

"O Christmas Tree"

by
Mike Murphy

112 Lovering Street
Medway, MA 02053-2326
508-533-8310
mikeandzachary@gmail.com
WGA Registered

1 INT. MILFORD POLICE STATION - EARLY EVENING

1

A busy, small-town police station. Officers are milling about, some with suspects in tow. Others are at their desks, typing on computer keyboards.

SGT. EVANS, 30, sits at his desk going over some paperwork. He is clean cut, tall, and fit. The telephone rings. He answers it.

EVANS

Milford Police Department.
Recorded line. May I help you?

Upon hearing who it is, Evans sits up a little straighter, as though the caller can see him.

EVANS

Yes, Mr. Underhill?. . . And what
was taken, sir?. . . Can you give
me that *again*, please?. . . No,
that's what I thought you said.
(beat)
I'll be right over.

Evans hangs up the phone.

FADE TO:

2 EXT. UNDERHILL HOME - NOT MUCH LATER

2

Light snow is falling as the ornate iron gates securing the driveway slowly swing open. Evans drives his cruiser up to the opulent house, leaving tire tracks in the snow along the way. He parks beside the Underhills' Cadillac, which has similarly left tracks (though faded now in the snow). Evans gets out of his cruiser, closing the door behind him.

He approaches the front door of the house and rings the bell, which is under a large metal sign reading "The Underhills." JOSHUA UNDERHILL, a senior, white-haired, dignified man, opens the door.

EVANS

Mr. Underhill, I'm Sgt. Evans.
(beat)
We spoke earlier.

JOSHUA

Yes. Please come in.

(CONTINUED)

Joshua steps aside, motioning for the officer to enter the house. He closes the door behind him.

Evans glances about the swanky home and immediately sees why he was called: Many carefully wrapped presents are on the floor surrounding an empty space by a big picture window that *had* held the Underhills' Christmas tree.

Evans walks about the spot. Joshua joins him.

EVANS

Who'd want to steal your Christmas tree?

JOSHUA

I wish I knew. It was certainly a surprise to see. . . or, should I say, *not* see, it there when we got home.

VIRGINIA UNDERHILL, Joshua's equally senior and dignified wife, approaches the men. She holds a cane in her right hand.

VIRGINIA

(approaching)

Is that the policeman, dear?

JOSHUA

Yes, darling.

(beat)

Sgt. Evans, may I present my wife, Virginia Underhill, *nee* Virginia Grigsby of the Boston Grigsbys.

VIRGINIA

(embarrassed)

Oh, Joshua, that was *ages* ago! I'm an Underhill now and happy to be one.

EVANS

Pleased to meet you, ma'am.

VIRGINIA

And you, officer.

(beat)

Are you going to find our tree?

EVANS

I'm certainly gonna *try*.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EVANS (CONT'D)

I can't understand why someone
would take the tree but leave all
the gifts.

JOSHUA

That makes two of us.

Virginia raises her left hand slightly.

VIRGINIA

Three.

(beat)

I know the thief couldn't see
through the wrapping paper, but he
must have known the boxes
contained presents.

EVANS

May I ask what's in the boxes?

JOSHUA

Gifts for our grandchildren.
They're coming over on Christmas
afternoon.

EVANS

What kind of gifts?

JOSHUA

Very nice ones.

VIRGINIA

Just what they wanted.

She points at one particular present.

VIRGINIA

That box is for our grandson,
Malcolm. He wanted one of those
newfangled pie pads.

JOSHUA

(correcting her)
iPad, dear.

VIRGINIA

(confused)
Not "pie?"

JOSHUA

I'm afraid not.

(CONTINUED)

VIRGINIA

Kids nowadays! I don't even know
what the thing *does*.

(beat)

Give me pie any day.

EVANS

(chuckles)

Me too.

Evans looks about.

EVANS

Do you have a security system
here?

JOSHUA

Yes, and the no-good thief got in
anyway.

EVANS

Is it working?

JOSHUA

Definitely. I checked.

EVANS

Is the tree real?

JOSHUA

Yes.

VIRGINIA

It only cost \$50. Most of the
trimmings have been in our family
for years. Some of the ornaments
have great sentimental value.

JOSHUA

We had special bulbs made when
each of the grandchildren was
born.

VIRGINIA

Harcourt & Smith made them for us.

JOSHUA

Emil Harcourt is an old friend of
mine. He does *wonderful* work!

EVANS

They sound nice.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EVANS (CONT'D)

About the security system, the thief would need to know your pass-code to get into the house, right?

JOSHUA

Correct.

EVANS

But he got in anyway.

JOSHUA

(sighs)

Yes, and I don't see how. We turned the alarm on when we went out for dinner, and it was *still* on when we got home.

EVANS

Who knows the code?

JOSHUA

Just the two of us.

VIRGINIA

And the people at the alarm company, of course.

EVANS

(beat)

May I have a look around outside?

JOSHUA

Certainly. For what?

EVANS

However the thief got in here, he had to get the tree out of here. He must have had a car nearby, and tires leave tracks.

FADE TO:

The snow is still falling. Evans inspects the driveway, noticing again the two sets (not *three* sets) of tire tracks leading to his cruiser and the Underhills' car.

He looks at the stoop and finds some odd square marks, about the size of a quarter each, evenly spaced apart. He follows them into the driveway, where they disappear in the newly fallen snow.

4

INT. MILFORD POLICE STATION - LATER THAT NIGHT

4

The station is slightly less busy. As Evans sits at his desk, SGT. CARPENTER, a female friend, approaches with frequent drunk MR. MCBRIDE in tow. He is wearing a rumpled suit. His eyes are bloodshot, his sparse hair uncombed, and some gray stubble shows on his face.

They stop near Evans, as McBride stumbles briefly.

MCBRIDE

(always tipsy)

Easy on the arm, huh, officer?

CARPENTER

(growing exasperated)

I'm *barely* touching you - just enough to make sure you don't fall down face first.

MCBRIDE

Where are you taking me?

CARPENTER

To the drunk tank.

EVANS

(disappointed)

Again, Mr. McBride?

MCBRIDE

(resigned)

It seems so.

EVANS

What is it this time?

CARPENTER

Public drunkenness, for one.

EVANS

That must be the *fourth* time this winter!

CARPENTER

Five, but who's counting?

MCBRIDE

Sgt. Evans, will you kindly tell this lady that I don't *need* to go to the drunk tank?

(CONTINUED)

CARPENTER

I can smell it on your breath!

EVANS

If Sgt. Carpenter says you need to
sober up -

MCBRIDE

But I *don't*. That's the whole
thing!

EVANS

You've lost me.

MCBRIDE

I *swear* I saw it.

(beat)

Would I have called you if I
hadn't seen it? Would I have given
myself away if I had a toot going?

EVANS

What did he see?

CARPENTER

Nothing worth mentioning.

MCBRIDE

(exasperated)

"Nothing worth mentioning?" How
can you *say* that?

CARPENTER

Because it's *true*.

(beat)

You called us three weeks ago.
Remember?

MCBRIDE

(humbled)

Oh, yeah.

CARPENTER

And what was it *then*?

(beat)

Plaid elephants walking down Cedar
Road, if I remember correctly.

EVANS

Plaid? Most guys see *pink* ones.

(CONTINUED)

MCBRIDE

When you're Scottish, you see
plaid.

CARPENTER

(chuckles slightly)

EVANS

Do you often see things when you
drink, Mr. McBride?

MCBRIDE

Sure, but not *this* time. This time
was *different*.

(beat)

Three weeks ago, when I saw the
plaid elephants, I was drinking
whiskey. Tonight, it was *scotch*.

EVANS

(amused)

You'd think it would be the other
way around.

Carpenter grins and tries to get McBride moving.

CARPENTER

C'mon, sir. We've wasted enough of
Sgt. Evans's time.

EVANS

What did he see?

Carpenter looks at McBride.

CARPENTER

You wanna tell him?

MCBRIDE

(eagerly)

Could it help?

CARPENTER

Chicken soup.

MCBRIDE

Huh?

EVANS

It couldn't hurt.

(CONTINUED)

MCBRIDE

OK then.

(longish beat)

Some of my mates and I were having a few. . . a *couple*. . . pre-holiday pops down at O'Grady's Pub. All by my lonesome, I stepped outside to have a smoke. Why you can't smoke in bars anymore, I'll never know!

(beat)

Anyway, it was when I was stubbing out my cigarette, that I saw it.

EVANS

It?

MCBRIDE

I saw. . . a *walking* Christmas tree.

(beat)

I swear on all that's holy! I do! I saw it!

EVANS

Walking?

MCBRIDE

As sure as I'm standing here!

(beat)

Right across the street from the bar. On its stand, it was, like it was using the thing for feet. *Klink, klink* it went, working its way down the sidewalk.

EVANS

Did anyone else see it?

CARPENTER

Someone *sober*?

MCBRIDE

(resigned)

I. . . I guess not.

(beat)

The tree was all dolled up for Santa. The ornaments were swaying and clicking together in the breeze. It was dragging *something* behind it like a tail - a plug or some spare Christmas lights maybe. I. . . I can't be sure.

(CONTINUED)

CARPENTER

That's because you were three sheets to the wind.

MCBRIDE

I resent that! Maybe *two*, but not *three*!

(beat)

I can't be sure, Sgt. Smarty Pants, because I accidentally left my glasses at home.

EVANS

Did you go back into O'Grady's?

MCBRIDE

Later on, sure.

EVANS

I mean *then*, to. . . to get some of your friends.

MCBRIDE

Why would I take them away from their drinks?

EVANS

To be *witnesses* to what you saw.

MCBRIDE

It was over before I knew it. The thing was pretty fast. . . for a tree, I mean.

CARPENTER

So you called the police department?

MCBRIDE

Sure I did! I'm a good American.

McBride leans into Evans's space.

MCBRIDE

Did you ever see a Christmas tree walking down the street?

EVANS

Can't say I have.

MCBRIDE

Me neither! My first thought was, "There's gonna be trouble."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MCBRIDE (CONT'D)

(beat)
Terrorism, you know?

CARPENTER
From a Christmas tree?

MCBRIDE
It's *possible*.

EVANS
(amused)
I have to be getting back to work,
but thanks for the story.

MCBRIDE
(befuddled)
Story? I -

CARPENTER
Come on, Mr. McBride. There's a
drunk tank down the hall with your
name on it - and, I swear, no
trees!

Carpenter takes a protesting McBride away. Evans
chuckles, but then, sitting at his desk, starts to
wonder.

FADE TO:

We briefly see the blinking O'Grady's Pub sign as Evans
looks both ways, lets a car or two pass, and then crosses
the snow-dusted street.

Shortly, he notices the broken pieces of a blue Christmas
ornament on the sidewalk. He kneels, picks them up, and
carefully puts the pieces into his coat pocket.

He looks about some more and sees a faint trace in the
snow of something thin - like a power cord - having been
dragged along the sidewalk. He also notices many of the
same square marks that he saw outside the Underhills'
home.

FADE TO:

6

INT. UNDERHILL HOME - THE NEXT MORNING

6

The Underhills are seated in their living room with Evans. Virginia handles the broken pieces of the ornament.

VIRGINIA

This is so *sad*.

EVANS

It's *definitely* one of yours?

VIRGINIA

Oh, yes. You can't see the entire inscription, but it said "Malcolm - 2007."

She turns a large piece of the broken ornament over.

VIRGINIA

There's the Harcourt & Smith mark.

Joshua turns to Evans.

JOSHUA

(confused)

You said you found it down by O'Grady's Pub?

EVANS

I did.

JOSHUA

That's a pretty rough area of town. Why would whoever stole our tree bring it all the way over there?

VIRGINIA

(longish beat)

To put it up in his own home?

FADE TO:

7

INT. HOGAN HOME - THAT SAME MORNING

7

This home is *nothing* like the Underhills'. It is small, sparse, functional, and with little in the way of extras or luxuries.

The family is gathered about the old TV, watching cartoons.

(CONTINUED)

JAY HOGAN, 36, his crewcut indicating past service to his country, is morosely sitting in a wheelchair. His tired wife, KELLY HOGAN, 34, is sitting on the couch, fighting falling asleep. Their son, CHRIS HOGAN, 6 1/2, also sitting on the couch, is *wide* awake and enjoying the cartoons.

The doorbell rings. Kelly wakes with a start and rushes for it.

KELLY

I'll get it!

She opens the door and is surprised to see a fully decorated Christmas tree on their stoop. It is lightly dusted with new-fallen snow.

KELLY

What the -

Jay calls to her.

JAY

What is it?

Chris jumps up and runs to the door. Jay wheels up behind him.

CHRIS

Oh, boy! A tree! A Christmas tree - with lights and *everything*.

(beat)

C'mon, Dad. Help me get it in the house.

KELLY

(shocked)

Christopher Hogan!

Chris is embarrassed. He momentarily forgot that his father is now in a wheelchair.

CHRIS

Sorry. I. . . I for-

JAY

No problem.

Kelly looks the tree up and down.

KELLY

I don't see a. . . a note.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

(eagerly)

Can we bring it inside? Can we?

JAY

Well. . .

CHRIS

Please?

JAY

(beat)

Is it real?

KELLY

Yes.

(sniffs)

Smells *nice*.

JAY

You'd better bring it in then,
before you have to dig it out of
the snow.

FADE TO:

The tree is now inside the house. The white lights have
been plugged in and are shining brightly. The three
family members seem entranced by them.

KELLY

Who do you think left it on our
doorstep?

CHRIS

It's like leaving a baby in a
basket. Right, Mom?

KELLY

Yes, dear.

(beat)

But who. . .

JAY

It could be *anybody*.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAY (CONT'D)

Remember when I first got home
from Iraq - those fruit baskets
and things that showed up
unannounced. . . for a couple of
weeks anyway?

KELLY

You think this is the same sort of
thing?

JAY

Do you have a better explanation?

KELLY

(beat)
Well, it's very nice of *whoever* it
was.

CHRIS

Can we *keep* it?

JAY

You know how I feel about charity,
son.

CHRIS

But, Dad -

KELLY

You're forgetting one thing,
honey: We have no idea who left it
on the stoop. We can't return it
without knowing who put it there.

CHRIS

(eagerly)
So we *can* keep it?

JAY

(reluctantly)
Under the circumstances. . . yes.

CHRIS

Great! That'll make it easier for
him.

KELLY

For who, dear?

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

Santa. That's why we have
Christmas trees in the first place
- so he can put presents *under*
them.

JAY

(quickly)
Sport, uhm. . . why don't you
check the tree's water supply.

CHRIS

Roger wilco!

Chris eagerly kneels beside the tree and does that.

CHRIS

Dry as a bone.

JAY

Then you'd better get it something
to drink. You and. . . and your
mom didn't bring the tree all the
way in here for it to die of
thirst.

CHRIS

One glass of water coming up!

Chris starts running off, but stops as his mother speaks.

KELLY

And, dear, get a blanket out of
the upstairs closet. We need
something to wrap around the
trunk.

(beat)

The red one would look nice and
festive.

JAY

Off you go, soldier.

Chris happily runs off.

JAY

(sighs)
Santa, huh? I know one little boy
who's gonna be *pretty* disappointed
on Christmas morning.

(CONTINUED)

KELLY

We have you back, dear. Who could wish for more?

JAY

A kid who's waiting for Santa to come, that's who.

(beat)

No Christmas for you this year, little boy. Humbug!

KELLY

(getting teary)

Cut that out! You've *always* loved Christmas.

(beat)

I'm sure this would be a *big* holiday if. . .

JAY

Say it. Go ahead!

(beat)

If I wasn't in this wheelchair.

Frustrated, he slams on one of the armrests.

KELLY

You know what I mean.

JAY

(sighs)

I suppose I'm lucky to be alive after hitting that IED.

KELLY

That's the way to look at it!

JAY

Poor Harry and Mitch, they're. . . they're not. . . *anything*.

(sniffs; growing emotional)

Can you. . . Can you imagine the lousy Christmases *their* families are gonna have this year? *Their* kids?

KELLY

Now, Jay, don't you -

JAY

Don't worry. I'm not about to start mourning them again.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAY (CONT'D)

There's nothing that can be done
for either one. Dr. Hapgood
explained that to me last week.

KELLY

She's right.

JAY

Go easy on Chris, OK? It's gonna
take him a while to realize that
his dad's. . .

(getting bitter)

. . . a *cripple* and can't do much
anymore.

KELLY

(teary)

Don't say that!

JAY

It's *true*!

(beat)

Do you think I'll ever get out of
this contraption? Do you? Because
the doctors *don't*.

(beat)

On the plus side, I'll always have
a seat at the movies.

KELLY

Honey. . .

JAY

The boy's gonna be disappointed.
The money's just not there this
year.

KELLY

It was more important to get you
as well as can be. We had to pay
for what wasn't covered.

JAY

Chris isn't gonna understand that.
He'll wonder why he can't have his
dad *and* Santa in one year, like
his pals do.

KELLY

There's always *next* Christmas.
Things will be better then.

(CONTINUED)

JAY
(chuckles slightly)
Ever the optimist, honey. That's
what you are. You're a "glass-half-
full" kinda gal.

Chris hurries back into the room, a big glass of water in
one hand, the red blanket in the other.

KELLY
(sniffs)
Somebody has to be.

FADE TO:

Jay is watching TV. The lights are dimmed. The lit tree,
now wrapped in the red blanket, is to his left. Kelly
approaches and sits on the couch beside him in his
wheelchair.

KELLY
(sighs as she sits)
Chris is *finally* asleep.

She takes a good look at the tree.

KELLY
The lights are so pretty!
(beat)
Where do you suppose the ornaments
came from?

JAY
Extras, I guess.

KELLY
What do you mean?

JAY
Everyone has some extra Christmas
ornaments they never use. We have
a bunch in the crawlspace. People
must have donated their extras.
(chuckles)
You can't have a naked tree after
all!

KELLY
(hesitantly)
You. . . uhm . . . don't suppose
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KELLY (CONT'D)

. . . No, that'd be too much to ask.

JAY

What would be?

KELLY

That some. . . presents might show up unannounced at the door too.

JAY

I think you're right.

KELLY

(eagerly)
You do?

JAY

That *would* be asking too much.

KELLY

(beat)
Just a few. . . for *Chris*. I. . .
I don't need anything.

JAY

I wouldn't get your hopes up - or his.

KELLY

(sighs)
You're right.

JAY

(chuckles)
I love it when you say that.

He takes a long look at the tree and sees something that bothers him.

JAY

Kelly, what's that ornament?

KELLY

Which one?

He points.

JAY

The. . . The pink one - right *there*.

She rises and walks to the tree.

(CONTINUED)

JAY

You see Santa with his arm around
Rudolph?

Kelly searches the tree.

KELLY

Rudolph. . . Rudolph.

She finds the ornament and touches it.

KELLY

Got it!

JAY

To the *right* of that one, there's
the manger scene.

KELLY

(beat)
I see it.

JAY

Just behind *that* one - the pink
bulb.

Kelly reaches in and plucks the pink ornament from the
tree. It looks delicate and expensive. We see that it is
inscribed "Amanda - 2009." She brings it to Jay and hands
it to him.

KELLY

Who would give an ornament like
that away?

JAY

I. . . I don't think anyone *did*.
(beat)
We must have a *stolen* tree on our
hands.

KELLY

You have to be kidding!

He motions with the ornament.

JAY

Tell that to Amanda.

KELLY

Somebody stole that tree, carried
it here, and left it with *us*?

(CONTINUED)

JAY

Sure looks that way.

(beat)

We'd better call the cops.

KELLY

Why?

JAY

A crime's been committed. If. . .
If we don't report it, we're
accessories. . . aren't we?

KELLY

I don't know. I'm not a lawyer.

JAY

You don't think I should?

KELLY

No, you're right. It's only that
Chris will be *so* disappointed.

Jay picks up the phone and starts dialing.

JAY

It'll be a good life lesson for
him: You can't always get what you
want.

(beat)

I won't have a hot Christmas tree
in this house.

FADE TO:

The Underhills and Evans are now present. Chris
approaches in his footie pajamas, yawning, his hair
disheveled. He shuffles to his mom's side.

KELLY

What are you doing up? It's *late*.

CHRIS

(yawning)

I heard the cars in the driveway.

VIRGINIA

Aren't you a *handsome* boy?

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

My grandson, Kevin, is your age.
You're six, right?

CHRIS

Six *and a half*.

VIRGINIA

(chuckles)

Excuse me.

JAY

Son, this is Mr. and Mrs.
Underhill and Sgt. Evans.

Chris breaks from his mother. He looks at Evans's
uniform.

CHRIS

Are we in trouble?

EVANS

(chuckles)

No.

CHRIS

This is about the tree, isn't it?

KELLY

It belongs to the Underhills.
They're taking it with them.

CHRIS

But -

JAY

The tree doesn't *belong* to us. To
keep it would be stealing.

CHRIS

But we didn't *take* it! I thought
stealing meant that you took
something that belonged to
somebody else.

JAY

It does, but in this -

CHRIS

It showed up at the front door!

(CONTINUED)

JAY

Even so, keeping it would be wrong
now that we know who the tree
belongs to.

EVANS

It showed up on your doorstep?

JAY

That's right.

KELLY

The doorbell rang and, when I
answered it, *voilà*.

(beat)

We thought it was the act of some
good samaritan until Jay saw the
Amanda ornament.

CHRIS

Dad, are you *sure* we. . .

JAY

I'm sure.

(beat)

I'd love to know how that tree got
here.

Some of the TREE branches flutter as it speaks in a high-
pitched male voice.

TREE

I can tell you.

Everyone is shocked.

KELLY

(disbelieving)

Did that tree just. . . *talk*?

TREE

I sure did. *Somebody* has to settle
this.

CHRIS

Cool! A *talking* Christmas tree.
The guys will *never* believe this!

TREE

To answer your question about who
brought me here, *I* did - and *don't*
think it was easy walking all that
way on my old tree stand.

(CONTINUED)

EVANS

That explains those square marks.

JOSHUA

How'd you get out of the house?

TREE

When you were gone, I left.

VIRGINIA

But the pass-code. . .

TREE

I know it. You and the mister
always mumble it when you press
the numbers into the keypad.

(beat)

You didn't *know* that?

VIRGINIA

We do *now*.

TREE

Anyway, when I got the news I was
needed here, I headed over.

EVANS

Who gave you this. . . news?

TREE

Nature. We're all part of it.

JAY

But you've been cut down.

TREE

It doesn't matter. We trees don't
lose our connection to nature just
because we don't have any roots
anymore.

(beat)

We're a big collective - kind of
like the Borg, but *nice*.

JOSHUA

You got word that you were more
needed *here* than at my house?

TREE

I did, and my brothers and sisters
were *right*. This home needed some
cheering up.

(CONTINUED)

KELLY

(sotto voce)

No argument there.

TREE

I got here as quickly as I could
to spread some cheer.

EVANS

You need to go back to the
Underhills'.

TREE

Why?

EVANS

You're *their* property. That's the
law.

TREE

I obey a *different* law.

(longish beat)

If you take me from here, I'll
just come back. Why don't you
leave me alone? It would be easier
for everyone.

Evans looks at Joshua.

EVANS

Mr. Underhill?

JOSHUA

It looks like the decision's
already been made.

(beat)

Virginia?

VIRGINIA

We can do *without* a tree this
year.

JAY

I *can't* let you do this for us.

CHRIS

But, Dad. . .

TREE

Sure you can. I'm a *gift*.

(CONTINUED)

EVANS

(chuckles)

It doesn't look like you have a
choice, Mr. Hogan.

JOSHUA

We can't have this poor tree
walking back and forth between our
houses time after time. All of its
needles will fall off!

TREE

(eagerly)

Like he said.

KELLY

Please, dear.

JAY

(sighs; reluctantly)

OK.

CHRIS

Yeah!

Jay looks at the Underhills.

JAY

Thank you both.

KELLY

(getting teary)

Yes, thanks.

CHRIS

Me too.

JOSHUA

We *would* like the ornaments back
before you put the tree out on the
curb for recycling.

KELLY

Every one. I'll be very careful. I
promise!

VIRGINIA

Are you OK with being recycled
. . . Mr. Tree?

TREE

It's all part of the process.

(CONTINUED)

JOSHUA

Please excuse us for just a moment.

The Underhills step away, whispering between themselves.

EVANS

The boss will *never* believe this.

FADE TO:

The Underhills and Evans are getting ready to leave.

KELLY

It's been a *pleasure* meeting all of you.

JOSHUA

(beat; bothered)
Like. . . Likewise.

EVANS

Is something wrong, sir?

JOSHUA

I didn't want to say anything, but. . . it's the tree.

TREE

(defensively)
What's wrong with *me*?

JOSHUA

You look so lonely, so. . . That's it! There are no presents underneath you.

CHRIS

Santa hasn't come yet.

VIRGINIA

That's true.

(beat)
Maybe this year, we could give him a little help?

CHRIS

(confused)
What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

VIRGINIA

Mr. and Mrs. Hogan, Joshua and I
would like to give you some of the
Christmas presents we have at the
house.

KELLY

Oh, we *couldn't*!

JOSHUA

To put under the tree.

TREE

I'm all for that!

JAY

That's *very* generous of you both,
but -

JOSHUA

They'd *mostly* be presents for your
son. We'd keep the gifts for our
granddaughters.

(beat)

You wouldn't like those, Chris,
would you?

CHRIS

Girls, *ick*!

KELLY

Mr. and Mrs. -

VIRGINIA

We'd *really* like to do this.

(beat)

We're very comfortable, and our
kids and grandkids are as well.

JOSHUA

I don't think any of them has ever
experienced giving - *really*
giving. It would be good for all
of them. . . and for us too.

(beat)

Will you *please* let us help you?

KELLY

(tentatively)

Honey, could we?

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS
(prompting him)
Dad?

JAY
(longish beat;
breaking up a
little)
We're not normally so. . . so bad
off, you know.

JOSHUA
Of course not.

JAY
I've only been home from Iraq for
. . . I want to make it a *loan*.

JOSHUA
If you insist.

JAY
Things *will* get better for us.
Then I'll pay you back every cent,
including the money for the tree.

VIRGINIA
Chris, one of my grandsons was
getting an iPad. Do you have one?

CHRIS
I sure *don't*.

VIRGINIA
You do now!

CHRIS
Did you hear that, Mom? An *iPad*!

KELLY
You're a very lucky boy.

JOSHUA
I know what we can do!

EVANS
Mr. Underhill?

JOSHUA
Mr. Hogan, how about a contract?

JAY
I don't understand.

(CONTINUED)

JOSHUA

I'm a businessman. Have been for years. We don't say "boo" without a contract.

(beat)

Sergeant, would you have some paper on you?

Evans takes out his notepad.

EVANS

Will this do?

JOSHUA

Perfect.

(beat)

May I have a page please. . . and your pen?

Evans rips a page from the notepad and hands it and his pen to Joshua.

JOSHUA

Thank you.

Joshua hands the paper and pen to Jay.

JOSHUA

If you would sign your name.

JAY

(confused)

Uhm. . . OK.

He writes his name on the paper. He hands it back to Joshua, who folds it and puts it in his shirt pocket.

JOSHUA

When I get back to the office after the holidays, I'll have my assistant scan this signature into a contract. Then everything will be legal.

JAY

That sounds fair.

JOSHUA

And, as the seller, the price is mine to set.

JAY

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

JOSHUA

Therefore, for all those Christmas presents, you will owe me a grand total of. . . one dollar.

JAY

(very confused)

Huh?

JOSHUA

I think we have to exchange *something* to make it legal.

JAY

(breaking up)

I. . . I don't know what to say.

KELLY

This will be such a *good* Christmas!

VIRGINIA

For all of us.

TREE

Even me!

FADE TO BLACK.