

ERIC

"Merry Gretchmas"

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EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

On a snowy day, crowds of people gather by the front steps, holding picket signs. Among the crowd is ERIC NELSON, 18, black; his brother, BILLY, 20's; and his mother and stepfather, RHONDA NELSON-JAMES and MATT JAMES, both 40's.

BILLY

Man, let's get this over with!

ERIC

Yeah, it's so cold out here, white people are bundled up!

MATT

Guys, this is for a good cause. A black man is finally getting freed for a crime he didn't commit!

RHONDA

Thank Shana and Eleanor for starting the movement online!

SHANA JONES, 20, biracial, and her half-sister, ELEANOR DUMBECK, 19, white, approach them.

SHANA

Ooh, my ears are burning!

ELEANOR

Mine too, thanks to our patented, heated mobile mansion!

ERIC

So, girls, when will this guy be released?

ELEANOR

Oh, she'll be out soon.

Shana nudges Eleanor.

BILLY

"She"? I thought this was for Dion Browning!

ELEANOR

Yeah, that's what I meant! I thought "Dion" was a girl's name. Like, "What"?

She CHUCKLES.

RHONDA  
Girls, who is this really for?

SHANA AND ELEANOR  
(mumble)  
Gretchen Jackson.

RHONDA  
Who?

SHANA  
(regular voice)  
Gretchen Jackson. She's getting pardoned.

MATT  
What? Aw, hell no! Let's get outta here!

SHANA  
Wait! Ya'll wouldn't have come if you  
knew it was for Gretch!

ELEANOR  
Yeah! Nobody even bought the "Free  
Gretch" shirts we made up!

Eleanor opens her jacket and shows off the shirt.

MATT  
I think her robbing three banks and  
wounding an officer might have something  
to do with it.

ELEANOR  
(subdued)  
When you put it that way, you make it  
sound bad.

SHANA  
And if she had more opportunities, she  
wouldn't have had to resort to that!

ERIC  
(facetiously)  
Society's always tryin' to bring the  
white woman down, huh?

ELEANOR  
Yup!

Cops exit the station, following GRETCH JACKSON, 20's,  
white.

GRETCH

I'm home just in time for Christmas! Did you guys miss me?

The crowd BOOS and starts throwing snowballs and picket signs at her.

GRETCH (CONT'D)

Hey! I'm checking receipts! Literally! I know all of your EBT balances!

INT. NELSON HOUSE - DAY - LATER

The Nelson family enters the house.

MATT

I'm glad we got away from that mess.

The sons' father, JUNIOR, 40's, enters from the kitchen. He wears his normal sequined jumpsuit with sequined headband wrapped around his Afro. He eats a bowl of cereal.

JUNIOR

Wassup, Nelsons?

MATT

(dejected)

Junior. Make yourself at home.

JUNIOR

Okay. I did buy it.

ERIC

How'd you get in here, anyway? Did Cynthia let you in?

JUNIOR

Cynthia?

He looks around.

RHONDA

Junior, you're here more than when you were here. What's up?

JUNIOR

Glad you asked! I came to give you all your Christmas presents!

BILLY

Is it gonna top the Christmas present you gave us last year?

ERIC

A coupon for 50 percent off a burger?

BILLY

With the purchase of five burgers?

JUNIOR

Don't be like that, boys. It's the thought that counts. Here.

Junior hands each family member an envelope.

RHONDA

This ain't another wedding invitation, is it?

JUNIOR

No!

RHONDA

I'd understand. Old habits are hard to break.

JUNIOR

Just open it.

They open their envelopes.

MATT

(reads aloud)

"You're invited to a Christmas dinner with William P. Nelson, Jr." Why so formal?

JUNIOR

I want to make a good impression on Cassie!

ERIC

By inviting your ex-wife's family, who you neglected?

JUNIOR

You guys know me better than anybody, and I really like this woman. I want her to get to know the real me.

(to Rhonda)

I want to do it different this time.

Rhonda turns to Matt.

RHONDA

Matt, what do you think?

MATT

Oh, you do not want to know that!

(sighs)

But Christmas is about helping the less fortunate. So fine, we'll go along with it.

ERIC

Matt!

MATT

Guys, all we have to do is be in and out. No lovey-dovey, "I like you" stuff.

RHONDA

And I'll try my best to hold my tongue.

JUNIOR

Great! Ha, ha!

He plops down on the couch.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

So, what's for dinner?

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The front door opens. Junior zooms from it.

JUNIOR

AAAARRRGH!!

He CRASHES into some trash cans.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

Hey, what gives?

MATT

Timmy's out of town! Next man up! And you're close enough to one!

Matt SLAMS the door. Junior SIGHS.

INT. JACKSON HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Shana's husband, JACOB JACKSON, 20, white, lays out on the couch in the living room, and watches TV. Shana enters the house.

SHANA

Jakey! I thought you were gonna show up today!

JACOB  
I never said that.

SHANA  
But Gretch is your sister, and she just got out!

JACOB  
She gets out all the time! Watching reruns of "Turtleman" is less predictable!

He points to the TV.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
This is the episode where Turtleman enters peace talks with Australia!

Shana takes the remote and SHUTS the TV OFF.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
Hey! I never got to the end!

Shana sits next to Jacob.

SHANA  
Honey, I think you should spend more time with her. In fact, we all could!

JACOB  
What? Why?

SHANA  
Why not? It's the holidays! She's not in jail! And she can get a chance to meet her nieces and nephews!

Their children, J.J., and J.R. JACKSON, all biracial babies, sit in a circle with other babies. J.J. stands on his knees. [NOTE: All of the babies speak telepathically, in *italics*.]

J.J.  
*Hi, my name is J.J., and I'm a crawler.*

THE OTHERS  
*Hi, J.J.*

J.J.  
*I don't mean to use the coffee table as a crutch, but it seems so much easier to hold on to something instead of putting the first foot forward! I mean, what is that?*

JACOB

Shana, I don't know if that'll work.

SHANA

Come on, Jakey, we can make it an extended family thing! We can invite other family members, too!

JACOB

Sounds even more exciting.

SHANA

We'll go there and surprise her on Christmas Eve! I'll add it to my calendar.

She pulls out her phone.

SHANA (CONT'D)

What's her home address?

JACOB

Jail.

SHANA

You gonna cooperate or not?

JACOB

(sighs)

Fine. She's at my old place.

SHANA

Good.

The Jackson babies' sister, JENNIFER, also a baby, crawls over to the group.

JENNIFER

*Excuse me, is this the "Crying for Attention" group?*

J.R.

*No, that was yesterday.*

JENNIFER

*Aw, I missed it again!*

(cries)

*WAAAH! WAAAH! Oh, WAAH!*

Shana picks Jennifer up and hands her to Jacob.

SHANA

Your turn!



Shana exits. Jennifer's crying SUBSIDES.

JACOB

I wanted to spend Christmas not dealing  
with family.

(to Jennifer)

Including you.

JENNIFER

(attempts to cry)

WAA-

Jacob, signaling her to stop, points to her. She STOPS.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The living room is adorned with Christmas decorations.  
Junior fixes pillows on the couch. His girlfriend,  
CASSIE, 40's, black, enters from the kitchen. She wears  
an apron over her clothes.

CASSIE

Junior, dear, you're running low on milk.

JUNIOR

Aw, man! Already?

CASSIE

Don't worry, I had enough to finish the  
mac n' cheese!

JUNIOR

(sighs)

Okay, fine.

Cassie approaches him.

CASSIE

What's wrong, baby?

JUNIOR

I just want everything to go right. You  
know you're the first woman I've ever  
introduced to my family so soon.

CASSIE

Well, if they're even halfway normal,  
that's cool. More than I can say about  
mine.

JUNIOR

I'm the crazy one, babe. These guys are  
alright!

They hear faint bickering from outside.

CASSIE

Who is that?

JUNIOR

Hold on.

Junior opens the front door. The Nelson family is on the porch BICKERING. Standing with them are their pets, BONY DOG and EDDIE THE CAT, who BARK and HISS at each other.

RHONDA

Eric, yeah, he's a loser, but we're here now!

BILLY

Well, let's get this over with! I'm missing the "Turtleman Kwanzaa-thon"!

MATT

Aw, that's tonight? Dang!

They continue BICKERING.

JUNIOR

Hey, hey! Guys!

They STOP.

NELSON FAMILY

Merry Christmas!

They enter the house.

JUNIOR

Everybody, this is my girlfriend, Cassie. Cassie, you've met Eric. And here's his brother, William the Third. And there's their mom, Rhonda, and her husband, Matt.

They all greet each other.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

I have a grandson, too, but he's with his mom for Christmas.

BILLY

Whoa, you're acknowledging him??

Junior nudges him.

BILLY (CONT'D)

It's just that we never really exist until after your wedding. And even then...

JUNIOR

Aw, what a kidder, huh?

Junior pats him twice, then SLAPS him on the head.

MATT

Something smells good in here.

CASSIE

Thanks! You're just in time for supper.

NELSON FAMILY

"Supper"?

ERIC

Two dinners? I like her already!

JUNIOR

I'll get your coats. Just put your gifts under the tree.

The family takes off their jackets and head to the Christmas tree. Matt pulls the boys to the side.

MATT

Hey, where are your gifts? Did you leave them in the car?

ERIC

No.

BILLY

Sorry. I haven't been working much, but I'll give you guys your gifts after Christmas.

ERIC

Same here.

MATT

Oh. I thought I saw you guys wrapping up some perfume and stuff the other day.

BILLY

Well...yeah, those are for our...girlfriends.

MATT

So you were able to buy gifts for your girlfriends, but not your mom?

ERIC

Yeah, 'cuz we wanna keep our girlfriends! Mom's already our mom!

Matt angrily steps up to them.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(nervously)

We're going out right now to get her something!

BILLY

Can we at least borrow your car?

Matt hands Billy the keys.

MATT

Let Bony out before you go.

ERIC

C'mon, Bony.

Eric, Billy, and Bony exit.

JUNIOR

Well, now that the kids are gone, let's break out the good stuff! I'll get the glasses.

Junior heads to the kitchen.

RHONDA

(to Matt)

We're gonna need a couple glasses of the good stuff.

MATT

So, Cassie, how did you and Junior meet?

CASSIE

At my job. And boy, he did not let up! He wouldn't stop until I agreed to a date!

RHONDA

Yeah, he knows what he wants and doesn't stop until he gets it!

(chuckles)

He also knows what he doesn't want and when to leave!

MATT  
 That's why me and her are together now!  
 (chuckles)  
 He just knows how to bring other couples  
 together!

Cassie chuckles halfheartedly.

MATT (CONT'D)  
 (to Rhonda, in between  
 chuckles)  
 Stop me from talking.

RHONDA  
 No, you stop me.

Junior stands behind them with glasses and a bottle.

JUNIOR  
 How about ya'll both stop together, on  
 the count of one?

CASSIE  
 Aw, baby, they're just having fun.

She gets up and grabs the glasses.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
 Besides, I'd leave you long before you'd  
 leave me!

JUNIOR  
 (mockingly, smirks)  
 Oh, goody.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - SAME

Eddie sleeps in a corner near an open window. He gets  
 SMACKED by some snowballs. He wakes up and looks at the  
 window. WHISKERS and FRISKERS MOUSE stand by the window  
 and LAUGH. They leap out the window.

Eddie runs after them and CRASHES into Junior. They both  
 fall onto the floor. Junior slowly gets up.

JUNIOR  
 Stupid cat!

Eddie has a wig stuck on his paws. It is revealed to be  
 Junior's, as Junior is shown with a balding head with  
 hair on his sides. Matt and Rhonda GASP.

RHONDA

I knew it!

JUNIOR

(to Eddie)

Give me that!

He snatches his wig from him.

EXT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Junior tosses Eddie out of the house. He PLOPS onto the snow-covered ground.

EDDIE

I never liked that thing, anyway!

BONY (O.C.)

Okay, everybody, places!

Eddie brushes himself off.

BONY (O.C.) (CONT'D)

And action!

MONTAGE - WHISKERS & FRISKERS' "SHOW"

-- Eddie chases after Friskers, who flies with his bowtie as a propeller. Whiskers hangs onto Friskers' feet. Eddie trips over some snow, looks up, and looks around for them.

-- The mice stand on top of a hill. Whiskers makes a snowball and rolls it down the hill. The snowball becomes bigger as it nears Eddie.

CUT TO EDDIE LOOKING AT THE SNOWBALL

-- The snowball's shadow looms larger over Eddie. He looks at it. A boom mic is at the top of the shot.

BONY (O.C.)

Cut! The boom mic's in the shot again!

-- The snowball makes a BRAKING SOUND and stops.

END OF MONTAGE

EDDIE

Great. Now you'll say, "Action", and the snowball will hit me.

Bony walks onto the set with the mice.

BONY  
On the contrary, Eddie.

WHISKERS  
We wanted to give you this.

Friskers hands Eddie a wrapped present.

FRISKERS  
Merry Christmas.

EDDIE  
What is it, another bomb?

BONY  
Just open it.

Eddie carefully opens it, and pulls out a plush mouse.

EDDIE  
Aww, how'd you know?

BONY  
It's from all of us.

EDDIE  
I didn't get you guys anything!

WHISKERS  
Don't worry about it!

EDDIE  
Thanks, guys!

Bony and the mice exit.

EDDIE (CONT'D)  
(to the plush mouse)  
Hey, buddy.

BONY (O.C.)  
And action!

The snowball continues rolling and SMASHES into Eddie. His hand emerges from underneath the snow and holds up a sign that reads, "I HATE THEM."

INT. GRETCH'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Gretch enters the living room from her bedroom. She hears voices SINGING, "Jingle Bells", from outside.

GRETCH

Damn carolers!

She marches to the door and opens it. Shana and Eleanor continue SINGING. Shana's babies are with them, in their strollers.

GRETCH (CONT'D)

Oh, it's only the Dumbucks.

She SLAMS the door. The singing STOPS. Gretch walks away. Shana begins BEATBOXING, and Eleanor begins RAPPING the second verse to Run-D.M.C.'s "Christmas in Hollis". Gretch returns and opens the door.

ELEANOR

(raps)

"It's Christmas time in Hollis,  
Queens/Mom's cooking chicken and collard  
greens!"

Shana BEATBOXES in Gretch's face.

GRETCH

Whoa, stop, stop!

The sisters STOP. Gretch wipes her face.

GRETCH (CONT'D)

What are you doing??

ELEANOR

We thought that would be more up your  
alley!

SHANA

Just spreading Christmas cheer! Right,  
Jacob?

Shana pulls Jacob from the side of the door.

JACOB

This was all their idea, Gretch!

They enter the house.

GRETCH

Wait, what's going on?

SHANA

We didn't want you to be alone on  
Christmas Eve, so here we are!



ELEANOR

Yeah, speaking of that, where are the decorations?

GRETCH

I didn't get to that, on account of me being locked up.

JACOB

Yeah, what's up with that? Did they build you a statue yet?

SHANA

What he means to say is that he's glad you're out, right, Jakey?

GRETCH

(to Jacob)

What's the deal with these weirdos?

JACOB

I don't know, just play along. And say hi to your nieces and nephews.

GRETCH

Cute. Which one is yours?

SHANA

I can hear you, and they all are!

GRETCH

Oh, lucky you.

Shana smirks. She hears the door open.

SHANA

Who's that?

She hears a booming voice from a LADY.

LADY (O.C.)

Ten-hut!

Shana stands at attention. J.R. and Jennifer's grandmother, COMMANDER IRVING, 41, black, enters.

LADY/IRVING

Ha, ha, I love doing that. At ease, Jonesy.

Shana EXHALES, stands at ease, then faints and PLOPS to the ground.

JENNIFER

*Guess Mommy needs a nap, too!*

J.J.

*She can nap with us!*

J.R.

*No, she better wake up. I'm sure she won't wanna miss this!*

INT. GRETCH'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Shana lies on the floor. Her view is of Eleanor above her.

ELEANOR

Come on, sis, wake up! Somebody gimme some water!

Jacob hands her a glass of water. Eleanor drinks it, tosses the glass, and starts SLAPPING Shana on the face.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Wake up, stupid! Come on, now!

SHANA (O.C.)

Stop it!

ELEANOR

Just to make sure, how many fingers am I holding up?

Eleanor holds up three fingers.

SHANA (O.C.)

How many fingers am I holding up?

Eleanor's eyes widen, and she GASPS.

ELEANOR

Oh, real mature, Shana!

Shana gets up.

SHANA

Alright, Jacob, very nice. You invited their grandmother to get back at me.

JACOB

I can't take credit for that, dear.

ELEANOR

It was this girl!

She points her thumbs to herself. Shana pulls her to the side.

SHANA

You could've invited Dad. You could've even invited Jacob's dad. You could've invited any other family member. But you invited my baby daddy's mama, who's also my higher-up??

ELEANOR

Higher up what?

SHANA

My boss!!

ELEANOR

She saw me at the store. I guess she saw me as a whiter you. If that's possible. I had to invite her, or she would've written me up!

SHANA

What? You ain't even in the Army!

ELEANOR

Look at her! I don't think she cares!

Irving walks over to them.

IRVING

You don't have to worry, Shana. Tonight, I'm Malika Irving.

ELEANOR

You know what would be better? If Shana could, for tonight, call you by your actual name.

PAUSE.

IRVING

(to Shana)

Is she for real?

JACOB

Let's all get settled in.

GRETCH

Hey, this is my house!

ELEANOR

Yeah, so let's make ourselves at home!

JACOB  
(to Gretch)  
Hope you like chicken! 'Cuz that's what  
we decided on! Order it for us!

Jacob pats Gretch on the shoulder. Gretch GRUNTS.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - LATER

Junior, Cassie, Rhonda, and Matt sit at the table.

JUNIOR  
Rhonda, when are your kids coming back?

RHONDA  
They're your kids, too, and I don't know.  
Ask Matt.

MATT  
They're just running some errands.  
They'll be back soon.

JUNIOR  
Well, I'm hungry. I can't wait any  
longer. Let's start eating.

CASSIE  
Junior, it's alright.

JUNIOR  
But your mac n' cheese is getting cold.  
Why don't you go get it?

CASSIE  
Okay, fine.

Cassie goes into the kitchen.

RHONDA  
She made mac n' cheese? Junior, you never  
had me cook for you!

MATT  
That's not just a Junior thing, honey.

RHONDA  
But still.

MATT  
You're not getting jealous, are you?

RHONDA

No. Just that I'm the one who's supposed to have found happiness. He's supposed to have been hit by a bus.

MATT

Well, who knows what the future holds?

He pats her on the shoulder.

JUNIOR

You guys ain't really being the best guests in the world.

MATT

Alright, we'll chill.

SFX: Cell phone RINGS.

Rhonda answers her phone.

RHONDA

Hello?

BILLY (O.C.)

Mom, I don't want to worry you, but...we're only allowed one phone call.

RHONDA

What??

LATER

The Nelsons enter the house.

ERIC

First time in jail, and it's for something Matt did!

RHONDA

Bound to happen sooner or later.

MATT

Ya'll weren't in jail, you just got taken down to the station.

BILLY

(sarcastically)

Oh, what a relief! At least we got to cruise in the back of the car!

JUNIOR

Guys, what happened, anyway?

ERIC

We got pulled over because of Matt's unpaid parking tickets!

MATT

I made the payment, I swear!

RHONDA

Really?

MATT

Well, I put the check in the mail. By the time they would've gotten it, I would have deposited the money. You know, being the holidays and all.

RHONDA

Oh, Matt!

MATT

Well, if the boys had gotten you a gift, this wouldn't have happened!

RHONDA

No, if you paid your parking tickets, this wouldn't have happened!

ERIC

Yeah!

The Nelsons start BICKERING.

JUNIOR

That's it! I've had it! All of ya'll get out!

RHONDA

What?

JUNIOR

You heard me! You're doing everything possible to ruin dinner with my girl!

Matt pulls Junior to the side.

MATT

Hey, man, I didn't mean for this to happen.

JUNIOR

Look, Matt, you and Rhonda got a chance to be happy! Don't I get a chance, too?

MATT  
 (scoffs)  
 C'mon, Junior...

JUNIOR  
 I'm serious! Forget about everything that happened before!

PAUSE.

MATT  
 If you're acting this way, you must really like her.  
 (to the family)  
 Guys, let's sit down, act halfway civil, and enjoy this dinner that Junior and Cassie made for us.

RHONDA  
 Okay, fine.

They sit at the table. Cassie brings more food to the table and sits with them.

CASSIE  
 Here's the last of it!

BILLY  
 Everything looks so good, Cassie!

ERIC  
 (sotto voce)  
 Everything don't look good.

RHONDA  
 What was that, Eric?

ERIC  
 I said, it looks good. Sure. We all here, one big happy family. Dad found the love of his life. This week! I remember 18 years ago, Mom was the love of his life. Then week after week, it was another love of his life.

MATT  
 Eric...

ERIC  
 No, it's cool. You came along, Matt, and filled the void. So it's cool, right? It's Christmas! But hey, your voices carry, Dad. Ya'll can forget about everything, but I sure as hell can't.

He gets up.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Finish dinner without me. I'm out.

Eric exits the house. Junior SIGHS.

RHONDA  
Wow.  
(to Billy)  
So, you guys didn't get me a present at all?

MATT  
Rhonda!

RHONDA  
Right, not that important now.

INT. GRETCH'S APARTMENT - LATER

Gretch sits at a table with her hands on her head. J.J. BAWLS while sitting in his high chair. Jacob tries to feed him.

SHANA  
(yells)  
Well, thank goodness Shaheed and Shakur at "Efficient Fish" don't celebrate Christmas!

IRVING  
(yells)  
Did you get any tartar sauce?

SHANA  
(yells)  
No! They forgot it!

ELEANOR  
(yells)  
I got some tartar control paste in my purse! Is that the same thing?

SHANA  
(yells)  
Why don't you try it and find out, Eleanor?

JACOB  
(yells)  
Come on, already, J.J.! Eat the stewed beets!



Jennifer and J.R. sit on the couch with Eleanor.

JENNIFER

(to J.R.)

*There he go again, always showin' off.*

GRETCH

(yells)

Jacob, can't you do something about him?  
Maybe he needs changing!

SHANA

(yells)

We did that already!

ELEANOR

(yells)

Well, do something! I can't even enjoy my  
"Efficient Fishwich"!

She takes a bite out of her sandwich.

IRVING

(yells)

Jacob, may I?

JACOB

(yells)

Sure! I need a beer!

He gets up and goes to the kitchen, where Gretch sits.

GRETCH

Beer's at the store. Help yourself.

JACOB

We used to do that back in the day.

GRETCH

Yep. I would buy the lottery tickets, you  
would sneak out with the tallboys.

JACOB

Such is the life of a kindergartner!

GRETCH

You know it!

JACOB

Or what about the Number Game? Where we  
go to each ice cream shop and give the  
cashier a fake ticket number, then take  
their food?

GRETCH

Yeah, that was fun, until you discovered you were allergic to peanuts.

JACOB

Oh yeah. Dang.

GRETCH

Now look at you, a family man. Makes me sick.

JACOB

You could take a tip from me, then you could be better off.

GRETCH

What's wrong with me now? I'm maintaining! I always got a roof over my head!

JACOB

But you don't even have a job! What are you even gonna do tomorrow?

GRETCH

Don't worry about it! I never ask you for anything! Just know that I'm gonna be alright!

JACOB

Fine. Just trying to be nice.

GRETCH

I know. Stop it!

JACOB

So you want us to leave, then?

GRETCH

(sighs)

No. Pass me some of that fish from the living room.

JACOB

Hey, the crying stopped.

He goes into the living room. Irving rocks J.J., who sleeps.

IRVING

Literally, if it's not one thing, it's another. If he's not hungry, he's stinky. If he's not stinky, he's sleepy.

She lays J.J. down next to the other babies.

J.R.  
*(scoffs)*  
*We could've told ya'll that.*

Gretch enters.

GRETCH  
*(to Jacob)*  
 I can tell J.J.'s your son. He's got your lungs.

JACOB  
 Very funny.

ELEANOR  
*(cackles)*  
 Actually, it is!

SHANA  
 I know you ain't laughing, Eleanor! You cried and yelled a lot, too!

ELEANOR  
 Well, maybe I needed a manly presence around. Where were you at?

She CHUCKLES. Shana mockingly LAUGHS.

IRVING  
 I'm more than an Army commander, you know. I was the oldest of eight kids. And my mama was the mother of the whole block back in Tacoma, Washington.

She picks up Jennifer, who holds on to her finger.

SHANA  
 Wow, that's cool.

ELEANOR  
 Okay, enough of this "Kojak" moment. Let's finish eating.

She pulls the toothpaste out of her purse and puts it on her sandwich. She takes a bite.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
 Mmm, nothin' like that seasonal minty taste!

INT. SHOPPING MALL - LATER

Eric, looking upset, walks through the mall and past a MALL SANTA, white, who is sitting in his chair.

MALL SANTA

Hey, son, it's Christmas Eve. You don't belong here.

ERIC

Huh? Oh, I know, it's a time to be with my family, right?

MALL SANTA

No, we're closing, man!

ERIC

Oh, right.

He continues walking.

MALL SANTA

Why so down?

Eric walks back to him.

ERIC

I may have shown my behind to my whole family, and I'm a little embarrassed to go back.

MALL SANTA

Oh, I'm sure it's not that bad. Whenever I have a disagreement with Mrs. Claus...

Eric cuts his eyes at him.

MALL SANTA (CONT'D)

Whenever I have a disagreement with my wife, we don't ever let it get too serious. I just tell her she's right, and it's all good.

ERIC

It's not just that. My father really pissed me off. Excuse my language.

MALL SANTA

We're in Madison. Keep going.

ERIC

Okay. He left me and my brother when we were young, and he's been in and out of marriages since.

MALL SANTA

And is he coming back to make right?

ERIC

He's been back, and I've been used to it by now, or I thought so, anyway.

MALL SANTA

Oh?

ERIC

And why is everybody acting like everything is okay? Why did I act like it was okay? I wish I could just go back and tell him how I felt then.

MALL SANTA

Go back, huh?

ERIC

Yeah!

MALL SANTA

And how would that change things now?

ERIC

I'd probably be less mad.

MALL SANTA

But were you really this mad before tonight?

ERIC

No, not really, mostly because my mom married this guy named Matt. He's my real father.

MALL SANTA

In other words, it wouldn't matter if you told him then or now, right?

ERIC

No, I guess not.

MALL SANTA

Look, son, no matter what happens, never be afraid to go back home. Now you better head out.

ERIC

Right. Hey, thanks a lot. Merry Christmas.

MALL SANTA

And a merry Christmas to you.

Eric walks away.

ERIC

Time to go home and face the music.

He runs into a male SECURITY GUARD, black.

SECURITY GUARD

Sir, we're closed.

ERIC

I know, I'm heading out.

He continues walking, then turns back around.

ERIC (CONT'D)

You know, you got a pretty wise man here playing Santa.

SECURITY GUARD

Santa? We don't have a Santa here!

ERIC

What?

SFX: Background FOREBODING MUSIC.

Eric turns around and sees an empty spot.

SECURITY GUARD

But they do!

He points to the mall Santa, sitting in his chair in a department store, and waving at Eric.

SFX: Music FADES.

ERIC

Oh!

Eric waves back.

SECURITY GUARD

That store isn't part of this mall. They got they own agenda goin' on there! I'd stay away from them!

Eric exits.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Send me a friend request! I can spill  
some heavy tea on them! You kids still  
say that, right?

INT. GRETCH'S APARTMENT - LATER

The gang surrounds Commander Irving near the door. Jacob  
hands Irving her coat.

IRVING

Well, I had a great time. Thank you,  
Gretchen, for opening your home to us.

ELEANOR

Even though a lot of our stuff is already  
in her home.

IRVING

Jonesy, can you walk me outside?

SHANA

Sure.

EXT. GRETCH'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

SHANA

Okay, be careful driving home, Malika.

IRVING

"Malika"? What am I, your drinking buddy?

SHANA

Uh, what?

IRVING

Stand at attention! Atten-hut!

Shana stands at attention.

SHANA

(mutters)

Oh, I'm dead.

IRVING

From this point forward, you address me  
as your superior, is that understood,  
soldier?

SHANA

Ma'am, yes, ma'am!

IRVING

Now why haven't you contacted me about my grandbabies?

SHANA

I didn't have your contact information, ma'am!

IRVING

That's bull! Have you tried looking me up?

PAUSE.

SHANA

Ma'am, no, ma'am!

IRVING

Has my son Darius seen your children?

SHANA

Ma'am, no, ma'am!

IRVING

Has he tried to contact you?

SHANA

Ma'am, no, ma'am!

IRVING

Have you tried to contact him?

SHANA

Ma'am, no, ma'am!

IRVING

And why not?

SHANA

Because if he didn't think enough to contact me or our kids, I don't want anything to do with him, ma'am!

She cups her mouth.

IRVING

It's okay. At ease, soldier.

Shana stands normally.

IRVING (CONT'D)

Would you like Darius' contact info?



SHANA

No. He can call me. My number hasn't changed.

IRVING

Understood. Well, I'd like to see the babies sometime, if you wouldn't mind. Especially that J.J. He kinda looks like me!

SHANA

Uh, ma'am, J.J.'s not...

IRVING

Doesn't matter. Just give it some thought.

SHANA

(sighs)

Ma'am, yes, ma'am.

IRVING

Merry Christmas, Shana.

Irving gets in her car and pulls off. Shana waves.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - LATER

Eric enters the house. The rest of the family still sits at the table.

MATT

Eric!

RHONDA

Thank god you're alright!

CASSIE

Junior?

She nudges him. He SIGHS, gets up, and approaches Eric.

JUNIOR

Look, Eric...

ERIC

No, Dad, it's all on me. Don't apologize.

JUNIOR

I wasn't! I was gonna say that's it's about time you came back! We hungry!

Eric sneers at him and sits at the table.

BILLY

Okay, now can we start our dysfunctional family dinner?

JUNIOR

As long as we're all good.

MATT

Let's eat anyway.

CASSIE

Like I told Junior, if my family was at least half as functional as yours, I would be happy. I'll get the drinks.

She heads for the kitchen.

RHONDA

Eric, you didn't have to bust out the house like that.

BILLY

Yeah, bro, if you would've showed your discontent for Dad all the time like we do, you wouldn't have needed to lash out!

ERIC

I have a lot to learn, huh?

Cassie reenters.

CASSIE

Honey, where's that bottle of single malt scotch I got you?

BILLY

Oh, that? It was expired! It said, "18 years", on it, so we poured that mess out!

Cassie stands there shocked, body frozen. Junior approaches her.

JUNIOR

Uh, it'll be alright, sweetie. Let's find something else. My goodness.

He struggles in pulling her hand. He turns her body around and walks her into the kitchen. Billy smirks, and the rest of the family SNICKER.

INT. GRETCH'S APARTMENT - SAME

Shana enters the apartment.

SHANA

Hey, guys, let's leave Gretch alone and get home.

GRETCH

(sarcastically)  
So soon?

JACOB

Alright, we gone! Come on.

The family packs up their things.

ELEANOR

Hey, Shana, sorry about before.

SHANA

It's alright. Christmas is for family, anyway, right?

GRETCH

Where do you guys keep gettin' that from?

JACOB

I know, right?

J.J.

(to his siblings)  
*Two new relatives, gang! That means twice the extra presents!*

J.R.

*Have you looked around this place? I wouldn't get your hopes up.*

ELEANOR

So that means I can invite Commander Irving to our next family function, too?

SHANA

Do it and I'll kill ya.

The family exits. Gretch closes the door and locks it.

INT. GRETCH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She enters her bedroom, where KRISMAS KLAUZ, 40's, black, lies in her bed.

He is naked except for his usual dinghy Santa hat; dirty, grey, fake beard; and a red bow covering his crotch.

KRISMAS KLAUZ

It took you long enough!

GRETCH

I know! They didn't wanna leave!

KRISMAS KLAUZ

Well, come open your present, miss  
"Gretch Who Stole Krismas"! I'm sure it's  
the right size!

GRETCH

You know I only stole you because I  
couldn't get my hands on a Santa.

KRISMAS KLAUZ

I didn't hear that over my erection. Now  
let me put some brown into your eggnog!  
Heh, heh!

Gretch GIGGLES amorously and sits next to him.

GRETCH

Okay, but first, let's have sex!

She CLICKS the night light off.

THE END