

The Season of Murph
by
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(Based on characters created by
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FADE IN:

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

The kitchen is basically empty except for a half-sized fridge. There is no table or chairs, no pictures on the wall, and no dishes save for a bowl, plate, glass, fork and knife in the sink. The phone is on the wall. There is a day calendar on the counter below the phone. MURPHY DUNN, a kind-but-sad-faced thirty-something average fellow, is talking to an answering machine. He wears a light blue jump suit that reads "Omar's Perfect Blue" on the back, with a stitched picture of a pool.

MURPH

It's Murph. Hope I'm not waking you up with this message, but I figure it's three hours later over there. I hope the season's treating you right. What are you doing this year, anyway? You still coming out for that visit, or did the Peace Corps book up all your time again? I hope you're coming. Well...

He pauses for a moment, unsure of how to say good-bye.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Call me when you can. Bye.

He hangs up, then looks down at the day calendar. He tears off the current page, revealing that today is December 21st. He then heads out the door.

EXT SAN FERNANDO VALLEY HILLS STREET - DAY

Murph drives his company truck through a wealthy neighborhood, pulls up to a giant brick mansion, and grabs some pool cleaning equipment out of the truck bed. He heads around the house to the back yard.

EXT BRICK MANSION'S POOL - MOMENTS LATER

Murph, wearing a portable CD player/radio device, is scooping leaves out of the pool. When he's gotten them all out, he takes a water tester out of his utility belt. He scoops up some pool water, and then eye drops some chemicals into the test tube. The water turns a shade of red, and Murph is satisfied. He checks that the pump is operating correctly, and then he gathers up his stuff to leave.

EXT A YELLOW HOUSE'S POOL - LATER

Murph is pulling leaves from another pool. A BUNCH OF HIGH SCHOOL KIDS are lounging around, drinking booze and basically ignoring the pool man. One PARTICULARLY DRUNK KID is pouring some egg nog into a punch bowl and laughing with a GIRL IN A BIKINI.

PARTICULARLY DRUNK KID

What are you supposed to spike egg nog with?

GIRL IN A BIKINI

I don't know. Rum?

MURPH

Brandy, actually. But I wouldn't drink too much of that stuff, the sun's kind of hot today.

PARTICULARLY DRUNK KID

Easy, pool guy. I can handle my shit.

He then grabs a bottle of rum and dumps it into the egg nog. He sloshes it around with a wooden spoon and pours himself a pint glass. He chugs it, and smiles spitefully at Murph. Murph just looks at him. The kid then vomits into the pool. All the other kids laugh like it's the funniest thing they've ever seen.

Wordlessly, Murph uses his leaf catcher to push the puke into the pool's skimmer. Murph turns up the volume on his discman. He then continues his work, doing his best to pretend that no one is there.

INT A MANSION'S INDOOR POOL - LATER

The indoor pool's room is decorated with hunting trophies, beer posters, and sports paraphernalia. (You can take the trash out of the trailer, but you can't take the trailer out of the trash.) Murph is testing the water's pH balance.

The estate's resident LONELY HOUSEWIFE approaches Murph, her robe swinging open to reveal incredibly trashy lingerie. Murph looks up at her, unimpressed. He's been through this a million times before...

MURPH

Hey, there, Mrs. Caspe.

LONELY HOUSEWIFE

Murph, good to see you. You look fit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

Thank you. Always the flatterer.

LONELY HOUSEWIFE

It's supposed to get me in your pants.

MURPH

Of course it is.

Murph continues his work, and Mrs. Caspe just stands there, looking as seductive as she can. Murph ignores her, and she soon gives up.

LONELY HOUSEWIFE

I don't get you, Murph. I don't think I'm that ugly.

MURPH

You're not. You're married.

LONELY HOUSEWIFE

Not happily.

MURPH

Get a divorce, then we'll talk.

LONELY HOUSEWIFE

What, and give all this up?

Murph looks around at the gaudy decor, raises his eyebrows, says nothing.

LONELY HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)

(giving up)

There is too much chlorine in there, it's bothering my eyes.

MURPH

If the water is bothering your eyes, there probably *isn't* enough chlorine. I'll check it out.

LONELY HOUSEWIFE

Oh, okay. Well, have a happy holiday.

MURPH

Sure. You too.

She struts away, hoping one last time to catch his attention. She doesn't.

EXT FAT RICH GUY'S POOL - LATER

Murph is scooping leaves. The FAT RICH GUY pool owner approaches Murph, and hands him a ten dollar bill.

FAT RICH GUY
Christmas bonus, buddy.

MURPH
Thanks very much.

He tucks it in his breast pocket and flashes the Fat Rich Guy a smile. The Fat Rich Guy lights up a huge cigar and just watches Murph work for a few moments.

FAT RICH GUY (CONT'D)
Big holiday plans?

Murph reluctantly takes off his earphones.

MURPH
I'm sorry?

The Fat Rich Guy talks much louder, even though Murph has removed the phones.

FAT RICH GUY
I said, big holiday plans?!

MURPH
No, no, I don't celebrate the holidays.

FAT RICH GUY
Ah, you're a Jew. That's great, a lot of my best friends are Jewish.

MURPH
Actually, I think we're in the midst of Hanukkah right now, but I don't celebrate that either.

FAT RICH GUY
What are you, some kind of Scrooge or something?

He laughs boisterously as if he's made an incredible funny.

MURPH
You've got to be rich to be a Scrooge. I just don't like celebrating the holidays.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FAT RICH GUY

Well, what about your family? You gonna have a visit?

MURPH

All I ever had was my old man, and he's not around anymore.

FAT RICH GUY

Ah. Well, why don't you go back and visit where you're from or something? See the old man's grave?

MURPH

What?

FAT RICH GUY

You know, go back East or Midwest or whatever small town you're from and visit your dad's grave, pay your respects.

MURPH

Actually, my dad's over in Forest Lawn. I was born and raised here. I'm a Valley boy.

FAT RICH GUY

You doing any plays right now?

MURPH

I don't do plays.

FAT RICH GUY

You're holdin' out for the movies, then.

MURPH

I'm not an actor.

FAT RICH GUY

Writer?

MURPH

No.

FAT RICH GUY

Director?

MURPH

No.

FAT RICH GUY

Musician?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH
I'm a pool man.

FAT RICH GUY
That's it? But you're not even Mexican.

MURPH
Well, some day I hope to be.

FAT RICH GUY
What the hell would you stay in LA for,
if you don't want to be in the biz?

MURPH
I like it here. LA's a gorgeous town.

The Fat Rich Guy looks at Murph like he's insane, then hands him another ten before heading back into the house.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Thanks.

Murph, glad the guy is leaving, straps his phones back on and continues his work.

EXT SOMEWHERE ON VENTURA BLVD - AFTERNOON

Murph drives past a bunch of shops, all windows dressed to pull passers-by in for holiday shopping. One window sign proclaims, "Don't buy cheap, buy here - That's holiday cheer." Another reads, "Nothing says love like one-thousand red roses on Christmas! (Only One Dollar A Flower!)"

Murph rolls his eyes. The streets are loudly decorated with lights and holly and signs wishing everyone merry. With every bit of decor he passes, Murph grows more sullen.

A billboard proclaims that Tim Allen is starring in another sequel to his "Santa Clause" movie. People crowd the streets, frantically shopping. Someone flips Murph the bird for no apparent reason.

Murph angrily pulls down a side street.

INT MURPH'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

MURPH
Whole damn world's gone bah humbug.

EXT DIRT PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Murph pulls into the dirt parking lot at the base of a trail that winds through the hills.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hops out of his truck, and starts up the trail, listening to his discman. He seems to be finding some serenity in this.

EXT STEEP HILL AT BASE OF TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Murph slowly makes his way up the hill. He passes TWO GIRLS in tight workout clothes, and watches them move past him. He sighs, knowing they would never "stoop" to date a pool man.

EXT SHARP CORNER ON THE TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Murph rounds a turn, takes in the view of a smoggy San Fernando Valley, and then waves hello to an OLD WOMAN PASSERBY. She barely smiles.

EXT CORNER WITH A BENCH ON THE TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Murph sits on the bench overlooking the Valley, and breathes in the air. He seems quite happy here, listening to his music and looking out over his hometown. A few seconds pass, and then a middle-aged MOVIE EXEC in jogging attire violently plops down on the bench, breathing harshly. Murph looks at him.

MURPH

Hello.

MOVIE EXEC

How's it goin'?

MURPH

Hangin' in there.

The Movie Exec laughs strangely at this response.

MOVIE EXEC

Gorgeous up here.

MURPH

It's a whole lot better after a rain.

MOVIE EXEC

Smog's gone then.

MURPH

Exactly.

MOVIE EXEC

I love taking a jog up here.

MURPH

It's nice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Movie Exec, having finally caught his breath, whips out a cell phone. He dials and starts talking incredibly loudly.

MOVIE EXEC

Yeah, Teedles? It's me. Jogging in the hills, had a thought.

Murph does his best to get back to his music and taking in the view.

MOVIE EXEC (CONT'D)

"It's A Wonderful Life".

Murph looks back at the Exec when he hears this title.

MOVIE EXEC (CONT'D)

What do ya mean you haven't ever seen it? It's a classic! Jesus, man, do your research, know your film history. Goddamn, Teedles. Okay, watch it tonight, and think of this: a shot-for-shot remake with Jim Carrey in the lead. Get it? *Jim* Stewart and *Jim* Carrey.

Murph's expression is turning to terror.

MOVIE EXEC (CONT'D)

Stewart was the lead of the original, Teedles. What do you mean you don't know him? No, he can't do a cameo in the remake. He's dead.

Murph gets up.

MOVIE EXEC (CONT'D)

No, that's the beauty. We don't have to change a goddamn word. The original's in black and white, so the color gives us our edge...

Murph heads back down the trail.

MURPH

(to himself, but audible)
What's happened to my town?

The Movie Exec doesn't notice Murph is gone.

EXT JUMBY'S SANDWICH SHOP - AFTERNOON

Murph's truck is parked at a meter, and he's heading for Jumby's. A CHARITY WORKER, a woman in her late seventies, stops him before he can get inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARITY WORKER

There's a lot of children that are going hungry this Christmas. They need your help.

MURPH

I'm sorry, but I don't have any money.

CHARITY WORKER

Then what are you going in there for?

MURPH

Get a sandwich.

CHARITY WORKER

The sandwiches are free today?

MURPH

What?

CHARITY WORKER

You've got money for an over-priced ham sandwich, but nothing for the children?

MURPH

I'm not getting a ham sandwich.

CHARITY WORKER

Where's your spirit of giving?

MURPH

Why are you razzing me?

CHARITY WORKER

I want you to do the right thing.

MURPH

Lady, you're old. All I have to do is give you a light shove, and that's it for your hip, get it?

CHARITY WORKER

Nice. Real nice. So you don't like kids or the elderly?

MURPH

Goddammit, I don't have any money, I don't hate anyone. Except you right now.

CHARITY WORKER

Well, fine, have just a wonderful Christmas and a jolly New Year, Mr. Scrooge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

I am not a-- Fine. Fine.

Murph pulls his ATM card out of his wallet.

MURPH (CONT'D)

I've got thirty bucks left on this thing.
Have it. I'll just eat some leaves or
something for lunch.

CHARITY WORKER

We only take cash.

MURPH

(yelling a bit)

Well, I guess you're really up the creek,
then, lady, because this is all I've got!
Now go bother someone with money, will
ya?

He violently pulls open the door to the sandwich shop and
storms inside.

INT JUMBY'S SANDWICH SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Murph stomps up to the counter. The COUNTER GUY looks at him,
expecting the worst.

MURPH

Give me a ham sandwich. No. Not ham. I
don't want ham. Turkey.

COUNTER GUY

You want a delicious beverage with that?
We have smoothies. They're smooth.

MURPH

No thanks.

COUNTER GUY

Aw, come on, they're fantastical!

MURPH

No. I can't afford it, okay?

COUNTER GUY

Oh, sorry.

(then, sotto)

My boss makes me do the hard sell thing,
it's not really my fault.

MURPH

That's okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Murph hands him his ATM card, the guy runs it, and Murph punches in his secret code.

COUNTER GUY

Sandwich is comin' up. And have a great Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza or whatever else you're having this year!

MURPH

Thanks.

INT VIDEO STORE - AFTERNOON

Murph is eating his sandwich and looking through the videos for sale. He picks up a copy of "A Muppet Christmas Carol". He looks at the cover and smiles. The VIDEO STORE CLERK, obviously a ridiculously pretentious movie geek, is putting some new videos on the shelves and looks at what Murph is holding.

VIDEO STORE CLERK

I hate those new Muppet movies. Kermit ain't Kermit since Henson died. It's bullshit. Disney bought the Muppets and they all went to hell. They don't have 'em anymore, but it doesn't matter, the damage is done. They're just a corporate product, like everything else. Might as well have been George Lucas fucking them all up, know what I'm saying?

Murph just looks at the kid, mildly offended.

MURPH

Actually, when I saw this in college, it made me cry.

The Clerk laughs at him. Murph then pulls out his ATM card, and hands it to the clerk defiantly.

MURPH (CONT'D)

I would like to buy this, please.

CLERK

Oh, man. You're just another soulless corporate consumer, aren't you? Why didn't you go to Blockbuster?

MURPH

Can I just buy the video without being berated?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLERK

Yeah. At Blockbuster.

MURPH

Look. I want to give you my money for this video. Not Blockbuster. You really want me to give money to that corporate giant and drive you out of business? Just because you don't like the more recent incarnations of Muppet movies?

The Clerk just stares at him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Would it make a difference if I told you that I think the new *Star Wars* movies suck, too?

The Clerk is unmoved.

MURPH (CONT'D)

And Michael Bay and Jerry Bruckheimer are evil? And Eddie Murphy hasn't been funny since 1988? And the redux of *Apocalypse Now* made no sense?

(a beat)

Any of this working?

CLERK

I like the redux.

MURPH

Okay. Sorry.

The Clerk looks at Murph, sizing him up for a moment, then reluctantly takes the card from Murph and rings up the video.

EXT POOL BESIDE A LARGE PICTURE WINDOW - EVENING

Murph takes a moment from scooping leaves out of the pool to look at his watch. It is six. He takes the CD out of his discman, and replaces it with another. He cranks the volume and hits play. It is Eric Clapton's version of "Willie and the Hand Jive". Murph's mood lightens, and he scoops out the rest of the leaves with a rhythm in his step.

Murph tests the pH balance, and it is perfect. Done with the last pool of his day, Murph puts away his test kit and then does a little "hand jive" with a smirk on his face. As he dances, he turns to look through the house's large picture window.

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CONTINUED:

A Christmas tree with blinking lights and gorgeous ornaments is framed perfectly by the window. The house's family, a MOM, a DAD, and TWO BOYS are gathered around it, finishing up the decorating. Dad puts a brightly lit star atop the tree.

Murph can only look at them, he is done dancing. The family doesn't notice him looking at them, and he has to pull himself sadly away from the pretty picture. He heads to his truck, parked just in front of the house.

EXT VENTURA BLVD - EVENING

The boulevard's decorations are lit up in full splendor. Murph drives slowly along the street, other cars whipping around him.

INT MURPH'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The lights reflect on his windshield as he drives past them. He turns on the radio, but can find nothing but holiday music and bad talk programs. He shuts it off, and starts looking around for something to do. He needs to blow off some steam.

He turns off of Ventura Blvd., up some anonymous side street. Murph sees something that catches his fancy, and pulls into a small parking lot.

EXT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - CONTINUOUS

Murph parks the truck and hops out. Murph looks up at the sign over the bar, and is obviously amused by the name. He heads inside.

INT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - CONTINUOUS

The place is dark but warm. There is a fire going, giving the bar a ski lodge type of feel. The bar itself is long and curvy. The joint is virtually empty, save for three people. One, the barkeep, is SCOOTER, a pleasant and plain looking fellow. He is busy cleaning up some wine glasses.

The other two sit at the far end of the bar. On the right is a department store SANTA CLAUSE and on the left is a full grown man dressed as the BABY JESUS, with a cloth diaper. Both are unshaven white guys. Santa is overweight and middle-aged, while Jesus is probably in his thirties somewhere, but he does his best to *seem* middle-aged. Both chew on cigars. They are in mid-conversation.

SANTA CLAUSE
Christianity is bunk! Bunk!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BABY JESUS

You don't have any qualms makin' money
off it every year, do ya?

SANTA CLAUSE

I'm just takin' back what they stole from
my people!

BABY JESUS

What people is that?

SANTA CLAUSE

The African-American community! Duh.

Murph sits down at the bar.

BABY JESUS

You're not black, you idiot.

SANTA CLAUSE

That doesn't mean they can't be my
people.

BABY JESUS

Yes it does. And what the hell did
Christians steal from black people?

SANTA CLAUSE

Oh, gee, I don't know. Their identity!?
Maybe!?

Scooter comes over to Murph as Santa and Baby Jesus continue
to argue about nonsense.

SCOOTER

What can I get ya?

MURPH

I don't know. What are those two having?

SCOOTER

You don't want to go down that road. How
about a spiked egg nog? 'Tis the season.

MURPH

I'll have a scotch. Rocks.

SCOOTER

Comin' up.

Scooter instantly puts a scotch on the rocks down in front of
Murph. Murph doesn't see him pour it, doesn't see him turn
away for even a second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

That was fast. How'd you do that?

SCOOTER

I've been doing this a long time.

MURPH

Yeah, I guess so.

Scooter offers his hand.

SCOOTER

Scooter.

Murph takes it.

MURPH

Murphy Dunn. Call me Murph.

BABY JESUS

Hey, Scootles! We're dry down here!

SANTA CLAUSE

Yeah, Dr. Skeeto, you're shirkin' your duty!

SCOOTER

I'm on my way.

Murph hands Scooter his ATM card.

SCOOTER

Open a tab?

MURPH

Actually, that thing's got five bucks left on it. I hope it covers the drink.

SCOOTER

Just.

MURPH

I'll owe you the tip. I hope you can forgive me on that. I'm in a bit of a bad spot.

Scooter throws the ATM card back at him.

SCOOTER

Then it's on me.

MURPH

No, no. I can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOOTER
Sure you can.

MURPH
I appreciate it.

Murph throws the ATM card back to Scooter.

MURPH (CONT'D)
(with a smile)
I'd like five bucks in singles, please.

Scooter fetches Santa and the Baby their drinks in his lightning fast manner, then runs the card and gives Murph the pad to enter his key code. Murph does so, and Scooter instantaneously lays out five singles like a Vegas card dealer. Murph takes out two, and pushes them towards Scooter.

MURPH (CONT'D)
That's for you. Now, you got a jukebox?

SCOOTER
Behind you.

Murph looks behind him, and sees a giant jukebox by the door. He downs his scotch in one gulp.

MURPH
Didn't notice that when I came in.

This is because it wasn't there. Murph gets up and starts flipping through the selection on the jukebox. He plays Eric Clapton's version of "Willie and the Hand Jive". Scooter pours him more Scotch, but Murph doesn't notice.

SCOOTER
I don't suppose you'd mind throwing on some Bing Crosby holiday tunes?

MURPH
I'd rather not, if it's all the same to you.

Baby Jesus and Santa stop their bickering when they hear Murph make this statement.

SANTA CLAUSE
Amen, brother! If I gotta hear one more holiday tune I'll blow a gasket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BABY JESUS

(to Santa)

Well, all the music is your fault,
technically. Not to mention all the
commercialized gift-buying nonsense.

SANTA CLAUSE

What's wrong with buying gifts?!

BABY JESUS

Christmas is about me, for god sakes! My
birthday! Hello!

SANTA CLAUSE

There you go again. So this time of year
is only for the Christians. They're the
only deserved people.

BABY JESUS

Well, sue us for being about more than
just Tonka toys and video games.

SANTA CLAUSE

You think this as a season of giving is
the wrong way to go? You're off your
rocker. Jesus.

BABY JESUS

Don't take my name in vain.

SANTA CLAUSE

You're not actually Jesus, buddy, you
just dress like him. Because you're
insane.

BABY JESUS

You dress like Santa. That's not crazy?

SANTA CLAUSE

I go to a mall and make money dressing
like this.

BABY JESUS

I could find someone to pay me to dress
like this if I wanted to.

SANTA CLAUSE

(considering)

I suppose this is the Valley.

BABY JESUS

But I dress like this in protest over
what has become of Christmas.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BABY JESUS (CONT'D)

(then)

Anyway. Giving is good, yes, but not as it is commercialized. You fat idiot.

MURPH

Actually, I'd say the giving part is just what's wrong with this time of year. The spirit of giving is the big lie.

Everyone stares at Murph for a beat. Murph turns around and downs the second scotch, not realizing it's his second. He's getting a bit drunk.

MURPH (CONT'D)

I've got this friend, she works for the Peace Corps, spends all her time giving and helping and being nice and all that silly crap. And I tell her, be careful, you're too much of a giver, next thing you know you've lost your fiancée...not to mention the pool cleaning business.

SCOOTER

You're friend's in the Peace Corps and she's got a pool cleaning business? That seems like quite a bit to deal with.

MURPH

No, no. She's just in the Peace Corps. I had the pool cleaning business.

(then)

Never mind.

SCOOTER

Sorry about your business.

MURPH

My own fault, really. Giving is not the American way, I'm afraid.

SANTA CLAUSE

Well, you can't be stupid about it.

MURPH

Good point, Kringle. Good point. And you look damn sexy in that suit, I might add.

Murph just smirks and goes back to the jukebox.

BABY JESUS (CONT'D)

Scoteronomy! I don't like the stranger.

(a beat)

You gonna kick this asshole out or what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

SANTA CLAUSE

I'm with the big, silly baby on this one.
This guy looks shady.

SCOOTER

I don't kick you guys out with those
filthy cigars.

SANTA CLAUSE

Oh, now we're the bad guys. Nice.

"Willie and the Hand Jive" comes to a finish, and then starts
right back up again.

SCOOTER

I guess you really dig this song.

MURPH

My dad used to play it all the time when
I was a kid. He taught me the dance.
Every time I had a bad day at school,
we'd do the Hand Jive together to cheer
me up. Sometimes still works.

BABY JESUS

You ought to "Hand Jive" your way on out
of here, Mr. Humbug.

SCOOTER

Hey, Baby Jesus. Easy.

MURPH

It's all right. I'll go. I don't want to
upset Jesus, what with his birthday just
around the corner.

(then)

Santa...Jesus: For Christmas this year,
I'd like to be visited by your three
ghosts. You can show me how to love the
holidays again...whaddaya say?

SANTA CLAUSE

We're not the real Santa and Jesus, you
know.

Murph speaks louder to drown out Santa, as he's worked
himself into a drunken frenzy.

MURPH

Scrooge got three ghosts. Rich guys get
all the breaks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

SANTA CLAUSE

A Christmas Carol was just a story. It's not real.

MURPH

And neither is the season, if you see what I'm saying.

BABY JESUS

Go home and get some sleep.

MURPH

(defiantly)
I will, mister!

Murph storms out. Scooter calls after him.

SCOOTER

Come on back sometime!

He looks over at Santa and the Baby.

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

You guys can be real jerks sometimes.

BABY JESUS

What?

SANTA CLAUSE

What'd we do?

BABY JESUS

Hey, Scootlebee, I need another.

Scooter ignores him, and goes back to cleaning up the wine glasses.

BABY JESUS (CONT'D)

Scootster? Scoobles? Scuttlebutt!

Scooter continues to ignore him.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Murph is clearly tipsy. He puts his discman/portable radio on the counter next to a copy of Eric Clapton's "Timepieces". He picks up the phone, dials a number, and waits for someone to pick up. It's a machine again.

MURPH

Damn your machine. Don't you come home anymore?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH (CONT'D)

Well, wherever you are, I'd love to chat if you get in...I mean I could really use a talk. I hate Christmas. And Hanukkah. And everything else. Holly. Egg nog. Ornaments. Trees. Please call. Can't you tell I need help?

(then)

All right, all right. I'm just messing with ya. I know you're probably out helping people who need it more than I do. But be careful. Don't forget to take care of yourself. You know what happened to me.

(then, regretting his words)

Forget I said that. I'm a little drunk, and feeling sorry for myself. I'll stop it now. Just give me a call when you get a chance.

He hangs up and mopes into his living room.

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The living room is as sparsely furnished as the kitchen. There is one chair, a cheap old La-Z-Boy coming apart at the seams. To the left of the front door is the only other piece of furniture, a very small end table with a beat-up television/VCR combo precariously balanced on top of it. Murph's new copy of "A Muppet Christmas Carol" is resting on top of the television. There is a small CD player in the corner with a bunch of CD's spread all around it on the floor.

Murph is staring at the television. An overly made-up NEWS ANCHORWOMAN is wrapping up the newscast with a human interest story:

NEWS ANCHORWOMAN

(on the television)

You can't accuse Los Angeles of being a Scrooge. Several junior high schools in the San Fernando Valley formed what they're calling, "The Miracle of Soup Coalition".

The television shows a bunch of young kids serving soup to homeless people.

NEWS ANCHORWOMAN (V.O.)

Over five hundred homeless people gathered to be served soup by joyful children overcome by the holiday spirit. Said one of the organization's--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Murph shuts off the television and tosses the remote to the floor. He sits in silence for a moment. Then, suddenly, the CD player makes a terrible, loud noise. Murph jumps up and unplugs the unit. The noise stops.

MURPH

You better not be busting on me, your warranty just ran out.

He plugs it back in, and breathes a sigh of relief when the noise doesn't start again. He puts his second copy of Eric Clapton's "Timepieces" into the box, and cues up "Willie and the Hand Jive". The music plays and he begins to dance.

He is just going through the motions, obviously joyless. After a few moments, he stops dancing, and unplugs the box again.

MURPH

(looking upwards)

Ah, Dad, it doesn't work anymore. Why won't it work anymore?

Then he realizes what he's doing.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Jesus, I'm talking to my ceiling. I'm gonna be hung over tomorrow. Joy.

He stumbles out of the living room.

INT MURPH'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is now in a T-shirt and boxer shorts. He is brushing his teeth. He begins to absentmindedly hum "Holly Jolly Christmas" by Burl Ives. He catches himself, and stops. After a second, he finds that he is humming the tune again. He talks to himself in the mirror.

MURPH

Stop doing that, Murph. It's a stupid song.

He goes back to brushing his teeth, but starts humming again.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Goddammit, cut it out!

But the song is stuck in his head.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, something else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He starts to sing "Enter Sandman" by Metallica but somehow it morphs right back into "Holly Jolly Christmas".

MURPH (CONT'D)

That's not possible! It's simply not possible!

He tries "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana, but the same thing happens. He continues to fight the "Holly Jolly Christmas" melody, bouncing back and forth between that and Metallica and Nirvana. He finishes brushing his teeth and then washes his face.

As he becomes more and more frustrated due to losing the battle with "Holly Jolly Christmas", he becomes more violent with washing his face. He spills water on the floor. When he goes to towel off his face, he slips and falls. He gets up yelling and runs from the bathroom, hysterical.

INT MURPH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bedroom has only a mattress with some old sheets and blankets, and a lamp on the floor next to it. Murph runs into bed, still yelling in an attempt to keep the song from coming back into his head. He yanks the covers up over him, and scrambles to shut off the bedroom lamp.

Murph is silent in the complete darkness for a few moments. Then he starts humming "Holly Jolly Christmas" again. He growls angrily to stop it. He sighs with heavy aggravation.

MURPH

(quietly, to himself)

No, no. I will not hum it. I will not hum it. I will not--

He is interrupted by the sound of cracking wood. He turns on his light and sits bolt upright in bed, startled.

He listens, and hears his front door fling open and smash into the wall. He hears someone rummaging around in his living room, putting things in what must be a canvas bag.

He trembles, unsure of what to do, then he speaks:

MURPH (CONT'D)

I'm home, you know!

The BURGLAR doesn't answer, just keeps on rummaging around.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Hello?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Still no answer.

MURPH (CONT'D)
I have a gun!

BURGLAR
(from the living room)
Bullshit!

Murph is taken aback. Then, he gets a little angry.

MURPH
No, no, I do! And I'm going to blow your
head off! With my gun! Head off with the
gun!

In his rage, he has formed an imaginary gun with his thumb and forefinger, and he is holding it up, ready to attack. He listens as the burglar continues to put things in his bag.

MURPH (CONT'D)
I'm coming in! You're a dead man!

Murph doesn't move, just sits there listening with his "gun" poised.

MURPH (CONT'D)
I am not full of shit!

BURGLAR
(from the living room)
Yes, you are! You hate guns!

MURPH
How do you-- Hey!

Murph jumps up from his bed and charges into the living room, holding up his finger gun in front of him as if it could actually protect himself.

INT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Murph busts into the living room in full cop mode, pointing his "gun" all over the room looking for something to "shoot". He yells as he does so.

MURPH
Freeze, sucker! Where are you!?

But the burglar is already gone. Murph looks at the television, but it is still there. He peers into the kitchen, and looks to the phone, which is also still there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then he whips his head around in horror, and looks to the corner of the living room where he keeps his CD's and player. They are gone. He looks to the top of the television and sees the "Muppet Christmas Carol" is gone.

MURPH (CONT'D)

What the hell is going on?

Murph looks at his front door, which is wide open and hanging off the door frame, detached from the top hinge.

MURPH (CONT'D)

You knew me. You knew me. Is this a joke?

He closes the door as best he can, and pushes his chair up against it to keep it closed.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Who would do this? It's not funny. It's really not funny.

Then he thinks of something and runs into the kitchen.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Murph looks at the counter where he had left his portable CD player/radio. It is gone. He stares for a moment, completely horrified.

MURPH

(very dramatic)

Noooooooooo!

He spins around and notices some words have been spray-painted on the kitchen wall. They say, "You will be visited by three ghosts!"

Murph stands stunned for a moment, just reading the words over and over again. Then, something hits him and he throws on a jacket and runs out of the apartment.

INT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Scooter is still cleaning glasses. Santa and Baby Jesus are still drinking. Murph busts through the door, still in his pajamas.

SANTA CLAUSE

Hey, that guy is back.

BABY JESUS

He's wearing his jammies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Murph points accusingly at Santa and Jesus.

MURPH

I know it was you! Give me my stuff back!

Santa and Jesus look confused.

SCOOTER

What are you talking about, Murph?

MURPH

These guys broke into my apartment!

SCOOTER

(shocked)

What?

MURPH

Yeah! Just now! They just busted in and vandalized and stole my stuff and broke my door!

(this thought pisses him off)

They broke my door! It won't shut right! My door! It was a great door, and now it's dead! Murdered! Shot down in the prime of its opening and closing life!

SCOOTER

Murph, they've been here all night. They're always here all night. They haven't even gotten up to go to the bathroom.

SANTA CLAUSE

"Depends". The undergarment.

BABY JESUS

Yeah, I love these things. I'm gonna need a change soon, I think.

Murph looks confused for a moment, then terribly embarrassed.

MURPH

Oh. I thought...I'm sorry. I don't know what...I guess I should call the police.

SCOOTER

Let me call for you.

MURPH

No! No, I've done enough to you already. Let me just...I need to go home. I'll be...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Then he turns and runs out of the bar.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - LATER

Murph is staring at the words on his kitchen wall.

MURPH
Is this for real?

He looks at the clock. It is three in the morning. He looks at the day calendar and tears off the top page...it is now December 22nd.

INT "OMAR'S PERFECT BLUE" POOL CLEANERS DEPOT - MORNING

There are several trucks with pool cleaning gear parked in the large garage. In the corner is an "office" without walls, set up with a desk and chair, file cabinets, a computer, a small fridge, and a coffee machine. There is a beat-up sofa and a coffee table covered with old magazines, mostly having to do with pools and the pool business.

OMAR, Murph's boss, a jovial guy with a big round face, is pouring rum over ice in paper cups. His employees, all in their early to mid twenties, are standing around the "office", waiting for the annual holiday toast. Murph is not there yet.

BARRY is the skinniest guy you've ever seen, and is constantly smoking. He is not wearing a uniform, unlike the rest of the guys. WILL is a heavy-set Latino who always has a porno mag rolled up in his back pocket. GERN has a full head of prematurely white hair and always looks terribly sad. Rounding out these employees is GINO, the kind of guy who can make anyone feel at home despite a gigantic Aaron Neville-like mole on his forehead. When Omar is done pouring, they all hold up their cups, ready for the speech. When Will raises up his cup, his porno magazine falls out of his pocket.

OMAR
Will. Your porn.

WILL
Oh, yeah.

He hurriedly picks it up and stuffs it back in his pocket.

OMAR
Okay, it's time for the toast.

BARRY
Hang on. I need a smoke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He still has one in his mouth, and lights a new one off it.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Okay. Go.

Omar looks at him funny, then moves on.

OMAR

My livelihood is not pools. It's not the customers with their big houses and giant bank accounts. It's not chemical tests, or scooping leaves, or making appointments.

He pauses, and fights back tears.

OMAR (CONT'D)

It's you guys. You are my boys, and I know I don't have to remind you, but if you ever need me, I'm always here. Happy holidays. Bottoms up.

They all say, "Happy holidays," and then down their drinks. Except for Gern, who kind of mumbles a "Merry Christmas" and then just looks into his cup like there is a dead fly in it.

GINO

And be sure, Omar, that you are the best boss a pool man could have!

Everyone hoots and hollers, except for Gern who barely raises his cup as he lamely agrees. Omar is obviously loving this.

OMAR

Make sure you get some sugar cookies!

He points at a huge platter on the coffee table. And then, Murph stumbles into the office, looking like hell, and he collapses on the couch. Everyone stops and looks at him.

GINO

Jesus, Murph! You all right?

MURPH

Sorry I'm late.

OMAR

That's okay, buddy. There's a first for everything. Did you sleep?

MURPH

(seeming almost drunk)
Not at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BARRY
What happened?

Gern puts down his untouched cup of rum.

GERN
(mumbling)
I got to get to work.

He leaves. No one notices.

MURPH
I got robbed.

Everyone reacts with shocked concern.

OMAR
No!

MURPH
Yeah. Middle of the night. Burglar just
busted down my door. I thought I'd be
killed.

BARRY
Goddamn! What'd he get?

MURPH
My little stereo, my discman, my CD's.

GINO
(incensed)
No!

OMAR
Did he get the TV?

MURPH
No, no he didn't.

OMAR
Well, thank goodness! You got out with
your life and your TV! That's a blessed
individual for ya!

GINO
Yeah, you're lucky. Last time I was
robbed, they didn't even leave me any
food.

BARRY
I got mugged once, guy took my wallet *and*
my pants!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BARRY (CONT'D)

I had to get on the bus with no pants!
And my smokes were in my pants! I only
wish I got burgled like you got burgled,
man. Pants.

WILL

I got pick-pocketed once.

He takes his porn out of his pocket and holds it
protectively, remembering the harrowing experience.

GINO

Maybe you should get better locks,
Murphy.

OMAR

Well, I'm glad you're okay. All's well
that ends well. Here's your rum.

He hands Murph a paper cup. Murph is a bit confused at the
lack of sympathy he is getting.

OMAR (CONT'D)

I don't know if you remembered, but
Barry's got to catch a plane for back
East, so we're all going to share his
work load today.

BARRY

You guys are awesome!

He chugs his rum, and immediately takes off. Omar hands Murph
a slip of paper with an address on it.

OMAR

Here's your extra pool. Hate throwing
this at you guys, but what can I do?
(then)
Make sure you get a sugar cookie!

The party breaks up as everyone heads to their trucks for the
day's work. Murph puts down his cup of rum without taking a
sip, and heads to his truck. Murph passes by Gern, who is
just finishing up loading his truck.

GERN

Hey, Murph.

Murph turns, mildly shocked that Gern is saying something
audible.

MURPH

Gern?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GERN

The holidays make you sad, don't they?

MURPH

I guess so.

GERN

Well, they shouldn't. Even if you don't like 'em, it's no big deal, they don't last past the second of January.

Murph stares at Gern, unbelieving.

MURPH

That's the most you've ever said to me, Gern. The holidays make you sad, too?

GERN

Nope. I like 'em. The lights.

Murph watches as Gern gets in his truck.

MURPH

We'll see ya, Gern.

Gern mumbles something incoherently, then drives out of the garage. Murph heads to his truck.

EXT GINGERBREAD HOUSE POOL - DAY

The house looks like it's out of a fairy tale: a gingerbread house. Everything is absolutely pristine, clean as a whistle. The pool area is decorated for a big holiday party. Murph is cleaning the pool. The two kids of the gingerbread house's family, a COLLEGE-AGED BOY and a COLLEGE-AGED GIRL, come out to the pool with some paper decorations and tape. Murph waves hello, but they are too busy to notice him.

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Where did mom say she wanted these things again?

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

Over there.

She points to the pool shed tucked in the corner of the backyard pool area. There are no decorations on it as of yet.

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Is it really necessary to put shit all over everything?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

Mom gets to do this once a year, why do you have to be such a killjoy?

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Because I do all the work. And I still have to go pick up the booze for the egg nog.

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

The party's not until seven.

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Yeah, but every time I grab the keys to go, she's found one more square inch to tape up another fire hazard.

He begins to tape up some decorations on the shed. His sister joins him.

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

You'll have time. Relax.

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

They'll probably be out of rum by the time I get there. And she'll yell at me for it, no doubt.

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

What do you need rum for?

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

The egg nog. Hello.

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

You're supposed to put vodka in egg nog, not rum.

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Bullshit.

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

You sayin' my sorority sisters are bullshit?

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Why is it that girls always want to put vodka in everything?

Murph can't help but overhear the debate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

Actually, it's not rum or vodka. Brandy.
You're supposed to add brandy.

They don't so much as glance at him, as if he wasn't even there. They work on hanging some more decorations.

MURPH (CONT'D)

I said, you want to add brandy to that
egg nog.

They continue to ignore him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Brandy. Hello?

Murph starts to do a silly little dance, while chanting:

MURPH (CONT'D)

Brandy. Brandy. Brandy. Brandy, brandy.

Murph stops his dance, still completely ignored. He is mystified, and can only return to cleaning the pool.

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

There are other types of liquor, you
know. Vodka is just one.

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

Are you going to be like this all
Christmas, because maybe you should just
go back to school and be alone. You know,
away from everyone.

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Believe me, I would, but they close the
dorms. Can't get in.

The gingerbread house's OVERPRIVILEGED HOUSE WIFE comes out with a list of party guests in her hand. She stops in front of her daughter.

OVERPRIVILEGED HOUSE WIFE

You left some people off the list?

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

(defensive)
No, I didn't.

OVERPRIVILEGED HOUSE WIFE

Really? And who made your bed this
morning?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

Stacey? I was supposed to invite Stacey?

OVERPRIVILEGED HOUSE WIFE

Of course you were! She works hard for us all year, the least we can do is invite her to the party. Dad's driver, the gardeners, the postman--none of them are on this list!

Murph looks over at the House Wife when he hears who she's inviting.

COLLEGE-AGED GIRL

I didn't know. I'll call all of them. Right now.

She heads inside.

OVERPRIVILEGED HOUSE WIFE

I swear, you're such a snob sometimes.
(then, to her son)
Did you get the scotch, yet?

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

(rolling his eyes)
You don't put scotch in egg nog, Mom.
It's rum.

Murph looks over at him, and shakes his head.

OVERPRIVILEGED HOUSE WIFE

Whatever. Did you get it?

COLLEGE-AGED BOY

Mom, every time I start to go--

OVERPRIVILEGED HOUSE WIFE

Well, get going, you can do the decorations when you get back.

He grumbles as he heads back into the house. She follows after him. Murph says to her as she passes by:

MURPH

(flashing a winning smile)
Happy holidays, ma'am. Should I bring anything?

She just keeps on walking, ignoring him completely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MURPH (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Pool man's not on the list, huh?

He goes back to work, then suddenly freezes in fear, realizing something.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Holy shit! Nobody could hear or see me!
The ghost must be here!

He starts looking around spastically.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Where are you?

No ghost materializes.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Ghost of Christmas Past? Are you there?

Murph's cell phone rings, and he gets so startled he runs to hide in a shrub. He then realizes he's being ridiculous, and sheepishly steps out from the shrub to answer the phone.

MURPH (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Oh, hey, Omar. No, no, I'm just about to finish up here, then I'll get right to the added pool. No problem. No, no, I just need to pack up my stuff and go. I'm on my way. Sorry.

He hangs up and starts to gather up all his stuff. Just as he's about to go, a single leaf floats down from the sky and lands in the pool. Murph has to put down his stuff, and gets down on his hands and knees to pull out the leaf.

He then gathers his stuff up again. Just as he's ready to go, another leaf lands in the pool.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Cut it out!

He puts down his stuff again, and pulls out the leaf. He gathers his stuff up more cautiously this time, keeping an eye out for more falling leaves. Sure enough, another one comes down. Murph drops his stuff, this time hurriedly catching the leaf before it even hits the water.

Then, he grabs all his stuff at lightning speed and sprints away from the pool before any more leaves can come down.

EXT UPPER CLASS LA NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - EVENING

Murph is slowly driving down the street, keeping one eye on the road and flipping through his Thomas Guide at the same time. He comes to a road block. A COP is standing in front of the orange cones and signs declaring that things are under construction. The cop looks right at Murph, and points him to take a right.

MURPH
(sarcastic, to himself)
Swell.

Murph waves at the cop.

INT MURPH'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

MURPH
Where the hell is this place? Why do I
always get stuck with the hard to find
bullshit?

He frantically flips through the Thomas Guide, the maps becoming more and more confusing to him.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Goddammit. I need some Willie and the
Hand Jive, but noooo...I am the victim of
a classic rock burglar.

He is no longer looking at the road. He hits something, and slams on his breaks.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Oh, shit!

He jumps out of the truck.

EXT CAROL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Murph runs to the front of the truck, and discovers he has knocked over a trash can.

MURPH
Nice, Murph, nice.

He gathers up the trash and uprights the can. Then, he sees the address on the mailbox. He double checks the piece of paper with the address of the house he's trying to find, and confirms:

MURPH (CONT'D)
I'm here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks at his surroundings, mystified.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Don't know how I did that.

He then begins to gather equipment from the back of his truck.

EXT CAROL'S POOL - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is busy cleaning the backyard pool. He is whistling Willie and the Hand Jive. He doesn't notice CAROL coming out of her house and walking up behind him, curious about the familiar song he is whistling. Carol, somewhere around Murph's age, is dressed casually, but still sexy. She carries herself in a confident manner, but flirtatious body language and expressions can't hide an underlying sadness...she is a woman full of regret.

CAROL
Haven't heard that in awhile.

Murph, startled, spins around to see her and falls backwards into the pool. Carol can't help but laugh at him. He stands up, waist deep in the shallow end. For a moment, he can only stare at her, unable to believe who he is seeing. He instantly becomes nervously awkward.

MURPH
Carol?

CAROL
Hi, Murphy. You're not the usual pool man.

MURPH
He's on vacation. I'm covering. You know. Covering. Filling in for the regular guy. I'm not on vacation. See.

She laughs at him.

CAROL
What a wonderful surprise. How have you been?

MURPH
Good. Great. I mean, fantastic. And terribly cold. Wet.

He goes to gesture with a hand, and splashes himself in the face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROL
Well, I'm glad. Not about the cold and
wet thing.

MURPH
And you?

Carol smiles at him.

CAROL
Murph?

MURPH
Yes?

CAROL
Would you like to get out of the pool?

MURPH
I probably should.

She offers a hand, and helps him out of the water. He is
dripping wet.

CAROL
You're a bit damp.

MURPH
Occupational hazard.

CAROL
Come in, I'll dry your clothes.

MURPH
No, no, it's no big deal, really.

CAROL
Um, I practically pushed you in. Let me
dry your clothes.

MURPH
I can't, I should finish up here.

CAROL
Murph. We're old friends, remember? I
won't bite.

MURPH
Okay, if you won't bite. But the second
you even nip at me, I'm leaving.

Carol laughs, and leads him inside.

INT CAROL'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is standing by the fireplace, looking at some unlit logs and newspaper, hands in the pockets of a borrowed bathrobe. Carol comes in from a hallway.

CAROL

Half an hour, and you'll be good to go.

MURPH

Thanks so much, I really appreciate it. I feel like an idiot. Some things don't change, I guess.

She just smiles at him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

This is a really fancy robe.

CAROL

Yeah, well, all our robes are fancy.

MURPH

(feeling very uncomfortable)
A half hour, huh?

CAROL

It'll give us time to catch up.

Murph looks at a picture on the mantle. In the photo, Carol is standing with a sixty-year-old black man and a little girl.

MURPH

Is this your husband?

CAROL

Yep. And that's my little girl, Kelly.

MURPH

She's very pretty.

Murph looks at the little girl in the picture, and a pang of sadness washes over him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Congratulations. A family and a house and everything. That's what you always wanted.

CAROL

I'm very lucky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is an awkward silence as the two look at each other. Murph breaks it by looking around the room.

MURPH

What is it that your husband does?

CAROL

He's a producer. Television.

MURPH

That's great! You met him through acting?

CAROL

Yeah, well I was doing extra work on one of his shows. We sort of hit it off.

MURPH

He helped you get your foot in the door?

CAROL

I haven't had a lot of time for that, really, with Kelly and the house and everything. But occasionally I'll do a bit thing for him. It's fun.

There is another awkward silence. This time it's Carol's turn to get the pang of sadness.

CAROL (CONT'D)

You want a drink or a bite or something?

MURPH

No, no, you've done enough. Very kind, really.

CAROL

Well, I'm going to have one, so it's no big deal.

She goes to the fully stocked mahogany bar in the corner of the room. She fixes herself a vodka martini.

MURPH

Still your drink?

CAROL

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

She pours him a scotch on the rocks. She hands it to him, and he takes a sip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAROL (CONT'D)

Oh, no. I forgot. I should've got you an egg nog. It's that time again.

MURPH

No, no, this is perfect. I don't drink that stuff anymore, really. Lost my taste.

CAROL

Oh, so some things do change.

Carol looks at him, looks at him deeply.

CAROL

Murph. You seem so sad. What's going on with you? No bullshit.

MURPH

Ah, wow. You still don't mince words, do you?

CAROL

Well, we've got less than a half an hour, here. There's not a lot of time. I want to know how you are.

MURPH

It's been a long time Carol, I don't know that I can really explain it to you. Time is funny.

CAROL

I don't think so.

MURPH

What?

CAROL

I don't think time is funny.

(then)

Where's your wedding ring?

MURPH

I'm not married.

CAROL

That's surprising, a romantic like you. What's she like?

MURPH

Who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CAROL
The girl you're seeing.

MURPH
I'm not seeing anyone. Not officially,
anyway.

CAROL
That's not the Murph I used to know.

MURPH
I'm still the same old Murph, trust me.
Still a push over, still a pool man,
still broke.

CAROL
Well, you've got a roof over your head,
right?

MURPH
Barely.

CAROL
Who are you spending the holidays with?

MURPH
You're lookin' at him.

Carol takes a big sip of her drink.

CAROL
That's really not like you.

MURPH
Actually, I've been that way for awhile.

CAROL
When did you start feeling so sorry for
yourself?

Murph is stung, but swallows his feelings.

MURPH
I don't. I just keep to myself. I'm a
pool man, you know, I get in the way if
I'm not careful.

Murph starts rattling around the ice in his glass.

MURPH
I haven't had scotch this good...probably
ever. Must cost an arm and a leg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CAROL

It does.

And then more silence. Finally, Carol sits down on the sofa.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Sit down, Murph.

MURPH

I'm all right.

CAROL

Please.

Murph reluctantly sits down, making damn sure the robe doesn't accidentally fall open.

CAROL (CONT'D)

You ever wonder?

MURPH

What?

CAROL

Us. What it would be like. Now.

MURPH

You mean, how we'd get along?

CAROL

I don't mean that.

She turns to him, her expression suddenly one of seduction.

CAROL (CONT'D)

What if we were to kiss? Once. Just to see.

MURPH

You have a husband and a child. I'm your pool man.

CAROL

I'm aware of that. Just forget about it for the moment?

MURPH

I should...probably pass on that, I think...have you tried the gardener?

CAROL

I miss you, Murph.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

She tries to kiss him. He jumps up from the couch. She jumps up after him, still pursuing the kiss. She tries to yank open his bathrobe. He spins to avoid her, falls over an end table, and spills both his and her drinks all over the robe in the process.

MURPH

You don't want to do this! You've got a family! An incredible daughter!

She looks at him.

CAROL

You're all wet again.

MURPH

Not a problem! I'm a pool man! I spend most of my life around wetness! I can't kiss you!

CAROL

(dismissive)

Murph. Start a fire. I'll get you another robe.

She leaves. Murph sits, stunned. He puts his face in his hands and then rubs his head.

MURPH

What is happening?

Carol pops back in, throws Murph a new robe.

CAROL

I'll check on your clothes.

(then)

Get on that fire, young man!

MURPH

I don't want to create any kind of romantic mood, Carol, I really think I should leave...

CAROL

Wearing a bathrobe? Just start the fire, I won't try to kiss you anymore, I swear.

She disappears again. Murph gets up, switches robes, and moves to the fireplace. He looks at it long and hard. Then, he takes a long match off the mantle and strikes it.

SMALL VOICE

Don't do that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Someone throws a bucket of water all over the fireplace, and Murph. Startled, Murph swings around to see KELLY, Carol's daughter, glaring at him. Next to her is an older African-American man, slightly effeminate, presumably the husband RAMONE.

MURPH
I'm cold and wet again.
(then)
Hello. I'm the pool man.

KELLY
You'll scare off Santa!

She throws the empty bucket at his feet. He has to do a quick little dance to avoid it, and nearly trips over it.

MURPH
Oh, ah, yeah, you're right. I forgot.
Santa. Guess I deserved that bucket of water.

RAMONE
What are you doing?

Somewhere down the hall, a toilet flushes.

MURPH
I, ah, fell in the pool, and then Carol...your wife...who I used to know many, many, many years ago...not as a girlfriend, or anything, we were just friends--

RAMONE
From acting class or something?

MURPH
(happy to stumble into this lie)
Yes. Acting class. She was very good. At acting.
(then, to Kelly)
Really sorry about the fire, Kelly. I forgot Santa was coming...wait, I thought he doesn't come until Christmas Eve?

KELLY
He could come early, you know.
(then)
It's okay. You didn't mean it. Santa won't be mad at you. He's really nice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Carol comes back in the living room, and covers her surprise at seeing Ramone and Kelly home early with the greatest of ease. She has been through this before. Then she sees Murph is all wet again.

CAROL

I really can't keep giving you all these robes, Murph.

MURPH

(to Ramone)

Oh, yeah, and Carol was kind enough to throw my clothes in the dryer...she lent me one of your robes...two of your robes...

CAROL

Ramone, Kelly. This is Murph.

At that moment, the dryer bell goes off.

CAROL (CONT'D)

There they are. I'll go grab them.

Carol leaves for the laundry room, and Murph is stuck with an awkward silence until she comes back and hands him his clothes.

MURPH

Ah, thanks so much. I'll just change and be out of the way, here.

(then, to the little girl)

I'm glad I didn't scare off Santa.

KELLY

Yeah! Close one.

MURPH

You caught me just in time...

For a split moment, Murph looks at her with a deep fondness. She should have been his. And she's a doll. Then, the moment gone, he hurries down the hall to the bathroom. Carol walks up to Ramone and gives him a big hug and a kiss.

CAROL

How did everything go?

RAMONE

Good, good.

He looks down the hall, a bit perplexed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

RAMONE (CONT'D)

That's not our pool man.

CAROL

He's the substitute. The usual guy is on vacation or sick or something.

RAMONE

Oh.

CAROL

And how's my big girl?

KELLY

That guy was going to light a fire!

CAROL

Well, he was wet and cold. What's wrong with that?

KELLY

He'll scare off Santa!

CAROL

Santa won't be coming for a couple of days, sweetie.

KELLY

Sometimes he comes early, you know. Why doesn't anyone seem to know this?

CAROL

I didn't realize.

KELLY

Well, get it together, Mom.

Carol smiles at her. Then at Ramone. She winks at him, and he winks back.

EXT CAROL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is loading up his truck, and in a hurry to get the hell out of there. Carol comes out of the house and jogs down to Murph's truck. She is holding a hundred dollar bill in her hand.

CAROL

Murph!

Murph turns to look at her, but he has nothing to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROL (CONT'D)

Sorry about all that. Ramone wasn't feeling well, they got home early. What can I say?

MURPH

Actually, I'd say his timing was impeccable. Look, I know it's none of my business, but...you're a lucky lady, Carol, you should take care of that. Your little girl...

CAROL

You're right.

MURPH

Yeah, I am.

CAROL

Aren't we friends, though? There's nothing wrong with that.

MURPH

I suppose not.

CAROL

We'll get together. On neutral ground, okay? Coffee or something?

MURPH

Sure.

CAROL

Sometime soon.

She hands him the hundred.

MURPH

What's this?

CAROL

Christmas bonus.

MURPH

I'm just the sub.

CAROL

I know that, Murph.

He looks at her, considers his options, then tucks the bill into his breast pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

Thanks.

He gets into his truck and starts it up. The radio is on, where it wasn't when he arrived, but he doesn't notice. Harry Chapin's "Taxi" is playing, just coming up on the last verse.

Carol watches him pull away.

INT MURPH'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Murph is driving away from his strange interlude with Carol, and Harry Chapin is singing on his radio:

HARRY CHAPIN (V.O.)

And she said we must get together, but I knew it would never be arranged. Then she hands me twenty dollars for a two-fifty fare...she said, "Harry, keep the change." Another man might have been angry, another man might have been hurt, but another man never would have let her go...I stashed the bill in my shirt.

Old Harry moves into the final chorus of his song, Murph not really noticing how perfectly bittersweet the whole moment really is. Then Murph looks in his rearview mirror to see Carol getting smaller and smaller...

Murph turns a corner and she's gone.

MURPH

If ever I needed a drink...

He drives on.

INT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - LATER

Murph is sitting at the bar, a few scotches into a binge. Scooter is leaning behind the bar, only a few feet from Murph. Santa and Jesus are in their usual seats, but both are quiet this time. Murph is in mid-sentence.

MURPH

Funny how things work out. You think you've been cursed, and it turns out you're better off.

SCOOTER

No one wants a cheatin' wife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

That's what I'm saying.

(then)

But I forgot how much I missed her until I saw her again. I mean, I wanted to kiss her. I really did.

SCOOTER

But you didn't.

MURPH

I couldn't.

SCOOTER

You're a good man.

Jesus and Santa begin to fake coughing to cover up their saying "bullshit" several times. Scooter shoots them a look, they quiet down. Murph looks at them, smiles.

MURPH

They're right this time around. Lusting after a married woman. That's not right.

SCOOTER

No, they are not. You can lust after whoever you want. If you act on that lust, that's a different issue. But you didn't. And you used to love her.

MURPH

Still do, I suppose. Love is pathetic, you know?

SCOOTER

Love is pathetic?

MURPH

She left me for money. How powerful is love, then? Can't beat money.

Murph then looks over at Jesus and Santa, both who do their best not to look back.

MURPH (CONT'D)

That's what a "Scrooge" is. That's what old Ebenezer did. He traded love for money. I never did that. I'm not a Scrooge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOOTER

Well, Scrooge hated the holidays, that's why people think you're like him. You hate the holidays.

MURPH

Yeah, but I have a good reason.

SCOOTER

What was it again?

MURPH

They took my job--

SCOOTER

(finishing the sentence)
--and your fiancée, I know. But you just said you're better off.

MURPH

It's the principal of the thing. She's all rich and rewarded for being selfish and cruel. Me? I got nothing.

SCOOTER

Do you really think she's happy?

MURPH

No. She's not happy. But neither am I! At least she's got a lot of really nice stuff. Nice stuff distracts you from your misery.

(then, remembering)

You should have felt these robes, it was like wearing a piece of heaven. And that mahogany bar? Damn. I'll bet she's got a bunch of plasma TV's, even.

Murph pulls a five out of his pile of money.

MURPH

One more for the road.

Murph looks at the money, the money from Carol.

MURPH (CONT'D)

At least she tips well.

He heads to the jukebox, and puts in a dollar. Santa and Jesus, watching him now, become horrified.

SANTA CLAUSE

No!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JESUS

Me Christ, no, don't let him do it!

"Willie and the Hand Jive" starts playing. Jesus and Santa moan in protest. Murph ignores them and sits himself back down.

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Murph opens his busted door, and it falls over into the living room. Murph, without any reaction whatsoever, puts it back upright without missing a beat.

MURPH

I need some water.

Murph goes into the kitchen.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Murph pours himself a glass of water and chugs it. Then he pours himself another. He looks at his answering machine. There are no messages. He considers, then picks up the receiver and dials. He listens for a moment, obviously waiting for an outgoing message to come to the beep.

MURPH

(into phone)

Hey, it's me. You're getting drunk dialed tonight, big time. I just got back from the bar with Scooter and Jesus and Santa. I can't wait to tell you about these guys, they're funny as hell...Scooter's a real life saver, too. I had a really weird night. Saw Carol. She's got that big rich husband and a cute little girl she always wanted. Then I had a bunch of scotch. I guess I shouldn't have done that, I got to be up for work in the morning, I'm going to be miserable. I got to get out of this slump, I will, I will. Carol gave me a hundred dollars. I took it. I need the money. I wish it was enough to buy you a plane ticket for that visit, but a hundred bucks ain't what it used to be.

Murph goes to lean on the counter, misses and falls to the floor. He jumps back up in a flash.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Woops. I fell--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then Murph hears a dial tone.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Oh, shit! None of that recorded? Son of a bitch.

He re-dials, but gets only a busy signal.

MURPH (CONT'D)

No way.

He tries again, and still the busy signal. He drops the phone, defeated.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Nice.

He tears off the next page on the day calendar, revealing that it is now December 23rd. He then stumbles off to the bedroom.

INT "OMAR'S PERFECT BLUE" POOL CLEANERS DEPOT - MORNING

Murph gets to work, groggy and miserable. He walks into the "office" and there is no one there. He hears something, and turns to see both Will and Gern getting into their trucks.

MURPH

Guys! Will! Gern!

They don't hear him, and they drive off. Murph looks around the place, realizing he is completely alone. He looks down at the coffee table, and sees a note with his name on it.

The note reads: "Dear Murph, Gino is out sick today, so you'll have to take his pools. Luckily, it is a light day for Gino, so it won't be too much more for you! Thanks, your buddy, Omar."

Murph looks up from the note, and groans.

INT MURPH'S TRUCK - LATER THAT DAY

Murph is driving down Ventura Boulevard, looking not just a bit down trodden. He sees a group of YOUNG CAROLERS on the sidewalk. He decides to pull over. He rolls down his window and listens.

The carolers are singing Ave Maria. It is quite beautiful. Murph's face softens. He catches the eye of a SINGING LITTLE GIRL, and she smiles at him as she hits a particularly wonderful note.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Murph smiles back, and gives her a little wave. She waves back, then beckons for him to get moving. He doesn't understand at first, but then he looks at the time, and knows he's already running late. He looks at the little girl, perplexed by her psychic ability. She gives him a wink, and he laughs, washed over with cheer. Amazed, but willing to accept this small miracle, he mouths a "thank you" to her. She watches him as he pulls away from the curb.

EXT BO STINSON'S BACKYARD POOL - DAY

Murph drops his equipment pool side and gets to work. Out of nowhere, Murph hears the voice of BO STINSON.

BO

Hey, could I trouble you for some help?

Murph turns to look at who's talking, and at first sees no one. He immediately becomes afraid.

MURPH

Are you one of the ghosts?

BO

What the hell are you talking about?

Murph then looks down at the wheelchair bound Bo. Bo has no arms and no legs, and he is missing his two front teeth.

MURPH

(covering)

Sorry, guess I'm overtired. I've been having these dreams. About ghosts.

BO

I know a good dream shrink, if you want his number.

MURPH

Okay. Thanks.

BO

I've got a card inside, I think.

MURPH

Well, no rush, I've got to do the pool.

BO

Look, I hate to trouble you, and I know this isn't exactly in your job description, but I need sort of an assist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

Oh, yeah, sure, of course. What can I do?

BO

My nurse stepped out to get some stuff for my big time Hollywood holiday extravaganza, I do it every year, and I guess he got stuck in traffic and now I'm left in the lurch, so to speak.

MURPH

I'm...I don't...

BO

Just follow me.

MURPH

No problem.

Steering the electric wheel chair with a mouth piece, Bo heads toward his house. Murph follows, very unsure. Bo pulls on a second mouth piece, a remote control that opens the sliding glass door leading into his house.

INT BO STINSON'S BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Bo cruises down his hallway at a rapid pace, Murph having a hard time keeping up. Bo makes a hard left into a bathroom. Murph stops in the bathroom doorway.

INT BO STINSON'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

MURPH

Should I just wait out here?

BO

No, actually, this is where I need your help. If it's too much, I understand, but if you could see fit--

MURPH

Oh, yeah, okay, no problem. Ah, what should I...

BO

First step would be to get these shorts off me.

Murph hesitates.

BO (CONT'D)

I don't want to seem pushy, but time is tight with this thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Murph unbuckles Bo's pants and takes them off, doing everything he can to keep from looking down at Bo's naked lower half.

BO

We're off and running. Now, you're going to have to lift me out of this chair. Thanks for this, so much. I'm in a bit of pain, here.

Murph lifts Bo, who is actually quite heavy, with a high degree of difficulty.

BO

Sorry I'm so heavy. My nurse is a weight lifter, actually. Big, big arms.

Bo looks over Murph's shoulder at the toilet.

BO (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah, you've got to get the lid.

Murph nearly capsizes as he awkwardly struggles to get the toilet seat open for his new best friend.

BO (CONT'D)

Easy, easy! Precious cargo here!

MURPH

Sorry, sorry.

BO

Forget it. You're doing a good thing, friend.

Murph is already sweating profusely, under extreme physical duress.

MURPH

(panting)

So, what, do I just put you down on there?

BO

Only if you want to clog the toilet!

MURPH

With what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BO
With me, I'll fall in there, and there
I'll be stuck.

MURPH
Oh, right, right.

Bo laughs uncomfortably at his lame joke, an attempt at breaking the tension, then he's instantly sorry he did so.

BO (CONT'D)
Sorry. That was completely inappropriate.
Just trying to be funny.

MURPH (CONT'D)
No, no, that was funny. I'm just not
paying attention, I guess. So. How does
this work, then?

BO
You're gonna have to hold me.

MURPH
Of course, of course.

Murph is in a state of mild shock, and does what he's told in a somewhat mechanical fashion. However, it is not easy to suspend Bo over the toilet and maintain his balance at the same time. He puts a hand on the back of the toilet to brace himself and get some leverage, but his hand slips on the porcelain and they tumble to the ground.

BO
Whoa! Whoa! Yikes, man, you're gonna kill
me!

Murph scrambles to pick Bo back up. Straining every muscle, especially his back, Murph steadies Bo over the toilet.

MURPH
This right?

BO
(hurting from the fall)
Yeah, yeah, I'm okay.

Murph waits for Bo to do his thing. He is now drenched in sweat and his eyes are bulging with an almost violent form of horror. Bo is silent, trying to concentrate.

MURPH
You okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BO

Yeah, yeah, the fall was just sort of a shock to the system. Give me a second to get back on track.

They are silent for a few seconds.

MURPH

Are we doing number one or number two here?

BO

Two, yeah, sorry.

(then, politely)

Can you not pressure me, though? We'll be here all day.

Murph shuts up. Bo bears down and scrunches up his face. He makes a terrible groan, which is immediately followed by an unbelievable fart. Murph grimaces at the smell.

BO (CONT'D)

We're getting there.

Bo strains and moans. Another huge fart, this one sustaining for quite some time, emits from Bo. Murph is looking on the verge of pained tears.

BO (CONT'D)

Up! Up! Here we go!

Murph waits for the sound of shit hitting water, but there is nothing.

BO (CONT'D)

False alarm.

MURPH

Should I put you back in the chair?

BO

No, no. I gotta do this. There's a monster in me and I need to get it out. I'm so sorry, man, hang in there.

Murph's arms, one propped on the toilet and the other holding up Bo, start to shake with extreme fatigue. Bo then finds the strength for one big push. He nearly screams in ecstasy as his bowls finally move.

BO (CONT'D)

Oh, God, Hallelujah!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Murph can only wait silently as Bo drops what seems an endless amount of "kids off at the pool".

BO (CONT'D)
Oh, man, this is genius!

MURPH
I guess let me know when you're set.

BO
Yeah, good, I'm done. But I gotta ask you for one more thing.

MURPH
Uh-huh?

BO
You gotta wipe.

Although it seemed like it had already reached the threshold, Murph's expression gives way to even more terror.

INT BO STINSON'S DEN - LATER

Murph is sitting on the sofa, staring blankly at the television...which is not on. Bo is next to him, looking very apologetic.

BO
I'm Bo, by the way. I'm sorry I was so rude. It was just, kind of an emergency. What's your name?

MURPH
Murph.

BO
Murph. Good name. You want an egg nog? I could go for one. They're right over there.

Bo nods his head towards a small refrigerator in the corner of the room. Murph goes over to the fridge, pulls out the egg nog and a couple of chilled glasses. He then looks for the brandy, of which there is none. Bo looks at him strangely.

BO
The Jameson's is right in front of you.

Murph takes the bottle and mixes the Irish whiskey and egg nog together in the glasses. He doesn't think to correct Bo about what booze is supposed to be in egg nog, doesn't think to say "no" to the drink he swore he'd never drink again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He is still in shock. And he needs a drink, no matter what it is. Bo smiles as Murph vacantly takes a sip.

BO
Good man, good man. There's my tray right over there.

Murph grabs the "breakfast in bed" tray and puts it on the sofa in front of Bo. He then sets the egg nog down on the tray. Murph plops back down on the sofa.

BO
I'm going to need a straw, actually, if you don't mind.

Wordlessly, Murph gets up and goes back to the fridge where there are a couple of big decorative mugs filled with straws. Murph puts the straw in Bo's drink, and then puts the straw in Bo's mouth. Bo takes a good long suck on the egg nog.

BO
That's the spirit of the holidays, right there!

Bo has a good laugh, and then has another suck off the straw. Murph acknowledges none of this. They sit in an awkward silence for a few moments.

BO
(trying to break the ice)
You could come to my Hanukkah party if you wanted. I mean, if you don't have too many more pools to get to...

Murph barely squeaks in acknowledgement of the invite. They are silent for a few more moments.

BO
So...you gonna come by? I mean, do you want to?

Murph looks at him.

MURPH
I'm sort of way behind at this point, so I'll be working real late.

BO
Well, you can skip mine, you've already been here too long. That should knock some time off, right?

The phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

Should I get that for you?

BO

Of course not.

(then, calling out)

Answer.

There is a clicking noise and the phone stops ringing. Bo turns his head and begins talking at a small speaker next to the phone.

BO (CONT'D)

Hello?

HUSKY MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Hey, Bo. I got some bad news.

BO

They're out of Menorahs? No way!

HUSKY MALE VOICE ON PHONE

No, no, not that. I got the Menorahs. But my car just died on me. Triple A won't be here for two or three hours they say.

BO

Ah, no, man. I got the party! What the hell am I supposed to do?

HUSKY MALE VOICE ON PHONE

I don't know what to tell ya, buddy, I'm real sorry.

BO

Not your fault, not your fault. You know what, you've been through hell, just take the rest of the day off. Okay?

HUSKY MALE VOICE ON PHONE

Thanks, Bo.

BO

It's nothing. There's nothing worse than car trouble.

HUSKY MALE VOICE ON PHONE

All right, then, I'll see you tomorrow.

BO

Tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Bo's nurse hangs up, and there is a dial tone, then it clicks off.

BO (CONT'D)
 Oh, boy. I don't know what I'm going to do.
 (then)
 Well, I've kept you long enough, my friend, I'll let you go.

MURPH
 Well, good to meet you.

Murph gets up from the couch.

MURPH (CONT'D)
 Have fun with the holiday party.

BO
 I think I'll have to cancel it, sadly. My arms and legs aren't going to come back until tomorrow.

MURPH
 I'm sorry. Well, I gotta go.

Murph hurries out of the room.

INT ONE OF BO'S GIANT HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Murph heads down the hallway, then stops in his tracks.

MURPH
 (to himself)
 No, no, Murph. Don't get on some kind of guilt trip on this. You don't do that anymore. You already helped him take a dump, and that's way beyond the call of duty as it is. Remember what giving gets you.

He starts to move again, then stops, angry at himself.

MURPH (CONT'D)
 Dammit! Dammit! Be strong! Don't help the handicapped!

He tries to move forward, but can't.

MURPH (CONT'D)
 I hate myself!

He turns around and heads back to the den.

INT BO STINSON'S DEN - CONTINUOUS

Murph walks through the door, Bo still sitting on the couch, looking a bit depressed.

MURPH

Hey, why don't you let me help you set up for that party. I'll get you going. Then I'll get back to work. Sound good?

BO

I can't put you out like that--

MURPH

Forget it. What needs doing?

A giant, ecstatic grin lights up Bo's expression.

INT BO STINSON'S BALLROOM - LATER

Murph is mixing up some punch in a giant bowl. When he finishes that, he begins setting up platters of bagels, vegetables, and other appetizers. He is obviously unbelieving of what he has been stuck doing. He stops to take a breath, and he looks around at the giant ballroom.

Bo comes into the room, his wheelchair whirring at breakneck speed across the marble floor to the buffet table.

BO

Hey, Murph, brotha! You are the best! This is going to be the best holiday party of all time! Hey, come with me, I've got something for ya!

Before Murph can protest, Bo spins around and heads back the way he came. Murph can only sprint after him.

INT BO STINSON'S GIANT WALK-IN CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Bo and Murph stand in front of a large closet filled wrapped presents of all different shapes and sizes.

BO

You are an angel, and I would like to give you something! These are all for my friends, but I'm going to give one to you. I'll just have to give someone a rain check.

MURPH

Bo, I can't--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BO

Of course you can! Pick whatever one looks good.

Murph looks at all the presents, overwhelmed.

MURPH

Bo, I don't want to take one of your friend's gifts. I don't want to do that.

BO

You are a friend. My newest. It's no big deal.

(then, trying to convince Murph)

I probably have some extras anyway. I usually wind up with extras. Buy for someone twice on accident or whatever. Go for it!

MURPH

Okay, okay. I'll just take a small one.

He reaches for a very small, square gift.

BO

Good choice. The small ones are mostly diamonds.

Murph immediately pulls back.

MURPH

Maybe a medium one, then.

He reaches for a medium-sized gift. Before he gets to it, his cell phone rings.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Woops. Sorry.

He answers the phone.

MURPH (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Oh, hey, Omar. Yeah, I'm sorry. I got caught up with some extra stuff at Bo Stinson's. What extra stuff?

(then, covering)

Ahh, the pool...filter was clogged. Very clogged. And then the pool needed some, ah, you know, cosmetic touches done. Yeah, yeah. I'm on my way out, I swear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He hangs up, looks apologetically at Bo.

BO

I'm so sorry, I'm getting you in trouble.

MURPH

It's okay. I guess I should get going.

BO

Well, grab your gift and get out of here.

MURPH

Maybe one of your friends can help you finish up with the party set-up when they get here?

BO

No, no, that's impossible. But that's okay. You got enough done, I think.

MURPH

What? I don't get it. Impossible?

BO

Well, they're all like me.

(then, remembering)

Except, of course, Kull. He's blind.

Murph stares at Bo, fighting again with his conscience.

INT MURPH'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is sitting in his truck, just starting it up to leave. He is obviously still grappling with leaving Bo alone with his party.

MURPH

(to himself)

Just put it in gear and get going. It's a very easy thing to do. In seconds, you'll be gone, and you never have to come back here again.

He puts the truck in drive. He tries to hit the accelerator, and can't bring himself to do it.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Murph! Murph! You'll lose your job! You aren't a giver anymore! Not a giver!

Murph looks at the wrapped present sitting on his passenger seat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH (CONT'D)

(changing tune)

And everyone at Bo's party is in a wheel
chair except for Kull, who's blind!
Dammit! Why? Why me?

He turns off the truck and angrily gets out, slamming the door. He heads back up to the house.

INT BO STINSON'S BALL ROOM - A BIT LATER

Murph is standing in the middle of the ball room next to Bo, who is now in a tux. They are silent for a few moments. Bo is obviously anxious for the guests to arrive.

BO

Thanks so much for getting this thing on me. Does it work, do you think?

MURPH

You look great.

BO

It's actually a little uncomfortable.

MURPH

It's a tux. It's supposed to be uncomfortable.

BO

Oh. Looking good can be a pain in the ass.

MURPH

Yes, it can.

Murph's cell phone rings. He looks at the caller ID.

BO

Who is it?

MURPH

My boss again.

BO

Are you in trouble? You should go.

MURPH

Damage is done. I want to see this party through, my friend.

BO

You know how good a guy you are?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

I swore up and down I wasn't going to be this nice anymore. Nice guys finish last.

BO

Maybe, but they do finish. Any I'll bet they feel better about finishing than any of the front runners, you know?

MURPH

Maybe.

Then, a gigantic doorbell sounds.

BO

(taking a nervous breath)
Go let 'em in.

Murph strides across the huge floor, and opens two gigantic doors with as much flair as possible. Through the doorway walks a blind man, KULL, and his seeing eye dog. The dog snaps violently at Murph. Murph jumps back.

BO (CONT'D)

Kull!

KULL

Bo!
(then, to dog)
Let's go, boy.

The dog leads Kull to Bo. Kull and Bo share a physically trying embrace.

KULL (CONT'D)

Happy happies, my good man.

BO

Get yourself a punch.

MURPH

Let me get it.

KULL

Who's that?

BO

That's Murph. He's a friend of mine, helping out with the party.

Murph flies across the floor, gets a punch, and gives it to Kull. Kull doesn't thank him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Then, more guests arrive: about THIRTY PEOPLE IN WHEEL CHAIRS. They all greet Bo with great enthusiasm. Murph smiles as he sees what a great time Bo is having.

BO
Let's get the punch flowing!

MURPH
Let' hit the buffet table!

BO
This is Murph! He's my holiday hero!

Everyone smiles at Murph and says hello as they head to the buffet table. Murph helps everyone get some food and beverages, as a lot of them really can't help themselves. He sets people up with cups and straws, puts plates of food on their laps and hand feeds many of them. He is hectic, but seems to be enjoying the tasks.

INT BO STINSON'S BALL ROOM - LATER

The party is now in full swing. Murph is standing behind the buffet table, keeping it as neat as possible. Bo is holding court, laughing along with his guests as he tells funny stories. Kull approaches Murph, obviously incredibly drunk. He keeps bumping into his seeing eye dog.

Murph watches, bemused, as Kull gets to the buffet table and smashes into it. Murph saves three crystal glasses from falling to the floor. Kull, after bumping into the table, turns completely around and faces the other direction.

KULL
(slurring)
Murphy, my good man!

MURPH
Over here, Kull.

Kull turns back around, does this clumsy trip over the dog with an amazingly graceful recovery, and then holds out his punch glass to be filled.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Are you sure you want another one?

KULL
Oh, for the love of God, I do this but once a year!

MURPH
You get drunk once a year?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KULL

I get drunk *here* once a year. I get drunk every day. You might, too, if you were blind, there, Mr. Judgemental.

MURPH

I'm not judging you, Kull, I just don't want you to get hurt.

KULL

Well, fuck you very much.

Then Kull leans into Murph, and talks like he has this big secret that will ruin Murph forever.

KULL (CONT'D)

I know who you really are, pal.

MURPH

Oh, yeah?

KULL

You're the pool man.

MURPH

How do you know that?

KULL

Keen sense of smell. Unless they're now making a cologne that smells like chlorine.

MURPH

Well, Kull, it's really no secret. I'm wearing my pool cleaning uniform.

Kull puts a hand to feel Murph's uniform.

KULL

What? Why would you wear this to a big, fancy party like this?

MURPH

Well, I came here to clean the pool. Bo needed some help because his nurse's car broke down.

KULL

How long have you been here?

MURPH

Most of the day, Kull.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KULL

You don't have any other pools to clean?

MURPH

No, no. I'm sort of getting behind.

KULL

Couldn't you get fired?

MURPH

It's possible.

KULL

Well, listen here, pool man. If you're doing this because you think you can get a piece of Bo's money, you can forget it.

MURPH

That's not what I'm doing.

KULL

Oh, right. Sure. You're willing to lose your job for no reason? No one is that stupid. Don't try to take advantage of Bo. You'll have to answer to me, fella.

Kull turns to go, trips over his dog again, and falls flat on his face, passed out. The dog just sits there and pants happily. Murph tosses him a cold cut. Bo comes up behind Murph.

BO

He does that every year.

MURPH

He's a belligerent drunk, I'll tell you that.

BO

It's not the booze, it's the time of year. He thinks people don't even want to look at him, no one wants to be reminded of misfortune during the warm and fuzzies. I tell him he should be grateful for all his friends here, his girlfriend--she's a doll.

MURPH

He's got a girlfriend?

BO

Yeah, she was here a second ago. I'm not sure where she went.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Murph's cell rings again. He looks at it, and frowns.

MURPH

Look, Bo, if I don't get back to work soon, I'm going to get fired.

BO

Yeah, yeah. Get out of here. You've done more than I could ever thank you for. I hope you feel good about yourself, Murph.

Murph thinks about this for a moment.

MURPH

I'll tell you, Bo, I hung around here today because I think you're a good guy. That's all there is to it. I'm not here to feel good about myself or anything. I--

Murph stops himself from saying anything else.

MURPH (CONT'D)

I better get back to work. Hey, I'll see ya.

BO

Yeah, see ya. Thanks for everything. Really.

Murph heads out.

EXT BO STINSON'S BACKYARD POOL - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is gathering up his equipment. LOUISE, a thirty-something black-haired beauty, is sitting on a bench by the pool, crying. Murph looks at her, curious as to who she is and why she's here. She does not appear to have the physical challenges of everyone else at the party.

MURPH

You all right?

She doesn't acknowledge him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Excuse me? Can I help you?

Still no answer. Murph moves to her and touches her shoulder. She jumps, startled.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She moves her lips, as if saying something, but she makes no sound...she is obviously mute. Murph realizes this and begins to sign to her.

MURPH (CONT'D)
 (in sign language)
 I'm the pool man. Are you okay?

She is distracted from her crying when she sees that he can speak in sign language.

MURPH (CONT'D)
 (in sign language)
 Why were you crying? You look like you're hating the holidays as much I do.

LOUISE
 (signing)
 I don't hate the holidays. I hate Kull.

MURPH
 (signing)
 Believe me, I can understand that. You must be his girlfriend?

LOUISE
 (signing)
 Why does he hate everything so much when he's got me?

She sits back down, and he sits next to her.

MURPH
 (signing)
 I guess some people just don't know what they've got.

Murph can't believe he's preaching something he doesn't practice, but it seems to make her feel better. She smiles faintly.

MURPH (CONT'D)
 (signing)
 You're a pretty lady, and you're obviously a nice lady. If Kull doesn't get that, then someone else will.

LOUISE
 (signing)
 But I love Kull.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

(signing, unsure)

Maybe give him some time, he'll come around. But don't give him too much time, now. Sorry to be the one to tell you that. Love can really suck sometimes.

She looks at him, doesn't know what to say.

MURPH (CONT'D)

(signing)

Well, I've got to go.

Murph gets up to go, and she suddenly gets up with him. She touches his hand, which obviously affects him.

LOUISE

(signing)

Thank you.

MURPH

(not signing)

You're welcome.

He looks at her for a beat, gives her a reassuring smile, then quietly goes.

EXT CURB OUTSIDE BO'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Murph finishes up putting his equipment back in the truck. A large station wagon with its back open is parked just behind his vehicle. Bo comes rolling down his front driveway, pulling a small trailer filled with hot lunches behind him.

Murph watches as Bo pulls up behind the station wagon.

MURPH

Bo?

BO

Murphy? You still here?

MURPH

What are you doing? Why aren't you up at your party?

BO

They'll be fine on their own. I gotta take these hot lunches to some people. There's only so much holiday time to do what I gotta do, you know. Can't party all my time away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

How are you going to get those lunches in the wagon? Someone coming down to give you a hand?

BO

I'm hoping Kull will come to soon.

MURPH

Bo! Damn! How can you be so good? If I was you, I wouldn't be. I really wouldn't.

BO

Really?

MURPH

Really! Life has fucked you over! You need to stop all this giving and start doing some taking! You deserve it!

BO

Take what?

MURPH

I don't know. Take more time for yourself. Enjoy your big house and all your fancy things. Get a little selfish! Be a rich guy, for god's sake!

BO

But...I don't want to. It's the holidays.

Murph just stares at Bo for a moment. Then, wordlessly, Murph starts loading the hot lunches into the back of the wagon. Then:

MURPH (CONT'D)

I don't suppose Kull is going to do the driving for you?

Bo smiles. Murph, again wordlessly, finishes up loading the lunches, then helps Bo out of his chair and into the car. Then Murph struggles to detach the trailer from the wheelchair in order to get it into the car, but he can't do it.

BO

Leave it.

Murph does and gets behind the wheel of Bo's wagon. They pull away.

EXT VALLEY STREET, NEXT TO THE LA RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

The wagon pulls up to an entrance to an LA River access road. There is a fence with a lock on it, blocking the way.

INT BO'S STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

MURPH

We can't go down there.

BO

There's a key for the padlock in the glove compartment.

Murph grabs the key and gets out, unlocks the gate and swings it open.

EXT VALLEY STREET, NEXT TO THE LA RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Murph gets back in the car, and drives through the gate and down the road.

EXT LA RIVER ACCESS ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The wagon stops just before the opening of a large tunnel.

INT BO'S STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Bo looks at Murph.

BO

It's all you.

Murph looks at him a brief moment, then gets out.

INT DARK TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Murph has as big a stack of the hot lunches as he can carry. He walks into the tunnel with great trepidation. Is this a good idea? Is someone going to jump out of the shadows and attack him?

Suddenly, a figure appears out of the shadows, startling Murph. He manages to keep a hold of the lunches. The HOMELESS WOMAN takes a lunch and runs off. Then, SEVERAL MORE HOMELESS PEOPLE grab the rest of the lunches. Some mutter thank you's, but most don't. They just disappear back into the shadows.

Murph stands for a few moments, taken aback. Then he turns to go get more lunches. When he gets to the mouth of the tunnel, he looks at Bo sitting in the car. Bo is weeping.

Murph walks up to Bo.

INT BO'S STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Murph puts his face in Bo's window.

MURPH

What is it?

BO

It's all so bittersweet. Helping them out. I feel terrible about how good I have it every time I come down here.

Murph doesn't know what to say.

INT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Murph is at the bar, having a scotch. Scooter is leaning up against the liquor shelves, cleaning a glass. Santa and Jesus are in their usual seats, staring angrily at Murph.

SCOOTER

Sounds like a helluva day.

MURPH

The helluva day's gonna come tomorrow when I lose my job. Charity doesn't pay.

SCOOTER

I'm sure if you talk to your boss, he'll let it slide.

MURPH

I don't know. I'm an idiot. I shouldn't have done that.

SANTA CLAUSE

Why don't you leave?

JESUS

No one likes you.

SCOOTER

I like him. Now cut the shit, fellas.

JESUS

Oh, yeah, dis the regulars for some drifter.

SCOOTER

He's not a drifter, he comes here every night now.

(then, to Murph)

Ignore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

Ignore what?

(then)

You know, Scooter, truth is, if he wasn't in a wheelchair, I wouldn't have helped him at all. It was a guilt thing.

SCOOTER

Well, if he wasn't in a wheelchair, then he probably wouldn't have needed any help. So maybe guilt is a good thing, huh?

SANTA CLAUSE

Out.

JESUS

Get out.

SCOOTER

Guys.

SANTA CLAUSE

(gesturing wildly)

We hate him!

He knocks his drink into Jesus' lap.

JESUS

(angry at Santa)

What the fuck!

He gets up and shoves Santa. Santa falls behind the bar, and then springs back up to clock Jesus in the face. This immediately turns into a major bar brawl. Jesus throws his drink at Santa, Santa shoves Jesus against the wall, they tackle each other into the jukebox.

SCOOTER

Guys! Guys! Come on, you're wrecking the place!

Scooter jumps across the bar and pulls them apart. Murph watches in disbelief. Santa and Jesus look at Scooter, a bit ashamed.

SANTA CLAUSE

Sorry, Doctor Scootles, we got carried away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS

The holiday hater makes me crazy,
Scooteronomy. All this talk about giving
being evil! I can't stand it.

MURPH

Why do Jesus and Santa hate me so much?

SCOOTER

(to Santa and Jesus)
Just shake hands, and pick up the mess,
will ya?

The two shake hands.

JESUS

What are we doing? This is brother
against brother, here.

Santa turns his rage towards Murph.

SANTA CLAUSE

You're right, lets kill this problem at
the source, huh?

SCOOTER

Guys.

Jesus and Santa start moving slowly, threateningly, towards
Murph. Murph gets up, afraid.

MURPH

Come on, we don't want to do this.

JESUS

Yes we do.

SANTA CLAUSE

In the name of cheer and giving.

They lunge at Murph. He dodges them, and they both topple
over bar stools. Scooter catches Murph from falling himself.

SCOOTER

Maybe you better get out of here.

MURPH

Sorry, I'm really sorry.

SCOOTER

Not your fault.

Santa and Jesus get up, ready to charge again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

Go.

Murph runs out the door.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Murph, looking beat, is just getting back from the bar. He sees that the light is blinking on his answering machine. The display says he has one message.

MURPH

Finally calling me back, huh?

He hits the play button, but it's not who he thought it was.

VOICE ON MACHINE

Hello, Mr. Dunn. This is Doctor Kane's receptionist, Zed. Just confirming your appointment for tomorrow at eight in the AM.

MURPH

Doctor Kane?

VOICE ON MACHINE

I'm sure you remember you had an appointment with your regular physician.

MURPH

My palm pilot was stolen, I don't remember a goddamn thing.

VOICE ON MACHINE

He was called out of town, and referred you to us. Anyway, your test results are back, and he wanted to make sure you got them.

MURPH

Man, I can't remember anything without that goddamn thing. What test?

VOICE ON MACHINE

We're in the medical building on Van Nuys, just north of the freeway. We look forward to seeing you. Thanks.

The machine beeps. Murph is perplexed.

MURPH

Glad you called.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He picks up the phone, looks at it for a second, then decides to dial.

MURPH (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hey, it's me. I've done it again! Gave myself into oblivion! I thought I had nothing left to lose, but looks like I'll be trading in this crappy little apartment for a dark-ass tunnel by the LA river! But what do you care? You never return my calls! Probably off doing your oh-so-important charity work! Well, don't bother calling me or visiting or sending me a letter or anything, because I don't want to associate with anyone who is on the brink of giving themselves to death! Got it?! I don't want you in my life at all! Crazy giver! Bye!

He hangs up the phone, then tears off the next page of his day calendar. It is now December 24th, Christmas Eve. Murph slumps off to bed.

INT DR. KANE'S WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Murph walks into the office, and approaches the reception desk. ZED, a pleasant looking young man, greets him with a smile.

ZED

You must be Murphy Dunn.

MURPH

And you must be Zed.

ZED

You're the first appointment of the day, so the wait shouldn't be long.

MURPH

Do I have to fill anything out?

ZED

Nah.

Zed gets up and disappears into the back office. Murph, alone in the waiting room, sits down and picks up a magazine.

MURPH

(glancing at the clock)

Please, I don't want to be late for work, here, guys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He opens the magazine, and is about to start reading, when DR. KANE, a mid-forties skinny dude with a playful expression, opens the door to the rest of his office.

DR. KANE

Hey, there! Oh, brother, I love me some
Cat Fancy, too!

Murph looks at him strangely. Dr. Kane nods at the magazine he is reading. Murph, for the first time, realizes he is in fact looking at a copy of *Cat Fancy*.

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

Well, come on, now, we don't want you to
be late for work.

Murph gets up and follows Dr. Kane into the office.

INT DR. KANE'S EXAMINATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Kane opens the exam room door for Murph.

DR. KANE

Grab a seat on the exam table, there.

Murph hops up.

MURPH

You know, doctor, I don't even remember
getting any tests done...

DR. KANE

No kidding. We all get so many tests here
and there, it's hard to keep track.
Imagine what it's like being a doctor!
Woo! Nothing but tests day in and day
out.

The doctor moves into a room, slips on a banana peel, and proceeds to nearly knock over almost everything in the room, a very adept piece of physical comedy. Murph can only stare at him. The doctor recovers, and looks to Murph for some applause.

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

Hey, now, that's one of my best bits.
Doctor slips on a banana peel? Classic.
You don't like it?

MURPH

I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were
doing a...bit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. KANE

Yeah, yeah, I know. Everyone expects doctors to be all somber and whatnot. But, this being the Valley, I get a lot of entertainers in here, I got to keep them laughing.

MURPH

Entertainers?

DR. KANE

Oh, yeah. There's a whole movie industry in this town. You heard of it?

Dr. Kane gives a hearty laugh and slaps Murph on the knee. Murph does his best to give a polite chuckle.

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah. Clooney was in here last week on account of his bad knees. Jake Busey came in yesterday, had a headache. I told him it was probably because of his dad's show.

(another hearty laugh)

He loved that one. Yep, all kinds of stars in here. John Carpenter, the director. Jennifer Love Hewitt. Peter North. A lot of people, brother.

Murph says nothing, just looks at the doctor warily.

MURPH

So, my tests?

DR. KANE

Good call, good call. Let's talk about that.

The Doctor then opens up a cabinet, and takes out a grapefruit and two kiwi fruits. He juggles them for a few moments, taking great pride in his skill. Then, grapefruit first, he slams them down on the table next to Murph.

MURPH

That's, ah...that was really good.

DR. KANE

Thanks.

Then the doctor becomes deadly serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

Look, Murph, it's killing me to be the one to tell you this.

MURPH

Tell me what?

DR. KANE

Do you remember the x-ray your doctor took?

MURPH

I...no, not really.

DR. KANE

Well, it was six months ago, just a routine thing.

MURPH

X-rays are routine?

DR. KANE

At your age, sure.

MURPH

I really don't remember.

DR. KANE

That's not the point, anyway. The point is, the results came in.

MURPH

After six months?

DR. KANE

Apparently there was some kind of problem with one of the employees at the lab, and a whole mess of these things got misplaced.

MURPH

You're kidding me.

DR. KANE

No, no. I don't do that. I do physical comedy and jokey bits, but I don't do the *Jackass* sort of mean-spirited thing. I mean, I think it's funny, just not in a doctor's office type of situation.

MURPH

So, what the hell is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DR. KANE

What?

MURPH

The results?

DR. KANE

Yes, yes. Right.

The doctor pauses, and looks down at the fruit.

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

Well, there's a tumor in your belly.

MURPH

A what?

DR. KANE

A tumor in your belly.

(then, pointing at the fruit)

The size of a grapefruit. Or two kiwis.

Murph looks at the fruit in horror.

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

Shape-wise, it's more like the two kiwis, here. Next to each other. That's why I brought those in. Didn't feel like the grapefruit would be enough.

There is a long pause of silence while Murph stares at the fruit, taking in the terrible news.

MURPH

What does this mean?

DR. KANE

Well. That's the thing, I guess. If the test hadn't been misplaced six months ago, I'd be telling you that you have six months to live.

MURPH

What?

DR. KANE

I'm sorry, Murph. I don't think you'll be alive to see Christmas.

MURPH

Christmas is tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DR. KANE

I know, brother. I'm very sorry.

MURPH

But...but I feel fine.

DR. KANE

The upside to this type of tumor is that the pain doesn't happen until right at the end, and it'll be pretty quick.

The doctor pulls a bottle of pills out of his pocket and hands them to Murph.

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

When it hits, just take some of these. They'll make it somewhat more bearable.

MURPH

Should I check into a hospital?

DR. KANE

Sure. Why not? They've got TV and those neat beds that go up and down...and applesauce. Go for it. I love hospitals.

Murph is aghast.

MURPH

How could you do all those jokes if this is what you had to tell me?

The doctor looks ashamed.

DR. KANE

I guess when you're a funny man, you have a tendency to hide behind your comedy. I, ah, didn't mean anything by it, it was just the only way I could cope. My wife gets mad at me about the same thing...

But Murph has stopped listening. He has picked up the fruit, and he is staring at it, in a state of shock. The doctor looks at him, concerned.

DR. KANE (CONT'D)

The fruit is yours, by the way. You can take it with you. It's fresh.

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Murph comes into the apartment, and violently. He stands in the middle of his living room, and freaks out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

Holy fuck! No way! No fucking way! Why,
what did I do? What the hell did I do!

He knocks over what little he has in the apartment, in an attempt to get out his rage. This does him no good.

MURPH (CONT'D)

(looking up to the heavens)
Dad? Dad? Where are you now? Can you
please tell me why? Why the fuck do I
gotta die?

Murph then collapses onto the floor.

MURPH (CONT'D)

I swear I was just starting to feel all
right about having nothing. This is so
uncool.

Murph is silent for a moment, just staring forlornly into nothingness. Then:

MURPH

What am I gonna do? I've got no time.
I've got no goddamn time. One day.
(he pause for another moment)
Scooter. That's it. I'm going to get
drunk. I'd say I deserve it. I am going
to get absolutely plastered! Hammered!
One-hundred percent FACED!

Murph then jumps up, and goes into the kitchen.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Murph picks up the phone, and dials work. He is red with anger.

MURPH

(into phone)
Hello, Omar. I'm just calling to say...I
QUIT! You were probably going to fire me
anyway, because I only got to one pool
yesterday...but let me tell you
something, that is just plain lousy! I've
always been the best you have, and you
know it! It was just one stupid day! And
I was doing some good with my day, by the
way, helping out those more unfortunate
than me. And let me tell ya, you may not
think it, but they do exist!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH (CONT'D)

And you were going to fire me! Shame on you! You son of a bitch!

Murph pauses, realizing his anger has got the best of him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

(complete change of tone)

I'm sorry, Omar, sorry. I just...I had a bad morning. Anyway, I can't work for you anymore. Sorry I can't give you any notice...there's just no time. I'll be leaving tomorrow. Won't be back. It was nice working for you.

(then)

I'll be spending my last day in the Valley at Scoot's Boot Scoot. It's a bar. If you want to come. I'll buy you a beer. You like beer. Well...see ya.

Murph hangs up, picks up his keys, and heads back out the door.

INT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - DAY

Murph walks into the empty bar, looks around, and then heads to the jukebox. He digs in his pockets for coins, drops them in the slot, and then goes to make his selection. Nothing happens. He realizes the power is off on the machine.

MURPH

Whoops.

Scooter comes in from a back room.

SCOOTER

Sorry, we're closed.

Murph turns around, and Scooter sees who it is.

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

Oh, hey, Murph, what are you doing here so early? You get off work?

MURPH

Not exactly. I'm no longer employed.

SCOOTER

He fired you? For real?

MURPH

No, no, I quit. I mean, I can't work there anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCOOTER

Why not?

MURPH

I got some news. I mean, I found something out.

SCOOTER

What?

Murph looks at him long and hard, and then decides not to burden him with the bad news.

MURPH

Nothing, really. I just...I have to move. Relocate.

SCOOTER

Where? Why?

MURPH

(struggling for a story)
Oh, this old friend of mine, she's real sick. She needs help, you know. I thought I'd just go help. So this is my last day in town, I leave tomorrow.

Scooter just looks at him, seemingly shocked.

SCOOTER

I don't know what to say.

MURPH

Nothing to say, really. I gotta go, end of story. No big deal.

SCOOTER

Your friend's sick, Murphy. That's a big deal. I'm very, very sorry.

MURPH

Oh, I'm sure she'll pull through, she just needs someone to help her out for the time being.

SCOOTER

Well, will you be coming back after she's better?

Murph realizes his lie isn't working out too well, and he can't come up with any decent cover.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

No.

SCOOTER

No?

MURPH

Yeah, I just can't. Okay?

(then)

Any way I can get a drink?

SCOOTER

I'm closed, Murph. The bar's all locked up.

MURPH

It's my last day in town. Why don't we hang? You know, a proper good-bye.

SCOOTER

I'm closed for the holiday. I'm about to take off to see some family.

There is a long pause as they awkwardly look at each other.

MURPH

Oh, oh. That's good. I mean, that's great. I didn't know you were heading out to see family.

SCOOTER

Look, I'm really sorry. Ah...

He moves behind the bar.

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

Maybe I can find something. We'll have a quick one for the road.

MURPH

No, no. Don't do that. I...I've got things I should wrap up, anyway. Shouldn't spend my final moments drinking.

SCOOTER

Final moments?

MURPH

In the Valley. Final moments in the Valley.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOOTER

Oh. Look, I feel terrible. Are you sure I can't get you something?

Murph thinks for a moment.

MURPH

Actually, I just dumped some coins into the jukebox. I don't suppose I could just listen to the tune. Then I'll be on my way.

Scooter goes to the jukebox, plugs it in, and then puts some coins into the slot.

SCOOTER

The usual, I guess?

"Willie and the Hand Jive" starts to play. Scooter and Murph stand next to each other, looking at the jukebox and listening to the music. They say nothing, they don't look at each other.

AND WE CROSS FADE TO:

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Murph is leaning up against the window frame, looking out at the street.

MURPH

Hello, street.

He looks at the window glass and notices how dirty it is.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Jeez. You're filthy. Guess I haven't looked out the window lately...

He goes to the kitchen.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Murph opens a cabinet and gets out some Windex and paper towels. He turns to go back to the living room, then stops himself.

MURPH

What am I doing?

At first he is horrified, but then he starts to laugh at himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH (CONT'D)

Oh, why not?

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Murph goes to the window, and cleans it off. He enjoys the task. He whistles a holiday tune, unaware he is doing so. When he's done, he admires his work. He enjoys a quick stare out the newly cleaned window, then returns the Windex and towels to the kitchen.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

After putting the cleaning supplies away, Murph looks out the kitchen window and makes a decision.

MURPH

You know what? I'm going for a walk.

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Murph is heading out when he catches a glimpse of himself in the newly cleaned window. He realizes he is still wearing his pool uniform.

MURPH

What am I doing?

He heads to the bedroom.

INT MURPH'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Murph finishes buttoning up some jeans. This is the first time we've seen him in an outfit other than his pool cleaning uniform.

MURPH

Nothing like a fresh pair of jeans.

(then, realizing)

Oh, sweet! I'm never going to have to do laundry again!

He takes his wallet and keys off the dresser and puts them in his pockets. When he puts in the keys, he feels something, and pulls out a fifty dollar bill.

MURPH

(laughing a touch)

Must be my day.

He heads out.

INT GROCERY STORE - DAY

Murph is standing at the bakery counter, eyeing some delicious looking desserts. A GROCERY CLERK flips the "now serving" number pad.

GROCERY CLERK

Number 72.

Murph looks around, sees he's the only one there. He then pulls a number out for himself which is, of course, number 72. All smiles, Murph holds up the paper.

MURPH

That would be me!

GROCERY CLERK

What can I do for you?

MURPH

I would like exactly fifty dollars worth of sugar cookies.

He lays the fifty dollar bill down on the counter.

EXT LA RIVER ACCESS ROAD - DAY

Murph is walking towards the opening of the big tunnel where Bo had brought him to feed the homeless. He is carrying a giant platter of sugar cookies as an upscale restaurant waiter might.

Again, he is whistling a holiday tune.

And he's smiling like an idiot.

EXT DIRT PARKING LOT - DUSK

Murph is walking up to the base of his favorite trail. He waltzes right past a sign that says, "Closed At Dusk." He starts heading up the steep hill.

EXT SHARP CORNER ON THE TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is rounding the corner, when he catches sight of a PARK RANGER. Murph hides in the bushes until the Ranger is gone, and then he cautiously steps out. He smiles mischievously, then heads on up the trail.

EXT CORNER WITH A BENCH ON THE TRAIL - EVENING

Darkness has fallen, and Murph has arrived at his bench. He stands on top of it, and looks out over the Valley.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It is one of those rare clear nights in the Valley. The lights below are breathtaking. Murph is looking at peace with himself, with the world.

He puts his hands in his pockets, and finds his wallet. He sits on the back of the bench, and starts looking through the crap he keeps in the billfold.

He looks at his license picture, has a laugh. He looks at some business cards he doesn't even remember getting. He looks at an old picture of him and Carol.

MURPH
Forgot about that.

He tosses it into the trees.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Bye, babe.

Then he pulls a credit card out of the wallet.

MURPH (CONT'D)
Ha. Four-hundred bucks worth of credit
I'll never have to pay back. Nice.

He thinks for a moment.

MURPH (CONT'D)
What to do, what to do.

He gets an idea, and then heads off back down the trail.

INT GIANT GIFT STORE - EVENING

Murph approaches the service counter, where an extremely HUNGOVER CLERK GIRL (covered from head to toe in tattoos and piercings) is doing her best to keep from puking.

MURPH
(cheerily)
Hi, there.

The Clerk Girl barely grunts in response.

MURPH (CONT'D)
You all right?

HUNGOVER CLERK GIRL
Sure. Never better.

She gags and then winces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

I've got a bit of an assignment for you.

He holds out his credit card. She stares at him for a beat.

HUNGOVER CLERK GIRL

I don't, ah, normally take...assignments.
You know, minimum wage and everything.

MURPH

Oh. Yeah, I know what that's like. Hmmm.
Would it make a difference if I told you
that I had less than twenty-four hours to
live?

HUNGOVER CLERK GIRL

No.

MURPH

Cool, cool. Is there someone who can help
me, then?

The Clerk Girl turns and yells something completely
unintelligible. A SECOND HUNGOVER CLERK GIRL appears, looking
exactly the same as the first one.

HUNGOVER CLERK GIRL

Help him.

The Second Clerk Girl looks at Murph.

MURPH

Oh, yeah, thanks. I need a couple hundred
dollars worth of stuff that a little girl
would get a kick out of.

Both girls just stare at him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Okay. Do you have animatronic animals?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT GIANT GIFT STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Murph is standing in front of a wall of animatronic animals.
He is pushing the buttons on the singing fish, kung-fu
hamsters, *Caddyshack* gophers, "Macarena" monkeys, and
everything else--and having a good laugh. The Second Clerk
Girl is rubbing her temples.

EXT CAROL'S HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

Murph walks up to Carol's front door, a huge gift (with lots of animatronic animals) for Kelly in tow. He is about to knock on the door when he sees Carol and her family sitting together in the living room. The fire is going, the Christmas tree lights are blinking. Kelly says good-night to her dad, then Carol takes her off to bed.

Murph looks at the perfectly decorated tree, and smiles.

He leaves the huge gift on the front stoop, and leaves quietly.

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Murph is yanking a giant tree through his front door. Several bags of ornaments and decorations are piled up in the middle of the floor.

Once he gets the tree into the room, he starts fishing through the bags and comes up with a small transistor radio. He turns it on, finds a classic rock station. He starts to unpack his decorations.

An alley cat comes to his open door and looks in at him. It meows. He turns around to see the little guy.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Hey, there, little fuzzy. You look like you could use some food. Let me grab you a canned tuna. In spring water, of course.

The timid cat watches as Murph dances his way to the kitchen.

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The tree is almost completely decorated. The alley cat is happily working on its third can of tuna. Murph is having a heck of a celebration, however solitary.

He puts the star on the tree, and just as he does so, to his happy surprise, "Willie and the Hand Jive" has just started on the radio.

MURPH

No way!
 (then, to the cat)
 Check it out, Fuzz!
 (then, to the ceiling)
 That's you, Dad, isn't it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He starts to do the dance, and the cat looks up from his tuna to watch the silly monkey man.

The phone rings. Murph heads to answer.

INT MURPH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He picks up.

MURPH

Hello? Scooter? Where are you, man? What happened with visiting the family? Well, that's too bad. What? Yeah, sure, I'll come down for a drink. Give me a few.

He hangs up.

INT MURPH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Murph is headed for the door, and the cat stops him with a look.

MURPH

I'm just going for a drink. I'll be back...I think. You just make yourself at home. I'll get you some more tuna on the way home...and some litter, I guess. In the meantime, Fuzzicle, just go ahead and shit wherever you feel like. Bye!

He skips out the door. Just as he closes it behind him, the phone rings. The machine picks up, and a WOMAN'S VOICE leaves a message.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(on the machine)

Hey, Murph. I'm sorry I haven't called you back, I was in Europe. On vacation, by the way, not "giving myself to death". Why do you get so depressed around the holidays, anyway? Well, I'm coming out there, and you're going to spend Christmas with me whether you like it or not. And we're going to go to a soup kitchen together and help those kids feed the homeless. You know, the "miracle of soup" thing they've been talking about on CNN? And you're going to have a good time. Got it? Happy holidays, cutie.

She pauses for a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Well, can't wait to see you! Bye.

The machine beeps, and a mechanical voice states the time.

EXT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Murph walks through the front door.

INT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - CONTINUOUS

Jesus and Santa are at the bar, sitting quietly and staring into their drinks. They don't look up at Murph. Murph sits down at the bar. Scooter has his back to him, and he doesn't seem to move.

The whole scene is rather creepy.

SCOOTER

(without turning around)

Scotch?

Murph looks at Scooter, perplexed.

MURPH

Ah, no, actually. I'd like an egg nog.
With brandy. Please.

SCOOTER

What else are you going to put in egg
nog?

MURPH

Oh, nothing, you know, there's just a lot
of confusion surrounding that
particular...thing. Is everything all
right?

Scooter turns around, puts the spiked egg nog down in front of Murph.

SCOOTER

Listen, Murph, you can't get mad at me.

MURPH

Why would I get mad at you?

SCOOTER

Because of this.

He puts a wrapped present on the bar in front of Murph.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPH

What is it?

SCOOTER

Your present.

MURPH

Why would I get mad at anyone for giving me a present? I love presents.

SCOOTER

Maybe you better just open it.

Jesus and Santa look up at Murph when Scooter says this. Murph opens the gift, with some trepidation. When he opens the box, inside are his palm pilot, his Muppet Christmas movie, his CD's and his discman. Murph just stares at his things, completely baffled.

MURPH

I don't get it.

SCOOTER

Well, you got your spirit back, so I don't need your things anymore.

MURPH

Still don't get it.

SCOOTER

Murph, you're not dying. Doctor Kane is a friend of mine.

MURPH

I'm not dying? But I've got a tumor the size of a grapefruit or two kumquats...kiwis..it's either kumquats or kiwis.

SCOOTER

No, you don't. I set that up, that's why I stole your palm pilot, so I could get you there without any questions. Get it?

MURPH

You tricked me into thinking I was dying? That's...that's really awful.

SCOOTER

But, Murph, you said that's what you wanted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

I never said I wanted to die...I mean, I don't remember saying that. I didn't say that, did I?

SCOOTER

No, no. I'm talking about what you wanted for the holidays. You know, to be visited by three ghosts. Dr. Kane, he was the Ghost of Christmas Future. You know, like in the book.

Murph's jaw drops as he soaks up this information. Then it all comes together:

MURPH

You mean, switching the pool schedule...Carol is the ghost of the past?

SCOOTER

Mm-hm.

MURPH

And Bo, the present?

SCOOTER

It was the best I could do.

Murph looks over at Jesus and Santa.

MURPH

Then who are they?

SCOOTER

They're just a couple of drunks.

SANTA CLAUSE

Speakin' of which...

JESUS

Another round, Doctor Scootles!

Murph is still in a mild state of shock. Suddenly, his brow furrows in anger and he grabs Scooter by the shirt, looking like he's ready to slug him. Scooter looks scared. Then, in a sudden shift, Murph grins a huge grin and kisses Scooter full on the lips.

MURPH

This is the greatest thing anyone has ever done for me! I mean, man, this is incredible!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOOTER

You're not mad?

MURPH

Mad? I told you what I wanted for Christmas, and you actually gave it to me! But how did you manage, Scooter? I can't believe you did all that! How did you pull it all off?

SCOOTER

Bartenders know a lot of people. I just made some calls.

MURPH

That's...it's just...it's a miracle! That's what it is. You did a miracle.

SCOOTER

I had some time to kill.

Murph gets up from the bar, and puts some change in the jukebox.

MURPH

Bing Crosby, right?

SCOOTER

Yeah, actually.

A Bing Crosby holiday classic starts to play. Murph sips his egg nog.

MURPH

Damn, that's the tastiest egg nog I've ever had.

Scooter calls out towards the back room.

SCOOTER

Okay, you can come out, now!

A door opens, and people just come piling into the bar, talking and laughing. They are all recognizable as the people with which Murph has come into contact over the last few days. All the people from Bo's party are there, Omar and the guys from work are there, even the carolers from Ventura Boulevard are there.

Dr. Kane is the first to come up to Murph.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DR. KANE

Hey, there, Murphy Dunn, sorry about the misdiagnosis. No malpractice law suits, okay?

MURPH

Of course not! I've never been so happy to not be dying in my life!

Dr. Kane gives him a pat on the shoulder and turns to get a drink. Then, Carol and her family walk up to Murph. Carol looks at Kelly.

CAROL

What do you say?

KELLY

Thanks for all the *Caddyshack* gophers and kung-fu hamsters.

MURPH

Well, you're welcome.

RAMONE

We should probably get this one off to bed...she doesn't want Santa to catch her not in bed, does she?

Kelly shakes her head. Murph shakes Ramone's hand, and then Ramone leads Kelly out of the bar. Carol looks at Murph.

MURPH

Thanks, Carol.

CAROL

Have a good holiday, Murph.

MURPH

The best.

Bo comes up behind Murph.

BO

What's up, Mister Dunn?

MURPH

Hey, Bo!

Omar and the guys from the pool business approach as well.

OMAR

How's our boy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MURPH

I don't know...do I still have a job?

OMAR

You kidding? I'll never let you go, my boy.

Carol gives Murph a kiss on the cheek.

CAROL

Bye, Murph.

MURPH

See ya, Carol.

She leaves Murph with a smile.

BO

Could use your help tomorrow, got some more deliveries. You up for it?

MURPH

Just tell me when.

BO

I'll let you know. I gotta get one of those egg nogs.

Murph watches him head to the bar, then watches as Omar and his coworkers become a bunch of dancing fools around the jukebox. He then takes a deep breath and really looks at all the people in the bar. He is deeply touched...this is all for him. He then looks over at Scooter, and Scooter gives him a quick wink as he hands Bo a drink.

Murph can't do anything but smile. Then he joins in the dancing that has begun to the holiday music.

EXT SCOOT'S BOOT SCOOT BAR AND GRILL - LATER

Murph is standing outside, and the last of the party-goers say good-bye to him as they head out to their cars. Murph waves as they leave. Jesus and Santa stumble out of the bar.

JESUS

Night, Murphy.

MURPH

Hey, Merry Christmas, you guys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SANTA CLAUSE

Well, I still think you're a sonofabitch,
but to hell with it, the spirit of the
season and all that.

He steps on Jesus' toe.

JESUS

Goddamn, watch it, you fat lush!

SANTA CLAUSE

You can heal the blind, can't ya? It's
just a stupid toe. Wuss.

MURPH

Hey, you guys know the closest place I
can get some kitty litter this time of
night?

JESUS

My toe is busted, here!

SANTA CLAUSE

(mocking voice)

My toe is busted, here!

Murph smiles as they walk away, still bickering. Murph then
looks up at the perfect night sky. Behind him, Scooter comes
out and starts locking up.

SCOOTER

Hey, Murph.

MURPH

Hey.

SCOOTER

You all right to drive?

MURPH

Yeah, but I think I'll walk anyway.
Sometimes the Valley can be just plain
gorgeous at night, you know?

SCOOTER

Yeah, I do.

Scooter looks up at the sky as well. They stand, Murph a few
feet in front of Scooter, silent for a few moments, just
breathing the air. Then Murph speaks:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURPH

I still don't know how you did it. You
got all these people from my life--

When Murph turns to face Scooter, Scooter has vanished.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Scoot?

Then Murph looks up at the sign over the bar, and it is gone
as well. In fact, the building is not a bar at all, but just
an old boarded up warehouse of some kind.

Murph realizes that whatever just happened to him wasn't
simply an act of kindness on the part of a friendly
bartender, but rather a supernatural miracle.

He turns back around and looks up at the stars. He puts on
his discman headphones as he does so.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Well, then. Happy holidays, Scooter.

He hits "play" on the discman, and of course, "Willie and the
Hand Jive" starts. Murph gives the stars and what he had
thought was a bar one last look, and then begins his walk
into the perfect San Fernando Valley night.

THE END.