

FADE IN:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A christmas tree sits silently in the living room. A framed history diploma adorns the mantelpiece and in front of it hangs a lone stocking. Outside, SLEIGH BELLS can be heard faintly ringing distantly in the night.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Little CHARLIE sleeps soundly in his bed. He has fallen asleep reading a book about Great 20th Century Historical Figures and is still wearing his glasses. He's only 8 years old but even asleep he looks smart. The bells outside sound a little louder now. A thud comes from the roof.

Charlie's eyes flash open.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A DARK FIGURE moves beside the Christmas tree. He has a sack of objects at his feet. A box falls to the floor with a dull thud, landing beside the figure's booted feet.

DARK FIGURE  
(awhisper simmering with quiet  
rage)  
Aw, for crying out loud!

He picks up the box and places it at the foot of the tree beside the other christmas presents.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

A pair of small, slippered feet creep slowly down the stairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The unmistakable figure of SANTA CLAUS rises from beneath the tree. With a warm smile, he places a filled stocking on the mantelpiece. He spots a glass of sherry and some biscuits. With an ever so slight "ho ho ho", he drinks from the glass.

CHARLIE  
(O/S)  
Don't move!

Santa turns to see a young boy, Charlie, wearing a plain dressing gown, pointing a SHOTGUN at him.

CHARLIE  
I SAID DON'T MOVE!

Santa jumps a little and spills his sherry down his bright red tunic.

(CONTINUED)

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CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Who are you and what are you doing in our house?

Santa regains his composure and laughs a little.

SANTA

Why, little Charlie McGinley. Don't you know who I am?

CHARLIE

I don't care who you are. But I know what you are, you robber!

SANTA

Why, I'm not a robber. I'm Santa Claus!

CHARLIE

No you're not. My mum and dad told me the truth ages ago.

SANTA

What, that I don't exist?. Well that's just simply not true. Your Mummy and Daddy must have gotten it wrong...

CHARLIE

My dad's a history teacher. Are you calling my parents liars?

Charlie leans in a little closer with the gun. Santa eyes the barrel carefully.

SANTA

Of course not, Charlie. But look, I'm real.

(Santa pokes himself in the belly.)

I'm here, aren't I?

CHARLIE

I'm not talking about your presence, just your identity.

Santa gives a little chuckle.

SANTA

I assure you, I really am Santa Claus.

Charlie sticks the gun barrel almost in his face.

CHARLIE

(a quiet threat)

Prove it.

Santa starts to panic a little. Sweat beads form on his forehead. He gently backs away from the barrel and thinks for a moment. He hasn't had to do this for a long time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SANTA

Well, I started out as a kindly old woodcutter and toymaker in Lapland and I...

CHARLIE

Wrong! Santa Claus is based on Saint Nicholas, a bishop and supposed miracle worker from Turkey!

SANTA

Well, of course, that was my name to begin with, but...

CHARLIE

OK, If you're St Nicholas, then what were your mum and dad called?

This catches Claus off guard.

SANTA

Er, er, it was so long ago. I...

CHARLIE

Theophanes and Nonna!

SANTA

(surprised)

Well, my, you really are a clever little boy aren't you Charlie?

This complement fails to move Charlie. The gun remains at Santa's head.

CHARLIE

What was your first miracle?

SANTA

Well, as a youth my gift for toymaking was always...

CHARLIE

As a newborn baby, St Nicholas stood up on his own for 3 hours in the baptismal font and spoke to the priest!

SANTA

What? I don't remember that!

CHARLIE

Of course you don't. It happened hundreds of years ago to an old dead man!

(He points the gun closer)

If you are St Nicholas, then why are you called Santa Claus now?

SANTA

My elves renamed me, just like they made this lovely red costume...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CHARLIE

No, Santa Claus is a mispronunciation of the dutch name, Sinterklaas! And he used to wear green. Santa's red suit was designed by Coca Cola in the 1920s to sell fizzy juice!

SANTA

(Getting defensive now)  
That's not true. I spend all year making gifts for the children of the world and deliver them myself! I work hard for all of you.

CHARLIE

Then why don't my mum and dad take me christmas shopping with them? Do you put all the toy adverts on TV? And why amn't I allowed to go into the hall cupboard before Christmas?

Santa is about to answer when he gives in. He relents and slouches. He gives a sigh.

SANTA

Oh, what's the bloody point? It's all been taken away from me, hasn't it?

He sits down in an armchair, looking beaten, and more like a tired old man than Santa Claus. He is clenching his fists.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Who the hell am I? Just a dead Turkish bishop, whose name is a mistake. I'm never home...no wonder I caught her with the elves.

Santa sees something in his minds eye, staring into the distance. A darker look comes over him. When he speaks, he's almost spitting, unable to get the words out.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Those bloody elves with their incessant grinning and sinister laughs.  
(mock elf laugh)  
Myeh he heh!

He's going a bit red in the face now, trembling. He leans forward in his seat, about to explode.

SANTA (CONT'D)

And every morning...  
(looks up at Charlie)  
...reindeer shit!

Santa stops himself, looking at Charlie. The anger fades from his face and he slumps back in the chair. Charlie is now starting to lower the gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SANTA (CONT'D)

And do you know the worst part of it?  
I've spent my whole life helping  
children...and I can't even remember a  
single thing about my own childhood.  
(begins to sob)  
Not even my own mother and father.

Charlie puts down the gun on the floor. He spies the sherry glass on the mantelpiece. He picks it up, smells it and then goes over and puts a supporting hand on Santa's shoulder.

CHARLIE

Look...look, just you sit there, and I'll  
go and get some help.

Santa looks up with a tearstained face at Charlie, who turns round and smiles faintly at Santa as he goes to the phone in the hall. Santa slumps forward and puts his head in his hands.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Charlie picks up the phone and dials. He looks back to the Living Room.

Someone answers Charlie's call.

CHARLIE

Hello? Can I have an ambulance please?

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

His head still in his hands, Santa spots the gun lying on the floor, through his fingers, where Charlie left it. He looks at it for a moment.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE

(quietly)

Yes, there's a man in my parents' house.

As he speaks, over Charlie's shoulder, we can see the gun lying on the floor through the doorway. One of Santa's hands appears at the corner of the doorframe and picks the gun up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Well, I thought he was a robber at first  
but now I think he's not well.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The end of the gun barrel meets the end of Santa's white beard. We can hear quiet sobbing.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE

But I think he needs a doctor. He thinks  
he's Santa.

(listens for a moment)

My name's Charlie McGinley and I live  
at...

Charlie stops for a moment as he realises something.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(To himself)

Wait a minute. How did *he* know my name?

A smile creeps across Charlie's face. The telephone slowly  
slips away from his ear. He's realized something. He turns to  
face the Living Room.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Santa...?

A lone GUNSHOT rings out in the house. Charlie freezes.  
Through the doorframe behind him, two black boots flop down  
one of them twitching slightly. Smoke from the gun drifts  
slowly over them. The look on Charlie's face changes to one  
of shock. He's killed Santa Claus.

FADE TO:

BLACK

The sound of sleigh bells fades out.