy)
It was a beautiful shower
curtain. It was gray. It had
little IBC's stamped all over it.

James unwraps the large present.

WENDIE
What did you get him this year?

JAMES
Nothing really. I made a frame
for an old snapshot of the two
of us when we were kids.

James reaches into the box and with difficulty pulls out
a top-of-the line VCR.

JAMES
I don't believe it. A VCR!

Frank explodes.

FRANK
I'm gonna kill her! I distinctly
said towel! I remember saying
the words!

WENDIE
He probably got the gifts mixed
up.

FRANK
I didn't get the gifts mixed up!
The ex-secretary got the gifts
mixed up!

JAMES
(over his friends'
laughter)
You really don't know him.

WENDIE
And I'm never going to know him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
WENDIE (Cont'd)
Every year you invite him to
Christmas dinner and every year
he's too busy to come. When are
you going to learn?

JAMES
Never. He's my brother.

The Fairy looks over at Frank.

FRANK
What the hell. It's Christmas.

WENDIE
Can we please get back to the
game. We're winning.

The party gathers around Guest 3 and a Trivial Pursuit
game.

GUEST 3
Okay, "on The Adams Family, what
musical instrument did Lurch
play?"

FAIRY
Frank, we must be off.

FRANK
Wait a second, I'm
starving. Lemme grab a
turkey leg or something.

FAIRY
I'm afraid we've
lingered long enough.

FRANK
Let's just hang out.
This is sort of fun.

The Fairy attempts to throw
her trademark right-cross
but Frank easily blocks it.

FRANK
Come on babe, gimme
your best shot.

JAMES
(to Wendie)
I think it was a violin

GUEST 4
Is that your answer?

WENDIE
It couldn't have been a
violin. He only had one
hand.

JAMES
That wasn't Lurch; that
was Thing.

GUEST 2
Wasn't he on The Munsters?

WENDIE
Let's say piano --
(to James)
-- Okay? We're saying he
played the piano.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

He feigns, does an "Ali Shuffle," hands up "peekaboo" style.

She glances above Frank's head and smiles.

FAIRY
Oh, how sweet -- mistletoe.

Frank looks up and, before he realizes his mistake, she rockets him to dreamland.

With a blast of pixie dust, WE MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SOUTH BRONX TENEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

The blow sends Frank sprawling into a shadowy one-room apartment. It is bitter cold.

He angrily picks himself off the floor, ready to duke it out.

FRANK
Okay! That's it! That does it!
(sensing he's alone)
Hello? Miss...Fairy woman? Ghostess? Anyone?

Frank tries the door. He yanks it. Locked tight. He pounds on it with both fists.

FRANK
Come back! Please! Don't leave me here!

The door won't budge. Frank stumbles back into the room, shuddering in the bluish light, exhaling cold clouds. He fumbles out his lighter and flicks it on. It doesn't shed much light. He grabs an old newspaper off the floor, rolls it tightly into a torch and sets it on fire.

A few feet away on a decaying couch sits Herman the wino. He watches Frank wordlessly.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
Ah! I'm sorry, you scared me.
I thought I was alone.

Herman continues to stare at him.

FRANK
I'm not going to hurt you. I
need your help. It's me uh...
Dick.

He reaches out and gently shakes Herman.

The gold pocket watch falls from Herman's hand and the
lid opens as it lands. It BEGINS PLAYING Beautiful
Dreamer.

Frank holds the torch closer. Herman's white face and
blank eyes confront him.

FRANK
Oh my God.

He's frozen to death. Frank backs away, slowly looking
around the room. Herman stares at him, as if in
judgement.

FRANK'S POV

While Beautiful Dreamer plays, WE SEE where Herman came
to his end -- ROACHES crawl over an empty, doorless
refrigerator; a plume of ice hangs from a broken water
pipe; the floor is littered with rags, cans, newspapers,
bottles.

The watch runs down and stops.

Frank, lost in this sad inventory, doesn't notice the
torch has burned to his hand.

FRANK
Ahh!

The flame sputters out, leaving Frank in darkness. He
panics, smashing the boarded-up windows with his shoulder
but they won't give.

Frantic, he tries kicking the door. Nothing. Grabbing
a chair, he batters the door with all his might. The
chair shatters.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

Frank gathers his last bit of strength to make a final charge into the door.

He breaks through!

INT. IBC STUDIO 8/SCROOGE SET - CHRISTMAS EVE

Frank bursts through Scrooge's office door, flattening the Lady Censor and tumbling to the floor.

WE HEAR heraldic HORNS play a fanfare. The IBC Announcer steps up to the mike.

ANNOUNCER
Tonight, live on IBC, the world premiere telecast of a Christmas classic -- Charles Dickens' immortal Scrooge.

WE SEE REACTION SHOTS of EXTRAS in Victorian costume, TECHNICIANS, Solid Gold Dancers, "Tip" O'Neill dressed as Marley, Brice and Grace, all staring at Frank in stunned silence.

BRICE
(hissing to Grace)
Help me get him off the set!

Frank, dazed and confused staggers to his feet, stammering inarticulately. As Brice and Grace try to lead him away, he sneaks a peek inside the Scrooge office. A Prop Man hurries out.

BRICE
Here, grab his arm.
(to set)
What're you looking at? Let's get with it.

STAGE MANAGER
Thirty seconds to air!

GRACE
I've been worried about you.

Brice steers him off the set and towards the elevator.

BRICE
We've all been worried about you, Frank.

(MORE)
BRICE (Cont'd)
Now, why don't you just go
upstairs and kind of "supervise
things" from that big office of
yours, huh? You could check
those satellite linkups.

FRANK
Yeah. Okay.
(to cast and crew)
Good luck guys...uhm...I feel
magic tonight!

INT. IBC STUDIO 8H/BACKSTAGE - CHRISTMAS EVE

Now at the elevator, the doors open and standing before
Frank -- hooded black cape billowing, red eyes glowing
in a skull -- is THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE.

Frank shrieks, dropping to his knees. He clutches
pitifully at the Ghost's cape.

FRANK
Take me! I give up! Do whatever
you want!

The Ghost tries to pull away, stumbling back into the
elevator.

GHOST
Help! Guard! SECURITY!

A husky IBC SECURITY GUARD moves for Frank.

BRICE
(lifting Frank up)
That won't be necessary. Frank
just needs a little rest and
he'll be fine.
(to Grace)
Get this nutcake the hell outta
here!

Frank stares wide-eyed at the Ghost who edges past him.
The Ghost waves his Scrooge script angrily.

GHOST
Listen, I gotta show to do. I
don't need this!

(CONTINUED)
158 CONTINUED:

FRANK
(as Grace gently guides him into the elevator)
I'm okay! False alarm! Go get 'em kids!

The elevator doors close:

GHOST
(to Brice)
This is live TV! Not tape, not film, live!

BRICE
Calm down.

GHOST
Don't tell me to calm down!
There's gonna be a hundred million people watching this show and I'm the one who's gonna be out there! Not you!

He turns on his heels and stalks away, cape luffing behind him. WE TRACK him through the congested backstage area.

GHOST
Anybody have a valium?

A Solid Gold Dancer looks up from fixing the run in her stocking.

SOLID GOLD DANCER
There's some in my bag in the dressing room.

GHOST
Thanks honey.

STAGE MANAGER (V.O.)
(over PA system)
Fifteen seconds.

The Ghost walks thru a quieter area. He reaches the dressing room and enters.

159 INT. DRESSING ROOM

The Ghost shuts the door behind him and crosses the empty room to the lit make-up mirror.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He tosses back the black hood and very slowly removes the horrific skull mask with blazing blood-red eyes. Beneath it -- a horrific skull face and blazing blood-red eyes. This really is the Ghost of Christmas Future!

Lightbulbs EXPLODE around the mirror.

The skull stares at his nightmarish reflection. There is an evil SIZZLING SOUND as smoke curls from his eye sockets.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank sits at his desk, confused and exhausted.

ON TV SCREEN

John Houseman sits in a wing chair. He opens the leather-bound copy of Scrooge and begins to read.

HOUSEMAN
"It was a cold, bleak Christmas Eve. The fog-draped streets of London were deserted save for an occasional carriage that moved like a phantom through the dingy mist."

WE HEAR the CLIP-CLOP of horses' hooves on cobblestones.

BACK TO SCENE

Frank pours himself a water glass full of vodka.

HOUSEMAN (O.S.)
"Old Ebenezer Scrooge sat alone in his gloomy chambers, more bitter than the night. 'Christmas,' he thought. 'Bah! Humbug!'"

Frank takes a big swig.
INT. STUDIO 8H HALLWAY

MARY LOU RETTON, dressed in rags as Tiny Tim, hobbles a few feet on her wooden crutches. Suddenly she stops, flings the crutches aside, somersaults down the corridor, flies into a full-twisting back-flip and lands on her feet.

MARY LOU
God bless us every one!

Sitting in a folding chair against the wall is a wide-eyed Calvin Cooley. He stares up at Mary Lou with strange intensity. Calvin's sister Lanell pulls up a chair beside him.

Mary Lou's COACH approaches her.

COACH
Try it again, and this time, really stick it.

Mary Lou nods and returns to her original position. In the b.g. John Houseman walks briskly to the dressing room trailed by his DRESSER.

Grace comes over to Calvin and Lanell. She puts a hand on his shoulder.

GRACE
You kids having a good time?

Mary Lou Retton hurtles down the hallway, landing right in front of them.

MARY LOU
God bless us every one!

Calvin can't take his eyes off her.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE

Over Frank's shoulder WE SEE the TV monitor with Brando as Scrooge sitting in his dreary counting house. His NEPHEW proudly sets a glass case on the desk.

SCROOGE
And what are these supposed to be?

NEPHEW
Why they're doormice, Uncle,...
CLOSE ON MICE

with antlers glued to their tiny heads.

NEPHEW (O.S.)
...The rage of London. I brought
a pair for my -

INT. RHINELANDER'S BEEKMAN PLACE BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Preston Rhinelander and his handsome, white-haired WIFE
sit in their classic WASP parlour watching Scrooge.
Their TWO PERSIAN CATS paw the screen after the doormice.

NEPHEW (O.S.)
...Wife.

SCROOGE (O.S.)
Doormice, indeed!

RHINELANDER
(to wife)
Works like a charm.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

SCROOGE
I've never heard of such foolishne-

Frank mutes the sound with the remote control.

Frank is totally gone. He pours himself another Stoly,
setting down the bottle without looking. It falls,
spilling over his cluttered desk. He grabs it and begins
sopping the liquor with an envelope. Seeing a wrapped
gift among his papers, he stops and picks it up.

The tag on the gift -- "To Frank."

WE STAY ON Frank as he opens the package. He freezes,
when he sees what's inside. His eyes fill up. Tears
begin to stream down his face. Brushing them aside, he
sets the gift on the desk and walks away.

CUT TO:

THE GIFT -- BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH

of Frank and James as little boys in front of tract
house. They have their arms around each other and smile
happily into the camera.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Inscribed at the bottom of the picture --

"To Frank,
The best brother a guy every had. Merry Christmas.

Love,
James

Frank pours himself another drink. Scrooge continues in monitor, showing a street scene.

INT. STUDIO 8H

The Victorian "Scrooge" street is in full glory: the poulterers hung with geese and turkeys; the grocers bursting with polished fruit; wind-up toys dance in the toy store windows; VENDORS hawk their chestnuts. Crowds of happy SHOPPERS bustle down the snow-covered street. CHILDREN CAROLERS sing God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen beneath a flickering gas lamp.

Brando, as Scrooge, walks beside a jolly giant wearing a long velvet robe and a holly wreath on his head -- Dickens' GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT. WE TRACK them down the cheery street.

SCROOGE
This has indeed been a night of revelations. Thank you for showing me the true meaning -

Big Ben begins CHIMING o.s.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Thank me not, Ebenezer, for soon you will be visited by the final Spirit; the thing all men fear the most!

CUT TO:
170 EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT
A huge blood-tinged moon sits ominously on the horizon, dwarfing the silhouetted skyline.

CUT TO:

171 EXT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT
Frank, framed by the criss-crossed window grids, stares out at the swollen moon. He stands imprisoned, a solitary, lonely figure.

172 INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT
Frank, his back to the CAMERA, stands at the far end of the spacious office, staring out the window.

He turns, and dull with booze, slowly crosses the room. The vodka bottle, upside-down in his hand, leaves a trail along the carpet.

As he passes the TV monitor, WE SEE appearing on the screen, wreathed in grey mist, the black-hooded Ghost of Christmas Future. The solemn phantom points a long bony finger at Frank.

Frank continues on, oblivious. WE SEE the Ghost, a skeletal hand pointing straight at Frank, take over all the monitors.

Suddenly the door flies open. Eliot Loudermilk -- unshaven with crazed, red-rimmed eyes; wearing pajamas, an overcoat, mud-caked galoshes, harlequin sunglasses, and carrying a double-barreled shotgun -- stands in the doorway. Smiling.

ELIOT
Honey, I'm home!

He BLASTS the vodka bottle out of Frank's hand.

With a sobering jolt of adrenaline, Frank dives behind his desk.

ELIOT
Remember me boss? The guy you canned the day before Christmas?!

Another SHOTGUN CHARGE slams into the desk; blowing the phone to bits.

(CONTINUED)
Eliot calmly breaks apart the smoking gun and slides two more shells in.

FRANK
(cowering under the desk)
Eliot, I've been trying to get you on the phone! Firing you was a big mistake.

Another BLAST blows out the TV monitors. Frank winces.

FRANK
As of now consider yourself rehired! Bonus and everything!

He breaks cover, bolting out the door. Eliot fires — missing him by inches.

INT. HALLWAY/AREA OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE — NIGHT

As Eliot coolly reloads, Frank tugs on an office door. It's locked. He runs to the next door, also locked, yanking on the handle. The door knob comes off in his hand.

ELIOT
How was my day you ask? Well, my wife left me, took my little girl with her. And that's all I can remember because ever since then I've been blind drunk!

Eliot clicks the gun in place with a metallic snap.

ELIOT
(singing softly)
"You better not shout,
You better not cry,
You better not pout,
I'm tellin' you..."

Frank hides behind a secretary's desk.

FRANK
You were right, I was a jerk. I've missed the whole point of Christmas, I know that now.

(CONTINUED)
Eliot appears above him. Frank looks up to see both barrels inches from his head.

FRANK
But I've been through a lot today. And, and I've learned a lot.

He gets to his feet.

ELIOT
(singing)
"He knows when you are sleeping..."

Eliot backs Frank up against the wall.

FRANK
I've done some terrible things. Not just to you but to people who love me. But the wonderful thing is it's not too late!

ELIOT
(singing)
"... Knows when you're..."

FRANK
Please, just give me a chance...

Eliot aims with both barrels at the CAMERA. Over his shoulder, WE SEE the Ghost holding out both his skeletal arms in a death embrace.

FRANK (O.S.)
...And I promise you -

Both barrels EXPLODE with a deafening roar.

Frank drops to the floor, barely dodging the blast. Two smoking holes are blown out inches above him.

Frank scampers on all fours down the hall. Eliot, in no hurry, reloads.

Frank springs to his feet as the water cooler explodes near his head.

Eliot follows him down the hall, the shotgun dangling casually over his elbow.

(Continued)
ELIOT
(singing)
"...Knows when you've been bad
or..."

Frank runs until he reaches the elevator bank.
Incredibly, the elevator bell RINGS and the doors slide
open. Frank leaps inside, hits "L" and frantically
punches "CLOSE DOOR." Eliot rounds the corner.

ELIOT
(singing)
"...So be good for...

The doors close on Eliot aiming both barrels into the
car. Frank is safe.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Frank stares up at the descending floor lights, sweat
beading his forehead, panting heavily. Suddenly he
realizes there is someone else breathing in the car --
low, death-rattle breaths. He whirls around to see the
Ghost of Christmas Future standing right behind him.

FRANK
Ahh...Oh god, it's you. Scared
me to death.

Frank wipes his brow, recovering.

FRANK
What the hell are you doing here?
Shouldn't you be downstairs in
the studio? We're on the air.

He notices something rustling beneath the Ghost's black
cape.

FRANK
Hey! Whatta you got under there?

He pulls back the cape to REVEAL hellish faces writhing
and moaning in pain, trapped inside the hollow Ghost's
bloody rib-cage prison.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Frank yanks the cloak shut. Eyes wide with dread, he slowly looks up to the Ghost's hooded face. Wisps of smoke drift from the coal-red eye sockets.

FRANK
Oh shit...Whoa, that's...that's some costume. Really, really works. Whew. I'm scared.

Elevator doors open behind him.

FRANK

As the Ghost silently glowers at him, Frank bolts out of the elevator into a situation too horrible to be described here.

Frank shrieks, pulls a U-turn and dives back into the elevator as Bernard Hermann's piercing Psycho sting strings pursue him.

INT. ELEVATOR

Frank hysterically jabs all the elevator buttons as the doors close. The Ghost stares down at him.

FRANK
My mistake...So...You don't say much huh? I uh I like that in a man. Strong, silent type. Chicks love it.

The Ghost doesn't respond. The elevator descends for a few more floors, finally stopping. The doors open to REVEAL --

INT. WILLOWBROOK MENTAL INSTITUTION - LATE AFTERNOON

WE SEE, squatting in a shadowy corner of this snakepit nightmare, a slightly older Calvin, wearing a grimy nightshirt.

REVERSE ANGLE

on Frank and Ghost watching from inside elevator.

(CONTINUED)
FRANK
(to Ghost)
So. What? Am I suppose to know these people?

ANGLE ON CALVIN
as an older Grace Cooley brings him a cup of water.

GRACE
(handing it to him)
Now be careful sweetheart. Drink it slow -

A HOSPITAL ORDERLY taps her on the shoulder.

GRACE
Please. I just got here.

ORDERLY
Visiting hours are over.

He starts to escort her away. Grace breaks free, running to her son. She hugs him tightly. The boy stares at nothing. He is lost. The Orderly pries her off, leading her from the room.

GRACE
(crying)
Don't worry Calvin honey. I'll be back. You be a good boy.

The elevator doors close.

FRANK
(to Ghost)
Is this true? Is this the future? But I can change it, right? I will. As soon as I get back.

(making a note in his pad)
"Take Grace's son to specialist."
See. It's a done thing. That easy.

The elevator descends and stops again. The doors open on -
EXT. RODEO DRIVE SIDEWALK BISTRO - DAY

A trio of middle-aged Beverly Hills HARPIES gossip over their nouvelle salads at the outdoor cafe. The women have too much jewelry, too much makeup and too much cosmetic surgery. They wear expensive fringed and studded designer jumpsuits and distressed hair.

The woman with her back to the Camera flicks a red-taloned hand through her orange shag.

WOMAN
...So by now the new girl is waxing my legs -

WE MOVE AROUND her to SEE -- it's Claire! She has become tough and brassy.

WOMAN 2
You mean the Korean?

TWO CHILDREN, ragged and gaunt, walk to the cafe's railing, watching the ladies eat.

CLAIRE
I guess, they all look - (seeing the kids)
Hey! Beat it! (searching over her shoulder)
Waiter!

WOMAN 3
Come on Claire, they're just kids.

ANGLE ON FRANK

eyes widening as he hears Claire's name -- recognizing her beneath the garish mask.

ANGLE ON CLAIRE

lighting a cigarette, her puffy face set in a sneer.

CLAIRE
Don't tell me. I wasted twenty years on losers like them. Thank God a friend took me aside one day and said "Save yourself Claire. Scrape 'em off." Best advice I ever got.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The Children continue to stare at her. She sips her drink, a tear in her eye.

CLAIRE
(to herself)
Yeah, best advice I ever got.

The elevator doors close on this scene.

INT. ELEVATOR

Frank turns to the ghost.

FRANK
I didn't mean it! I was angry and, and hurt. I didn't want...She was right. The second I get back I'm gonna call Claire - No! I'll go over and see her. Thanks. Thank you for showing me this. This was good.

The elevator descends, finally stopping at the bottom floor. This time the doors slowly swing open with a chilling stone against stone sound. The Ghost wordlessly floats past Frank out of the car.

FRANK
Hey! Wait up.

Frank follows the spectre into --

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Frank looks over his shoulder to see he has just stepped out of an age-worn, marble mausoleum. He shudders, dashing through the Michael Riva graveyard after the Ghost.

They walk/float side by side through the moonswept headstones and crypts towards a bare hill.

Wendie Cross stands there, alone, head bowed.

FRANK
Oh no. James. My brother is dead. Oh what a waste. I should have...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
FRANK (Cont'd)
I don't know what my problem was
with him? He's my brother and
I love him. I do! When I get
back I'll --

James Cross steps out from behind a monument and joins
his wife. He is sobbing. She holds his hand, comforting
him.

FRANK
(happily)
James! He's okay!
(realizing)
Well then... who's buried in
there?

Frank looks at the Ghost who simply points towards the
freshly dug empty grave. Frank is drawn up the hill.

CLOSE ON HEADSTONE

which reads -- "FRANCIS CROSS -- BELOVED BROTHER". The
birth and death dates are obscured by a floral wreath.

ANGLE ON FRANK

shaking his head, mouth open in disbelief.

FRANK
What? I'm dead? What the hell
are you saying here!? I've died?
That's... crazy. I mean... if I'm
dead, how, how can I change any
of this? Why bother showing me
these things if I can't do
anything about them?!
(backing away from his
grave)
No. I'm sorry. That's it.
That's enough. You're not
getting me in there!

He wheels, fleeing back to the mausoleum/elevator, his
only possibility of escape.

The spectre points a bony finger after him.
INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Frank races inside and pushes the 22nd floor. The doors slide shut.

He looks up at the floor lights. The car is still. He's breathing hard. Suddenly with a wrenching metallic sound, the walls of the elevator begin to close in on him. The ceiling slowly drops. Frank jams his arms out, trying to fight it, but the elevator tightens to fit his body. The lights flicker and, in the instant before they go out, WE SEE that the elevator car has become Frank's coffin!

From outside WE HEAR hands roughly grab the coffin and turn it sideways.

GRAVEDIGGER 1 (O.S.)
Easy, easy. Watch it!

GRAVEDIGGER 2 (O.S.)
I got it. You get the back.

GRAVEDIGGER 3 (O.S.)
Damn it's cold!

FRANK
Hey! What's going on? I'm in here!

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

THREE GRAVEDIGGERS carry Frank's coffin up the hill to the grave where James and Wendie wait.

GRAVEDIGGER 1
Not much of a turnout.

INT. FRANK'S COFFIN

WE HEAR Frank's panicked breaths.

FRANK
Anybody out there? Can anybody hear me? Hello?

WE HEAR creaking, jostling SOUNDS.

FRANK
Help!
191 EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT
They lower the coffin into the pit.

   JAMES
   "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall
    not want."

192 INT. COFFIN
In the blackness WE HEAR James' muffled voice.

   JAMES (V.O.)
   "He leadeth me beside the
    still."

   FRANK
   (whispering to himself)
   Oh my god! I'm being buried
    alive.
   (screaming)
   Help! Help me!

193 EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT
James closes the Bible, scoops up a handful of dirt and
drops it on the coffin below.

194 INT. COFFIN
In the total darkness WE HEAR the SOUND of dirt hitting
the coffin lid. Frank goes berserk.

   FRANK
   GET ME OUT OF HERE!

He pounds frantically against the casket. The wood
creaks.

   FRANK
   (hysterically)
   NOOOOOOOOO!

Shovelfuls of dirt hit the coffin. Frank's pounding
increases.

   FRANK
   I WANT TO LIVE!  I WANT TO LIVE!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

With his last ounce of strength, he slowly pries open the coffin lid.

MATCH CUT TO:

195 INT. IBC 22ND FLOOR ELEVATOR BANK - NIGHT

Frank bursts out of the elevator and lands on the floor.

FRANK
I WANT TO LIVE!!!

Church bells RING loudly on the TV monitor above him.

Frank stops thrashing. He looks around, recognizing that he's back safe on the 22nd floor. As the reality hits, a big smile spreads across his face. He bounds to his feet. He giggles, laughing louder, finally shouting with joy.

FRANK
I'M ALIVE!!!

Eliot steps from around the corner, aiming a shotgun squarely at Frank.

ELIOT
(smiling)
Not for long.

Frank brushes the gun aside and throws a brotherly arm around Eliot.

FRANK
Okay, here's my final offer -- you're hired back at twice the salary, you move upstairs to a big office, and I'm making you vice-president in charge of programming.

Eliot lowers the gun.

ELIOT
Excuse me, I'm looking for a Mister Frank Cross. I must have the wrong --

Frank stops him as he turns to go.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANK
No, it's me but ... it's not me!
I'm a new man! I'm a lover!

He gives him a big kiss on the cheek.

FRANK
I'm a singer!

He hits a high note. On the TV monitor, the clanging BELLS of London change to the Carolers singing *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*.

FRANK
I'm a dancer!

He grabs Eliot and waltzes him wildly down the hall. But Frank freezes in mid tango-spin, letting go of his partner's hand. Eliot sails across the floor and topples over a desk.

FRANK
Wait! Are we still on the air?

Eliot climbs from behind the desk.

ELIOT
(apprehensively)
Got about ten minutes left.

Frank helps him to his feet, throws an arm around him and steers him towards the door.

FRANK
Ten minutes! Come on Eliot!

Frank pulls a shiny red Christmas ball from the corporate wreath, hooks it around his ear, and flashes a wacky grin.

FRANK
Let's have a little fun for once in this life!
INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Scrooge, wearing a night shirt and tasseled cap, throws open the bedroom shutters and looks out.

SCROOGE
Oh what a glorious day! Never has there been such a day!

He shouts to the Street Urchin lobbing snowballs in the street below.

SCROOGE
You there! Lad!

The boy stops and looks up at the window.

URCHIN 1
Yes sir? Are you talking to me sir?

Scrooge holds up a shiny coin.

SCROOGE
Here's a gold sovereign! Go buy me the biggest goose in all London!

He tosses it to the boy o.s.

SLOW MOTION of the tumbling coin.

But it's caught by a different hand.

WE HEAR gasps. WE SEE the shocked REACTIONS of Brando, Grace.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The place is in a panic.

TECHNICIAN #1
He's drunk!

TECHNICIAN #2
He's nuts!

BRICE
He's finished!

Eliot has appeared with the shotgun behind the Director.

ELIOT
Just stay on him.
INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

The hand opens. And Frank Cross looks down at the coin he just caught. As more cameras glide over to shoot him, Frank takes charge.

FRANK
Which camera am I on? This one?
Come in a little closer, Tony.

(into camera)
Hi, I'm Frank Cross. I'm the President of this network. And I gotta ask you one question.

INT. RHINELANDER'S DEN - NIGHT

Bolt upright in his chair, nervously sipping a drink, Preston Rhinelander glares at Frank on the TV set. It has started to snow outside.

FRANK
-- What the hell are you doing watching television on Christmas Eve?

Rhinelander does a spit-take and lunges for the phone.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

FRANK
Don't you have a family? I do. I have a brother. And he's the best.

INT. JAMES' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James, Wendie and the other couples crowd around the TV, watching Frank.

FRANK
(waving)
Hey James. I should be there with you guys right now. Not here. We could be drinking punch, telling jokes, eating mince pie -- I don't know. But I should be with people I love. It's Christmas Eve.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

They all cheer, startling the Dog.

JAMES
You tell 'em Frank!

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

FRANK
No family? What about your friends -- the gang you work with?

INT. RHINELANDER'S DEN - NIGHT

Rhinelander's on the phone and Frank's on the console.

FRANK
...Your college roommate, the car pool,...

RHINELANDER
Control room? Who let that idiot on the air?

INT. 8H CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Eliot is on the other end of the line, holding shotgun, one foot up on the Director's chair. Frank's in the monitors.

ELIOT
Brice Cummings did, sir.

FRANK
...Your bowling team, an old army buddy, your personal banker,...

RHINELANDER (V.O.)
Put him on the phone immediately!

WE PAN AWAY from Eliot to FIND Brice festively trussed up in Christmas ribbon, gagged, with a big bow stuck to his head.

ELIOT
I'm sorry, sir. He's tied up right now.

(CONTINUED)
Continued:
Brice attempts to hop out of the room but Eliot deftly
slams his foot down on the end of Brice's ribbon and he
topples to the floor with a BIG CRASH.

FRANK
Call 'em up and get 'em over
there. Have a party.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

FRANK
When I first started here my boss
gave great Christmas parties.
We're gonna do that again.
Tonight! Why? Because it's
Christmas Eve.

ANGLE ON CAMERA MEN,
sound guys, prop men, actors, technicians in studio
whooping delightedly.

ANGLE ON FRANK

FRANK
Yeah, we're gonna get a band down
here. You grab somebody you like
and dance and you kiss 'em under
the mistletoe.
(thinking about Claire)
Boy, there's a girl I'd like to
be with tonight.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT
Claire watches Frank on the raffle TV.

FRANK
A girl I loved a long time ago.

MOVE IN ON A TIGHT SHOT of Claire.

FRANK (O.S.)
A girl I still love.

(continued)
WE SEE Frank on TV, Claire watching.

FRANK
(brightening)
But that's the beauty of it, Claire. It's not too late. It's Christmas Eve.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

It is snowing. Claire runs out into the street and hails a cab. A Checker fishtails to a stop. She jumps in.

INT. CHECKER - NIGHT

CLAIRE
I have to get to the IBC building in two minutes.

The Cabbie turns, a wide, pointy-toothed smile slapped on his demon face.

CABBIE
No problem.

He punches the accelerator and the cab peels out.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

FRANK
No friends? Go make a friend. Visit a neighbor and introduce yourself. What do ya think, they're gonna slam the door in your face? Don't worry. I got an idea.

(leaning in conspiratorially)
Bake 'em some cookies.

INT. DR. ROSENBLUM'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank's psychiatrist sadly shakes his head as he watches Frank on TV.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANK
Not just ordinary cookies -- no, no, no, no. Special cookies, the ones shaped like bells and stars and little snowmen.

DR. ROSENBLUM
(to himself)
He came to me for help and I failed him.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

FRANK
Then put some red and green sprinkles on top, knock on their door and say, "Merry Christmas! Want a cookie?" It'll work. It's Christmas Eve. Or caroling. That's a cool thing to do.

Grace, Calvin, Lanell and Mary Lou Retton watch Frank from the floor.

FRANK
Get together and sing some of those classic old Christmas songs.

(he demonstrates)
"Deck the halls with boughs of holly, Fa-la-la-la-la-ah ..."

INT. IBC LOBBY/GUARD CONSOLE - NIGHT

The two Guards harmonize loudly, their voices echoing in the marble lobby.

IBC SECURITY GUARDS
"I'm dreaming of a white..."

INT. GRACE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gramma on the Telecaster and the Cooley kids sing.

COOLEY FAMILY
"Jolly old Saint Nicholas, Lean your ear..."
INT. CLAIRE'S HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

HOMELESS are gathered around a beat-up old upright singing while Hazel plays.

SHELTER CROWD
"Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still..."

OMITTED

INT. RHINELANDER'S DEN - NIGHT

The TV is still on but Rhinelander's chair is empty. As Frank continues to speak, WE PAN over to the window and the SOUNDS of caroling outside.

FRANK
Get out there! Wake the neighbors! It's Christmas Eve.

His arm around his Wife, Preston Rhinelander stands looking out at CAROLERS who are serenading them.

EXT. RHINELANDER'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

WE SEE A REVERSE of the Carolers, a cross-section of New Yorkers, with the Rhinelanders framed in their parlor floor picture window.

CAROLERS
(finishing the song)
"Troll the ancient Yuletide'carol,
Fa-la-la-la-lah-la-la-la-la-la."

Preston applauds. His Wife beckons to them, throwing open the window.

WIFE —
Merry Christmas! Want a cookie?

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

FRANK
(taking off the Christmas ball)
There are people around you who are having a terrible Christmas. (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
FRANK (Cont'd)
They're cold and they're hungry.
Things couldn't be worse. Hey,
if you're not doing anything --
and you're not; you're just
sitting around watching me on TV
-- why don't you drop by and see
'em? Give 'em a sweater, an old
blanket. Make 'em a sandwich.

Frank notices Calvin.

WE SEE Calvin staring back.

FRANK (O.S.)
Show 'em you care.

Frank presses on.

FRANK
Do something, for God's sake.
It's Christmas Eve.

EXT. WATERFRONT - NIGHT

THREE BUMS huddle around a fire in an oil drum during
the snowstorm. SIREN wailing, a cop car pulls up and
hits them in the face with a searchlight.

COP #1
Alright you, get over here! Take
this!

He shoves a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken at them.

COP #2
And don't tell anybody where you
got it!

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

FRANK
For one night, we act a little
nicer, we smile a little quicker;
we share a little more. For a
few hours, we are the people we
always hoped we would be. Isn't
that amazing?

(MORE)

(continual)
FRANK (Cont'd)
It's really sort of a ... a miracle! A miracle that happens every year. On Christmas Eve. Don't waste it. Get involved! Wake up!

WE SEE Calvin, unnoticed by his mother, slip away and wander toward Frank.

FRANK
Take a chance! Get out!
Celebrate! It's gonna be a great night. After all, it's Christmas Eve.

He notices that Calvin has come over and is standing beside him. He reaches down and Calvin shyly slips his hand in Frank's.

They share a smile.

Frank turns to the TV camera.

FRANK
Merry Christmas!

Calvin turns to the camera too.

CALVIN
And God Bless us, every one.

Grace is stunned. She bursts into tears.

Lanell and Mary Lou look at each other in amazement.

Frank laughs and scoops up Calvin in his arms. Grace gives them both a hug.

The whole studio applauds Frank including many persons we've seen before -- the London Bobbie, the Lady Censor, Prop Man 1, Prop Man 2 holding Doormice, the Nurse, "Tip" O'Neill, the Street Urchins, the Carolers, the Carpenters, the Painters, the Technicians, Wayne, Ted, the Solid Gold Dancers, Lanell, Mary Lou Retton, Mary Lou's Coach, Scrooge's fiancee Belle, Scrooge's Nephew, Scrooge's Ghost of Christmas Present, Tony the cameraman, the Stage Manager, the other IBC Execs, Eliot and Marlon Brando. Claire can barely get through them.

(CONTINUED)
Frank spots Claire fighting her way through the crowd. He hands Calvin to Grace and Claire rushes into his arms.

THEY KISS!

CLAIRE
(tears streaming down her face)
Merry Christmas Lumpy!

FRANK
Christmas?...Bah humbug!

He winks at someone high over her shoulder and kisses Claire again.

WE CRANE BACK AND UP SLOWLY on the reunited lovers embracing in a pool of light, framed by a cheering throng, until WE CATCH Lew Hayward and the three Ghosts perched on a Victorian roof-top, smiling triumphantly. Sitting with them, now an angel with wings and a crooked halo, is Herman the wino.

JOHN HOUSEMAN (V.O.)
"And from that day forward, it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if anyone alive possessed the knowledge. He became as good a friend, as good a brother, as good a boss, as good a father, as the good old city knew. And he worked to make the world a happy place where children laugh and men dream dreams of peace and angels sing."

"THE END"

ROLL END CREDITS as all sing Angels We Have Heard on High.

EVERYBODY
"Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains...

FADE OUT.