

Osiyo,

This is a Christmas Gift from the Smith families to you. It is a screen play written by me and my brother Shane Smith in 1987, some 25 years ago. It is about the spirit of Christmas and families. I encourage you read it with your family. The main characters are:

D.J. McKay - a radio DJ,

John Studebaker - the radio station manager who is married to Gail and they have a son, Mark who is six years old,

Gus -a down and out older man.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

**Chad Smith
December 2011**

WXMS

A SCREENPLAY FOR TELEVISION

by Chadwick Smith and Shane Smith

ACT 1, SCENE ONE

It is 1986. The scene is dark, the sound of a diesel truck engine is heard running and changing gears. The camera pans out of a shadow to an 18-wheel diesel trailer-truck going down a rural 2-lane highway in a hilly plains area. The truck comes upon a bridge which goes over a railroad. The approach to the railroad overpass is sharp and poorly planned. As the driver gets near the bridge he suddenly brakes hard and swerves to avoid hitting the bridge abutment and to make the curve onto the bridge. The camera shows the ground level view of the truck narrowly missing the bridge abutment and continuing onto the bridge. The camera changes to the driver who is a late 20's early 30's country looking boy. He is shaking his head in regard to his narrow miss. He looks in the rear view mirror to see the severe drop from the bridge to the railroad tracks below. He turns the radio on and fumbles across the dial to a rock station playing an upbeat "Four Tops" song. The scene changes to a radio station in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is a modest "quality" rock station with an energetic but somewhat flighty early thirties disc jockey by the name of D.J. McKAY, and the station manager KEN STUDEBAKER, a mid-thirties up and coming middle executive stalled in a position showing little promise to his career goals of success. McKAY is doing his early morning program with an intense chatter in his record cluttered sound room with coffee and donuts on the electronic console. STUDEBAKER pays little attention to McKAY and his show as he reviews some paper work. A glass partition separates the two but they have visual contact.

D.J. McKAY: *(Close up with microphone in sound room, the same "Four Tops" song as the trucker was playing on the air and station sound system, as the record ends McKAY chatters into the microphone.)*

Quality rock 24 hours a day with the new 97 in the most livable city in the USA, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Today is the special day that I know each of you having been waiting (somewhat dry tongue in cheek humor).

The day after Thanksgiving, full of turkey and stuffing, right? Ready to settle in for the holiday football games for the next six weeks? Going to race to the mall for Christmas shopping? Yes, it is the official start of the "Christmas Season" and I, D.J. McKAY, claim the honor of kicking off the Christmas season this 7 a.m. by playing the first Christmas song of the season.

(McKAY plays "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." He sits back, puts his feet up on the desk, and closes his eyes. STUDEBAKER looks up from his paper work and annoyingly stares at McKAY for a few seconds and then resumes his paperwork. After a verse of the song STUDEBAKER gets up, goes to the glass partition, taps on the glass, and directs McKAY to come into his office. McKAY gets up and comes to STUDEBAKER's office.)

D.J. McKAY: Yeah. *(He looks into the office.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: What are you doing? Do you know what you are doing? Just look at these ratings!

D.J. McKAY: What's bothering you? I am just kicking off the Christmas season.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Looking over the Arbitron Report) Look at this. (Throws the report on the table.)*

D.J. McKAY: Let's see. *(Looks over the report, then appears sheepish and shrugs his shoulders.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Hostile)* These surveys are what sell advertising. And advertising makes money and money keeps this station going and pays your check.

D.J. McKAY: *(McKAY appears to ignore him as he introduces another song.)* This is D.J. McKAY with you on your way to work. Here is another "Four Tops" song to lighten your spirits and to till your day with some energy *(Plays song in background and McKAY turns to STUDEBAKER.)* You're the station manager, what do you say?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Well, first cut out those cutesy Christmas songs in November.

D.J. McKAY: *(After a pensive pause in a dry humor but deep-down seriousness.)* I have an idea. You know how people need cheering all the time and how time seems to slip away before you know it or appreciate it.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Disgustingly.)* So?

D.J. McKAY: Let's change the format of the station to year-round 24-hours-a-day nothing but Christmas music. Think about it. All these religious stations make a go of it by playing nothing but religious music.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: If you don't come up with something better than that, soon you're going to be doing 40 hours a week in public appearances, free!

DJ. McKAY: No, really, think of it. We would not have a large market listening all the time but we would have a huge audience listening part of the time. Anytime someone wanted cheering up they would turn to us.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Easy now. *(STUDEBAKER begins to leave.)*

D.J. McKAY: *(Continues to talk, but appears to be thinking out loud to annoy STUDEBAKER)* listening to Christmas music in July would remind folks of how time is slipping by and how they ought to relax and appreciate the things around them, spend time with their kids and give gifts for the fun of it.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Picks up the Arbitron report and rolls it up in a sign of tension, looks sternly at McKAY)*

D.J. McKAY: *(Continues his motor mouth)* It's a great idea. Sort of like summer reruns of Christmas. Kids would love it. Parents would love it. John, merchants would love it. *(Smiles mischievously at John)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(In a desperate attempt to interject logic)* Who would advertise?

D.J. McKAY: When do merchants sell most? At Christmas time. We'll promote a "half-Christmas" on June 25th.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Gets to the door and raps on it to get McKAY's attention and looks squarely at D.J. McKAY.)* Your idea stinks.

D.J. McKAY: *(Continues to ramble undaunted)* Yeah, June 25th. We could promote it as a mini Christmas. It would be called "Kid's Day" since we have a Mother's Day and a Father's Day. Yeah, "Kid's Day!"

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Tosses the rolled up Arbitron on table near McKAY)* Bud, we're in business, understand. Improve your ratings, period.

D.J. McKAY: *(STUDEBAKER leaves and returns to his office, sits down with a pencil in hand and continues his paperwork. The camera shoots through glass partition on McKAY and his voice is heard over station sound system.)* Here is a song that has to be among the top forty in the all-time classics. *(McKAY plays "Joy to the World." The camera closes in on STUDEBAKER with tension on his face. As the music crescendos STUDEBAKER breaks the point on his pencil.)*

ACT 1, SCENE TWO

JOHN STUDEBAKER leaves his office. There is snow and ice on the ground. It is dark with a heavy rush hour traffic. He gets into a 1976 Corvette and enters traffic. As he turns on the radio a Christmas song comes on and he quickly turns it off. STUDEBAKER pulls his vehicle into an intersection and stops. GUS approaches the intersection from a perpendicular street in an old green station wagon. GUS' wheels lock up as he nears the intersection and he slides slowly forward into the intersection. At the same time, JOHN STUDEBAKER takes off to cross the intersection and in the center of the intersection GUS' station wagon slightly hits STUDEBAKER's car. The impact leaves no serious damage but jolts the cars such that each is on a sheet of ice. STUDEBAKER continues through the intersection and stops. He gets out of the car, advances toward GUS in a rage. GUS continues through the intersection, and leaves the scene. JOHN can't get across the street to pursue GUS due to the ground conditions and traffic.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *If I ever catch you, you son of a (Another car approaches and honks his horn because JOHN is impeding traffic.)*

(STUDEBAKER has enough time to see the tag on GUS' car. He returns to his car and writes down the tag number. He continues home after surveying the slight damage to his car. After some time in traffic, he pulls into his driveway and enters with the use of an automatic door opener. He walks into the house through the kitchen.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *Anyone home? (Nobody answers; the house is quiet except for a pendulum clock. John mixes himself a drink, picks up the mail and newspaper, and sits in an easy chair.)*

(Some time passes, the next shot shows the drink glass empty, the mail opened on the floor and the newspaper wadded on the floor. The kitchen door opens.)

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *Hello, we're home. (She is carrying several department store sacks. JOHN and GAIL STUDEBAKER's six-year old son MARK is also carrying a department store sack.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *Hi, daddy! Look what we got.*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *It's about time you got in. (His eyes are puffy and red.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *We went shopping. (She begins to get defensive.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *Look, daddy, what we got! (MARK runs up to his dad trying to show the contents of the package.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Ignores MARK, Sarcastically) It would be nice to know where you go.*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: JOHN, we held dinner for you, you didn't call or anything. We waited for you as long as we could.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Listen, I work hard, and I want a little consideration when I get to that door. *(Indicating the kitchen entry door.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Did you see the note we left you? *(Picks up the note on counter)* Did you even try to call one time so we wouldn't be waiting with dinner getting cold?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I got tied up at work.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Don't they have phones at work?

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Joyfully)* Daddy, don't fuss and fight. *(Pleading)* It's getting to be Christmas!

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Don't interrupt when I'm talking with your mom. *(Angrily and then he stares at the boy, and MARK runs to his room.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Now see what you've done!

(JOHN STUDEBAKER sits back down in his easy chair.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(JOHN begins to get up and then sits back down)* What's the use. *(He sats To himself.) Ten minutes go by and MARK walks from his room to the kitchen with his head down, not looking at JOHN.)* Mark. *(Mark pauses)* I'm sorry. Come here and give me a hug. *(MARK walks over to JOHN and JOHN hugs MARK. However, MARK still looks down and appears hurt)* Let's see what you brought home. *(JOHN grabs MARK by the hand and MARK leads JOHN into the bedroom to a department store sack in the corner of the room.)* What did you get?

MARK STUDEBAKER: See. *(Mark brings a large plastic Santa Claus face out of the sack.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Hey, that's nice.

MARK STUDEBAKER: And it lights up, too.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'm really sorry about yelling at you. *(Sitting on bed with MARK.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: That's all right. Will you put Santa Claus up? *(GAIL walks in.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Not yet, it's too early. Christmas is still 6 weeks away.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Correcting JOHN sternly as she walks into the bedroom)* Five weeks.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: There is a Parade the Saturday before Christmas.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Yes, I know. D.J. MCKAY will be riding in it.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Will you take me, Daddy?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Okay, if I'm not working that Saturday. All I can do is try MARK.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Maybe I can give Santa Claus my letter then!

JOHNSTUDEBAKER: *(Frowning)* What letter?

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(MARK shows JOHN a letter addressed to Santa, JOHN stands and begins to exit room.)* Daddy?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: What.

MARK STUDEBAKER: How come it doesn't seem like Christmas this year?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: What do you mean, honey?

MARK STUDEBAKER: When I was a little boy, Christmas was special. Everyone had smiles and laughed. On TV there were Christmas shows and you could hear Christmas music everywhere. This year, something is missing. *(MARK looks down.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Looks accusingly at JOHN)* I don't know. *(JOHN leaves the room and returns to his easy chair. GAIL hugs MARK, leaves, and walks toward kitchen.)*

JOHN STIJDEBAKER: *(To GAIL outside the bedroom)* Does he still think there is a Santa Claus? He's too old for that.

GAIL STIJDEBAKER: I'm not too old to believe in Santa Claus. *(Sternly, she then turns and leaves JOHN.)*

ACT 1, SCENE THREE

Four weeks later. . . . It is early morning. There is a beautiful sunrise outside the Studebaker's home. The front door opens and JOHN goes and gets the morning paper. He is dressed casually and not dressed to go to the office. He returns to the house and plays briefly with the family

dog, a medium sized mutt. He enters the house and goes to the kitchen, gets a cup of coffee and begins to read the morning paper. His wife comes in dressed in a robe.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Good morning. *(GAIL pours a cup of coffee and joins JOHN at the kitchen table.)*

JOHN STIJDEBAKER: Good morning.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: What do you have planned for the day?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I have a staff meeting.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: But you have worked every Saturday the last two months.

JOHNS STUDEBAKER: It won't take long this morning; it is just a short staff meeting with some corporate people from the main office.

GAIL STIJDEBAKER: You do remember today is the Christmas Parade, and you promised to take MARK, don't you?

JOHN STIJDEBAKER: That shouldn't be a problem. I can be back by 11:00 to take him. Alright?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: I think MARK is going through some changes, I mean he is growing up.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: It is time someone told him about Santa Claus.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: JOHN, he is a little boy. Let him enjoy this Christmas.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I remember when I was Mark's age; I found out that there was no Santa Claus. I was crushed. And I was doubly hurt when I thought my folks had deceived me about the whole thing.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: We'll tell him after this Christmas. You know it is only a week away.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Yeah, I'll see you later. *(John leaves, gets into his car, drives to the station and walks back into the Radio Station.)*

D.J. MCKAY: *(Inside the reception area of the station is a Santa Claus Christmas display with human sized elves. D.J. MCKAY is dressed as an elf and as JOHN STUDEBAKER comes in, MCKAY poses as an elf as part of the display. JOHN walks by without recognizing him.)* And what do you want for Christmas, little boy?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(The receptionist close by giggles)* What? *(JOHN turns to survey the situation.)*

D.J. MCKAY: Have you been good or bad this year?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Sees and recognizes MCKAY)* It depends on who you ask. *(Pause)* What are you doing?

D.J. MCKAY: *(MCKAY walks over the receptionist and hugs her.)* It is the Christmas Parade, we're elves this year.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Slightly amused)* Okay. *(Walks into a staff conference room and pours himself a cup of coffee.)*

D.J. MCKAY: What does your kid want for Christmas?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Pauses and looks bewildered)* I don't know.

DJ. MCKAY: What? *(Jokingly)* You had better make a copy of Marks letter to Santa before he mails it, then.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Oh, I'm sure Gail knows what he wants.

(D.J. McKay points down the hall, STUDEBAKER nods, turns and walks to a meeting room and enters. Inside is JERRY GATES with various papers spread on the conference table)

JERRY GATES: *(Inside the room is JERRY GATES, a corporate executive from the radio station's main office. He is dressed in three piece suit, short, balding and firm. He has an associate with him.)* I need to work with you this morning about your ratings.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Fine, let's get started.

(STUDEBAKER closes the door, a clock reflects 9:30. Each brings out various papers, documents and charts. Soon the room is cluttered with coffee cups, notes and papers. Each person periodically leaves the room and returns with various business items of papers. The clock now reflects 11: 15.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Where is D.J.?

JEFF HARRISON: *(A business associate of JERRY GATES)* Oh, he left a little while ago to be in some promotion. He was going to be in a parade.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(To himself)* I was supposed to be at that parade. *(Out loud)* I need to call home.

JERRY GATES: *(Sternly)* We'll be finished here in a few minutes. I have a noon flight to catch.

(STUDEBAKER looks defeated) (The meeting finally breaks up at 11:30, JOHN rushes to his car but gets stalled in the traffic held up for the Christmas parade.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Leans his head against the closed driver's window.)* Oh, I'll be glad when Christmas is over. *(After the traffic breaks up drives home, enters the house and finds his son, MARK, quiet in his room.)*

GAILS TUDEBAKER: *(Tersely and working in the kitchen)* Hello.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'm sorry I'm late; I got tied up at the office.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: I've heard it before. It is MARK you have to explain to.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Proceeds to MARK's room where he sits quietly and doing nothing.)* MARK, I'm sorry. I got tied up at the office and then I got caught in the traffic. Didn't Momma take you?

MARK STUDEBAKER: It was too late after we waited for you.

JOHNSTUDEBAKER: All I can do is say I'm sorry.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Daddy, why don't you like me?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I love you, son.

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Shyly)* You never do anything with me. Brent's dad does lots of stuff with him.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Lays back on bed and closes his eyes)* Son, I work a lot for money for things for you and Momma. *(Long pause)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: I didn't get to give it to him.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Confused)* Didn't get to give what?

MARK STUDEBAKER: My letter to Santa Claus.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Huffy)* Give it to me and I'll mail it. *(Gets up and begins to leave the room)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Pulls an envelope out from under a pillow and holds the envelope preciously. He turns to offer the envelope to JOHN but then withdraws it.)*
No you won't.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Insulted)* What?

MARK STUDEBAKER: You don't believe in Santa Claus.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Grabs for letter)* Give it to me and I'll mail it.

MARK STUDEBAKER: No.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Angrily grabs the letter.)* I'll mail it. *(Turns to leave.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: You're mean.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: If your mom wouldn't spoil you, you would know there is no such thing as S *(Stops abruptly)* You're too old for this kind of stuff.

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Crushed, with tears welling in his eyes)* Yes, sir.

ACT 1, SCENE FOUR

You can hear a bell being rung by a Salvation Army Santa Claus. The scene opens on GUS, a Salvation Army Santa in an old Santa suit, scraggly fake beard and a lumpy stomach. He is ringing the bell. People walk by and drop coins and bills in a kettle positioned there in front of the department store. Occasionally GUS puts out his hand and a patron puts money in it. When he receives the money, he reaches through his Santa suit and puts the money in his own pocket.

GUS: Ho, ho, ho *(In a cracked and weak voice)* Merry Christmas, give to the needy. *(MARK and GAIL approach the department store.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Excited)* Look, there's Santa!

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Smiles, and talks down to MARK)* I think that is just one of Santa's helpers.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Oh. *(Still excited, runs from his mother to GUS)* GUS ignores MARK standing there with inviting eyes. GUS tries to pan handle other adult shoppers as MARK stands patiently nearby

GUS: *(To shoppers)* Merry Christmas.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Santa, I have a letter for you. *(GUS ignores MARK. As GAIL approaches, GUS extends a hand to GAIL.)*

GUS: Give to the needy!

GAIL STUDEBAKER: On the way out (To GUS.)

GUS: *(Acknowledges MARK quickly and continues to speak to GAIL) Has he been a good boy this year? (GUS winks at GAIL. Mark freezes and smiles sheepishly.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: I think so. *(She opens her purse and puts some coins in GUS' hand) Let's go, MARK. (She enters the store)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Requesting GUS' attention) I have a letter for you.*

GUS: *(Quickly turns to an on-coming shopper) Merry Christmas, give to the needy.*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(At GUS' side) Santa. (Mark produces and envelope.)*

GUS: *(Irritated. Without looking at MARK and in a low voice as another shopper approaches) Get lost, kid, I'm busy. (To shopper) Merry Christmas. (GUS rings his bell. Tears well up in MARK's eyes, and he walks away, goes into the store to a front part of the store and continues to look at GUS. He puts his face against the glass, inside the store. GUS does not see him. Soon GUS picks up his kettle and walks over to a green beat-up station wagon. GUS puts his things in. As he starts up the vehicle, it smokes and the engine throttles sticks, making the engine race and sound very loud. GUS jumps out of the car, quickly opens the hood, unsticks the throttle and burns himself on the engine. He yells. Ouch, son of a b . . . ! He slams the hood, gets in the car. As he backs out in haste, he almost hits an on-coming car. He honks, swerves and drives in front of the store where MARK is still watching with a tear in his eye and his face still pressed against the window. GUS' car smokes as he goes in front of the store. The camera shows MARK's bewildered face through the car smoke.)*

ACT II, SCENE ONE

MARK and his friend BRENT are playing army in a make-shift fort behind MARK's house on Christmas Eve. BRENT is much more street-wise and more mature than MARK. The two begin walking towards MARK's house. They come upon the Santa face on MARK's front door.

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Indicating Santa's face) Neat, huh?*

BRENT: Yeah.

MARK STUDEBAKER: What's Santa going to bring you?

BRENT: I already know.

MARK STUDEBAKER: How do you know?

BRENT: I found the presents Santa is supposed to bring.

MARK STUDEBAKER: What? *(Alarmed!)*

BRENT: Santa isn't real, your folks just pretend. Don't you know that?

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Angry and hurt. Pushes BRENT)* You're lying!

BRENT: *(Pushes MARK back)* There ain't no Santa.

(The two scuffle and swing some punches. Finally, after rolling around some on the ground, each gets up.)

MARK STUDEBAKER: Go home!

BRENT: *(Dusts himself off)* I will, baby! *(He leaves.)*

(MARK begins to smile, turns his head to the Santa head, leans against the head and then begins to cry.)

(Neighborhood Scene) The camera pans a tranquil scene of the STUDEBAKER's residential neighborhood with Christmas lights, snow, smoke coming out of an occasional chimney, and children building a snowman. In the background, the Christmas song "Winter Wonderland" is heard. The next shot is inside the STUDEBAKER home where GAIL is dressing a slight bruise over MARK's eye.)

GAIL STUDEBAKER: What in the world were you fighting over with your best friend on Christmas Eve?

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(A little tearful)* Brent said there was no such thing as Santa Claus and Christmas was all a joke. Momma, there is a Santa Claus, isn't there?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(A pregnant pause when MARK and GAIL look each other in the eye. A realization sets in on MARK and he runs from GAIL where she was cleaning his bruise with a wash cloth.)* Mark! Mark! Mark! *(Mark runs to his room and closes the door.)* Honey, let me talk to you.

(GAIL pauses and then returns to the kitchen preparing a large meal for that evening MARK slips out of the bedroom door and goes to each of the closets in the house looking for the Christmas gifts from Santa. He approaches an attic which is locked. He then returns to his mother's bedroom and locates the key to the lock in her dresser and returns to the attic. He opens the attic door, searches the attic, pulls a cover back, and discovers wrapped packages. He grabs one tag.)

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Reads tag) "To Mark from Santa." (MARK looks hollow in his eyes. He slowly sits down, then stands, covers the packages, shuts and locks the attic door and returns to his room. He stops in his room, looks around, gets a back pack from the closet and fills it with some clothes, toys, his piggy bank, and some candy. He sets the back pack down and goes to the kitchen. He shows tension in his young face. He addresses GAIL who is busy making a salad.)* It's true, isn't it? There is no Santa?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Puts stops making the salad, goes to MARK, and tries to put her arm around him. MARK pulls away.)* Sure there is a Santa. *(Trying to console him.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: You're lying! *(He turns and runs to his room. GAIL follows. MARK quickly shuts the door and sits in front of it so it can't be opened; there are tears in his eyes.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: MARK, let me talk to you!

MARK STUDEBAKER: Go away. *(GAIL pauses, the phone rings and she leaves to answer it. Inside the bedroom, MARK springs to his feet and gets his backpack. He opens a window, dislodges the screen and leaves the room through the window. The wind is blowing the curtains in the room. The camera shows the attic key on the window sill.)*

ACT II, SCENE TWO

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(In house with groceries preparing dinner)* MARK, will you come help me fix supper? I want to have it ready so we can open Christmas presents tonight. *(No answer so she moves and speaks towards MARK's room.)* MARK, it is Christmas Eve. Your Aunt Mary thinks we ought to wait until Christmas morning to open presents, I told her Christmas Eve is when we get our presents from Santa Claus. *(No answer and then a pause.)*

MARK, come help me, I want to have things ready when your dad and grandma and grandpa get here. *(Walks into MARK's room, at first angry,*

but he's not there.) MARK! (She yells and she sees that his bedroom window is open) MARK! (She runs to open window and then sees his clothes drawer open. She runs to closet and searches for items and notices things missing. She is hastily leaving the room when she catches out of the corner of her eye the attic key on the sill. She hurries over and picks up the key.) Oh, no! (She runs to her room, picks up the phone and calls JOHN's office. The phone is busy, she puts it down and runs outside looking for MARK and calls out) MARK, where are you? MARK! MARK! (It is cold; she has no coat and shivers. She looks around the house and grabs her car keys. She gets into the family car forgetting her coat. She drives the neighborhood streets looking for MARK. She comes upon some children playing.) Have you seen Mark?

CHILD 1: No.

CHILD 2: I saw him yesterday at Bobby's.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Please call me if you see him. *(She drives off and begins to cry. It begins to snow. She starts talking to herself)* MARK, where are you going? It is so cold. *(Yells inside car)* MARK! Where are you?

(The camera changes to show MARK running through a suburban field and up to a major highway. He is out of breath. He starts to shiver. He precariously crosses the highway to a small shopping mall where he saw Santa earlier. He sees GUS getting into his old car in his Santa suit. He walks up to GUS' car which is near the stores as he begins to leave.)

MARK STUDEBAKER: Mister?

GUS: *(Turns to face MARK with a short stogie cigar hanging from his lip without his Santa beard but with a three-day-old shadow of a beard. GUS looks rough.)* What?

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Looks at GUS, turns and runs to the department store in the mall. He is confused, hurt and cold. He walks quickly to an outside pay phone. Snow begins to fall and it becomes darker. His hands are cold, and his breath is visible as he places coins in the phone.)* Hello, can I speak with JOHN STUDEBAKER? *(Pause)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Over telephone)* Hello?

MARK STUDEBAKER: Daddy?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: MARK, what is it? Why are you calling me here at the office? Just a minute, I have another call.

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Pitifully) Daddy? (He holds phone but his hands are getting colder, tears welled up in his eyes, the wind blows his hair, he tries to rub his hands together to stay warm. He sees the remnants of Christmas trees on the parking lot where there was a Christmas tree lot which has sold its inventory except for a few scraggly trees left over. A car driven by and sashes up dirty snow on MARK. A mother exits the store scolding her five year old child for disobeying on Christmas Eve.)*

WOMAN: *(Looks poor and rough and says to her child, in front of MARK) Here you are, acting like this on Christmas Eve! Santa's not going to bring you anything!*

(MARK's hands are cold as he rubs them. There is still no return on the phone by JOHN Suddenly the Christmas lights and display on the mall are turned out and the canned Christmas music from the store is turned off. MARK desperately looks around, drops the phone, and runs for a nearby restaurant. He enters the front door and stays in the foyer. He warms himself next to a furnace. The camera shows the phone dangling. JOHN finally comes on the line.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: MARK, are you still there? MARK? *(The phone cracks dead.)*

(The camera changes; Jack to GAIL driving on the streets looking for MARK. She drives into her garage and runs to the phone in the kitchen and dials JOHN's office. The clock reads 5:00 p.m.)

GAIL STUDEBAKER: JOHN, please. Hello, JOHN STUDEBAKER, please. *(Desperately to herself.)*
Oh, please, John, John. *(John comes on the line.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Hello?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: JOHN, MARK ran away! *(Frantically)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: What? Now just settle down. What did MARK do?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: He ran away!

JOHN STUDEBAKER: How do you know?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: He had a fight with Brent over Santa Clause and his backpack is gone and his window is open. He had the attic key in his room. He is gone. I went looking for him.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'll be home soon.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Angry and screaming)* JOHN, he's runaway! It's cold, it's snowing, and it's Christmas Eve. Your job can wait. Your boy needs you now!

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Okay, I'm on my way.

ACT II, SCENE THREE

JOHN drives quickly into the driveway at his home. It is snowing. He opens the garage door with an automatic opener and meets GAIL in the garage.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Have you any idea where he may have gone?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: No. I called the police and they said they would look for him locally. *(They walk into the house and stop in the kitchen.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: You stay here in case he comes home or calls. Call his friends.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: I've already called them.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'll go look for him.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: It's going to get down to zero tonight. JOHN, please find him before dark.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: OK, I'm taking your car. *(JOHN leaves and takes his wife's car. The snow is coming down heavily. He drives in the snow with the windshield wipers parting the blowing snow; he listens to his radio stations and constantly looks for MARK.)*

RADIO: *(Over the car radio)* This is Q 97, your quality rock station. Tonight at 6:00, we will change our programming to play classic Christmas songs. There is a weather advisory this Christmas evening, with temperatures approaching zero and snow accumulations of 4 to 6 inches. If you must be out this evening, be careful. *(Rock song comes back on radio.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(To himself)* I wonder where that boy is. *(Angry)* *(Snow accumulates and JOHN returns to his house, he enters the kitchen where GAIL is visibly worried.)* Any news?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: No. I am really worried.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Have you talked to your family about changing plans and not coming over tonight?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: No, they'll be here at any time.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Call them, tell them not to come. We'll have to find MARK first.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: What do we do now?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(He pulls out a telephone book map)* I'll start looking in this zone for him. Here is the Map. *(Pointing to a section)* I'll look here and then I'll come back. I'll look toward Eagle's Point.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Okay.

(JOHN leaves and gets in her car then drives down the street into a service station and convenience store. It is getting dark. He gets out and the wind blows in his face and he suffers from the cold. He pumps gas in his car and then goes inside to pay for the gas.)

BURLY CLERK: *(He is a big burly man, dressed poorly and is gruff.)* That's \$15.00.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Pays for gas)* Have you seen an eight year old boy, brown hair and eyes, about 4 ' 10" with a fair complexion? He is wearing a backpack.

BURLY CLERK: *(Gruffly)* What's the deal?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: He ran away.

BURLY CLERK: Nah, I haven't seen him *(uninterested.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Writing phone number and address)* Let me leave an address and phone number. If you see him, please call.

BURLY CLERK: OK. *(Still uninterested.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Outside of store)* Son of a b . . . *(John gets in car, the radio is heard.)*

RADIO: This is D.J McKAY on Q 97 with Christmas songs this Christmas Eve. Merry Christmas from all of us at Q 97.

(JOHN slumps over steering wheel in frustration and gets up and then drives off. It is still snowing. "Silent Night" is playing on the radio. The camera pans wide and high to show John's car in the blowing snow alone on the streets going back and forth.)

ACT II, SCENE 4

"Silent Night" continues to play. JOHN drives into his driveway. There are a number of cars there. He enters to find his relatives gathered. JOHN enters through the front door.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(To GAIL, as he comes in door.)* GAIL, I asked you to call them.

J GAIL STUDEBAKER: They're here to help find MARK.

COUSIN #1: JOHN, did you have any luck finding MARK?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: No, there is no sign of him.

UNCLE: Tell us where to look.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: You don't have to do this.

COUSIN #2: It would not be much of a Christmas for us with MARK missing.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: OK. *(Gets phone book map)* JERRY, take this section, LARRY, what part of town do you know best.

LARRY: Parkview and Eastwood.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: OK, take those areas.

COUSIN # 1: I'll take East Gatewood and Cedars.

COUSIN #2: I'll take this rural area (indicating on map.)

UNCLE: I'll take this southern area.

AUNT: Where do you want me to go?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Stay here, your car will get stuck in the snow.

AUNT: I'll stay here with GAIL then.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(To everyone)* Let's report back no later than 8:00 p.m. *(To GAIL)* Any ideas?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: No, I've called all the video arcades. I'm worried he might be hurt. I'm going to call the hospitals.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Go next door to call out, in case he tries to call in.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: I'm scared.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'll see you all at 8:00 p.m. *(JOHN leaves.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(To AUNT)* Stay with the phone, I'm going next door. *(GAIL runs next door through the blowing snow. Cars are seen leaving the STUDEBAKER home in search of MARK. The neighbor lets her in and she uses their phone. She speaks on the phone.)* Hello, this is GAIL STUDEBAKER, JOHN STUDEBAKER's wife.

D.J. McKAY: *(On phone)* Hello, Merry Christmas.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: I need a favor.

D.J. McKAY: Fire, I'm ready to turn on the canned programming and leave the station.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: MARK is missing. I think he's run away and with the weather and ail, I'm scared. JOHN and our relatives are out looking for him.

D.J. McKAY: Tell me what he was wearing and I'll stay around awhile and make announcements tonight on the radio. *(The camera shows D.J. McKAY in the control booth writing down information.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Thanks! That's what I was hoping you would do.

ACT II, SCENE FIVE

(The radio in the background is playing. The shot is on cars going up and down streets with the drivers looking for MARK. It is still snowing.)

RADIO: This is D.J. McKAY on your Christmas Eve program. I have an announcement. MARK STUDEBAKER, a six year old boy with brown eyes, brown hair, 4' 10", and 60 pounds, last seen this afternoon at 4:00 in the Oaks Addition southwest of the city, is missing. He was wearing a green coat, blue jeans and a backpack. His parents are frantic with worry over the safety of the boy this cold Christmas Eve. If you see anyone who fits the description, call Q 97. Your help will make the STUDEBAKER family a Merry Christmas. *(Christmas songs continue, "O Little Child of Bethlehem." The camera pans to the gas station that JOHN STUDEBAKER visited earlier. The bully gruff clerk is ending his shift.)*

BURLY CLERK: *(To oncoming clerk)* Hi, Mary.

CLERK #2: Hi, are your kids waiting for you?

BURLY CLERK: Yeah, but! thought I'd drive around a little.

CLERK #2: Why? On Christmas Eve?

BURLY CLERK: Did you hear on the radio about the missing kid out tonight?

CLERK #2: Oh, no. As cold as it is outside?

BURLY CLERK: Yeah, I think I'll help look for him a little bit.

ACT II, SCENE SIX

The snow continues. MARK walks into a fast food restaurant like McDonalds. He is cold; he sits his backpack down in a booth. There are only one or two people in the restaurant. The attendant is a high school boy, REECE).

REECE: Hello, what can I get you?

MARK STUDEBAKER: A big hamburger and hot chocolate.

REECE: Anything else?

MARK STUDEBAKER: No. *(Mark is sheepish)*

REECE: Where are your parents?

MARK STUDEBAKER: Oh, um, *(pause)* they're outside.

REECE: *(Delivers food)* That will be \$2.89.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Here. *(He pays attendant and sits in a booth. Some time passes.)*

REECE: *(After MARK is finished with his meal, the attendant comes over to MARK.)* Can I get you anything else?

MARK STUDEBAKER: No thank you.

REECE: Are your parents still outside?

MARK STUDEBAKER: No, they had some last minute shopping. It has something to do with Santa Claus.

REECE: Oh. *(Cleaning area.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: When you were little, did you believe in Santa Claus?

REECE: Sure I did. I was heartbroken when they told me there was no Santa Claus.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Really?

REECE: Yeah, I remember crying.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Really?

REECE: Yeah, do you believe in Santa Claus?

MARK STUDEBAKER: Not anymore. *(Pause)* Is Christmas the same as Santa?

REECE: What do you mean?

MARK STUDEBAKER: Well, does Christmas go away when you don't believe in Santa Claus?

REECE: *(Aware that something is wrong with MARK, REECE bends down to MARK's level.)* The people who told you Santa was not real weren't telling the whole truth. I found out about Christmas. Christmas is a feeling and an attitude. Sometimes parents use Santa Claus just to share the Christmas spirit with their kids.

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(His eyes become less troubled and more comfortable.)* What if your folks don't care?

REECE: What happened?

REECE: Well, sometimes parents are like that. But it does not mean they don't care for you. *(Food buzzer goes off in restaurant and attendant gets up.)* Let me know if your parents are going to be much longer.

MARK STUDEBAKER: They will be here soon. *(MARK looks out the window.)*

(REECE's girlfriend comes in and talks to the boy. They gossip together. They look toward MARK and the girl keeps looking at MARK. MARK becomes uncomfortable. She goes back to the attendant after talking to the girl; he goes to the back room. MARK gathers his belongings and when the two are not looking, he leaves. He looks for a place to hide outside and to get shelter from the cold. He climbs into a dumpster behind the restaurant in the middle of several cardboard boxes. Soon, two police cars arrive and the officers, attendant and girl looks outside for MARK but does not find him. The officers get into their cars and use their spotlight. MARK hides and appears scared.)

ACT II, SCENE SEVEN

JOHN is driving around looking for MARK, he pulls up to a pay phone and calls home.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(On the other end of the phone, she answers excitedly.)* Hello? Hello?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: GAIL, have you heard anything new?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: The police called, they said someone saw a little boy that looked like MARK at McDonalds in Town west about 20 minutes ago, but when the police got there the boy ran.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'll go over there.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: What did we do to cause this? What did I do?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: You know you didn't do anything. You know it was me ignoring MARK. He'll be alright, I know he will be.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: If anything happens to him, I don't know what'll do!

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'll call later. Have the others gone home?

GAIL STUDEBAKER: No, some are still out. You know, JOHN, *(crying)* we have had people calling all evening asking where they can look and what they can do. JOHN, they are strangers who heard D.J MCKAY on the radio.

JOHNSTUDEBAKER: I'm sorry, GAIL. I'm really sorry.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Call if anything happens.

JOHNSTUDEBAKER: Okay. *(JOHN gets back into the car. He sits on something. It is MARK's letter to Santa. JOHN throws it up on the dash. He drives through a closed McDonald's where MARK was. He gets out and yells.)* MARK, MARK, MARK! Where are you? Please come home! *(He gets back into the car and tears run down his face. As he pulls out into the street, a police car turns on the red and blue lights and pulls JOHN over. JOHN gets out of the car and approaches the squad car. The officer rolls down his window.)* What's wrong officer?

OFFICER: You didn't stop when you came out of that parking lot.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Well, I don't remember.

OFFICER: Are you JOHN STUDEBAKER?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: How did you know?

OFFICER: I ran your tag and I have been looking for your boy.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Thanks.

OFFICER: Get in. *(JOHN gets in; the officer brings out a thermos of coffee, the overhead lights are still on.)* Coffee?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Well . . .

OFFICER: You look like you could use it.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Thanks. *(Takes coffee.)*

OFFICER: What's the story with your boy?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I think he learned there was no Santa Claus today. That's not the problem. Things just haven't been the way they should around the house. Do you have kids?

OFFICER: Yeah, they should be waiting on Santa now.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: That's good.

OFFICER: I work until 12:00 midnight; I'll keep a lookout for MARK.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Thanks.

(A dispatch comes over the police radio describing an automobile accident several miles away in which several persons were injured including a boy fitting MARK's description.)

OFFICER: Did you understand that?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: No, not really.

OFFICER: You can follow me. Be careful, it's slick out on the roads.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Okay. *(JOHN gets out of the Police car and gets into his. The officer drives off and JOHN follows. It continues to snow heavily.)*

ACT II, SCENE EIGHT

JOHN drives up behind a police car at the scene of an automobile accident. There are ambulances and other police cars there. JOHN bolts from his car and runs to the ambulances.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Where's the boy?

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT: Which one? *(Working on an unconscious woman.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I don't know.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT: There is a five year old on the way to the hospital.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: And the other one?

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT: Over by that tree. *(JOHN starts walking that direction.)* Be careful.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Freezes and turns around in panic.)* Who is it?

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT: I don't know, ask him. *(Pointing to a policeman.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Who is the boy over there? *(To policeman.)*

POLICEMAN: We really don't know. From what we can determine he wasn't one of the family.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: My boy is missing!

POLICEMAN: Let's go up there; maybe you can identify the boy.
(JOHN and the POLICEMAN walk up to where a boy is surrounded by ambulance attendants and policemen standing around.)

POLICEMAN: *(To detective.)* This man says his boy is missing.

DETECTIVE: When?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: This afternoon. My name is JOHN STUDEBAKER and my boy is MARK STUDEBAKER.

DETECTIVE: Are you ready?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Yes. *(The police and ambulance lights continue to flash. The DETECTIVE Takes JOHN to the boy on the ground covered by a blanket. The lights reflect on JOHN's face and eyes. JOHN's eyes reflect shock and then tears.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: It is not MARK.

DETECTIVE: Okay.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Oh my God, whose child is he?

DETECTIVE: We don't know.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: (Visibly shaken) Oh, my God. *(The DETECTIVE takes JOHN away from the boy.)*

DETECTIVE: Go home. We'll call you if we find your boy.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Thanks, what about that boy?

DETECTIVE: We'll take care of him; life flight is on the way.

JOHN walks away to car. He looks terrible and exhausted. He enters the car. He drives away and then his taillights disappear into the snow and night. The camera turns back to the accident scene.

ACT II, SCENE NINE

(At an intersection in an industrial district, the driver of a four-wheel drive Blazer, JOHN's brother, DAVID, flags down JOHN by blinking his lights. JOHN opens his car door and DAVID gets into JOHN's car.)

DAVID: Any luck finding MARK?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Tired and exhausted)* No.

DAVID: I think we have covered the streets well enough, I think we better go on foot now.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Okay.

DAVID: Go home and get something to eat and get some warm clothes on, it is 10 degrees out here.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Okay.

DAVID: When you come back, bring my dog LUCKY. You know she likes MARK, maybe she can help.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: But, it's snowing.

DAVID: We have nothing to lose.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Okay, David, how can anyone survive out there tonight? *(David shrugs.)*

(The scene resumes with JOHN walking in an industrial district with a large yellow dog. After walking several alleys, the dog becomes excited and goes to an alley beside a dumpster. JOHN digs through the snow and nearby finds a dog dead and frozen.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Oh, no. (Upon finding the dead dog, then turns to Lucky.) Let's take you back to the truck to warm up. *(JOHN takes LUCKY back to the truck, starts the truck and turns on the heater and listens to the radio. "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem " is on the radio. JOHN is tired. He lays his head back and falls asleep. Soon, there is a rap on the driver's window. JOHN is startled and upon awakening finds GAIL at the window.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: GAIL, get in. *(As he opens the passenger door.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: We haven't heard from you, so I got worried. DAVID sent everyone home and asked them to start at 7:00 when the sun comes up.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: That's good.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Looks into reflection of herself in passenger window.)* I don't know what I'm going to do if he's dead.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Please try not to think that.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Looks at JOHN sternly)* I think it's your fault. That damn job and your damn career!

JOHN STUDEBAKER: Mark ran off because you mothered him too much, because you treated him like a baby, not a growing boy. My dad never had time for me when I was growing up.

GAIL STUDEBAKER: And now MARK may have no time for either of us. If that job is so important to you, I want you out of the house. *(She gets out and slams the door and leaves.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(JOHN lays his head back on the seat in frustration and moves to lock the passenger door before he gets out. On the dash is MARK's letter to Santa. JOHN recognizes the handwriting on the outside as MARK's. It says, "To Santa Claus, North Pole." It is the letter than JOHN was supposed to mail for MARK. It has been opened. He picks it up and reads it out loud.)*

"Dear Santa, I know you know what toys I want for Christmas, because I told you in the shopping mall last week. Please bring my dad a lot of money so he won't have to work so much. I hardly ever see him, and when he comes home, he is not nice. I know they say money can't buy happiness, but it would let my mom and dad have time to spend with me and each other. Yours, MARK."

(JOHN slumps his head and face against the driver's window.)

ACT II, SCENE TEN

(MARK gets out of the dumpster and walks through back alleys in quick pace similar to a jog. He appears tired. He comes upon a bus station at the end of an alley. There are several empty buses and three or four people visible inside. He enters and huddles on one of the benches. He lays his back pack down. There are two seedy males in the mid-twenties at the entrance to the bathroom. The clock approaches midnight. One of the seedy males approaches MARK.)

SEEDY CHARACTER # 1: *(Sits down next to MARK)* Watcha doin', kid? *(MARK ignores him)*

SEEDY CHARACTER # 1: Hey, kid! I'm talkin' to you.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Yeah.

SEEDY CHARACTER #1: Where are your folks?

MARK STUDEBAKER: None of your business.

SEEDY CHARACTER # 1: *(Unzips bag)* Looks like someone is going on a trip.

MARK STUDEBAKER: Give me that back.

SEEDY CHARACTER # 1: On a night like this? You need some help. Come with me, my associate
And I will help you. *(Stands with backpack in hand and walks to bathroom door. MARK grabs for backpack but misses and then follows SEEDY CHARACTER #1 to bathroom door.)*

SEEDY CHARACTER # 2: Well, what do we have here? *(Opens door to bathroom for SEEDY CHARACTER #1 and MARK. After MARK gets to the door he pushes MARK into the bathroom.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: Quit it, give me my backpack! *(Once inside, SEEDY CHARACTER #1 opens back pack again and takes savings bank.)*

SEEDY CHARACTER #2: I'm sure this kid would want to share with us on the Christmas Eve.

SEEDY CHARACTER# 1: Sure he would. *(They grab MARK and start searching his pockets.)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: Wait, I've got to the bathroom.

(The two SEEDY CHARACTERS pause for a moment and MARK kicks one in the shins, grabs his backpack, and runs out of the bathroom door and out of the bus station. The other two run outside but tire easily and give up pursuit. MARK runs down the alleys in an industrial district

looking over his shoulder and upon discovering he is not being chased, slows to a walk The camera pans to show MARK alone in the snow in the industrial district with street lights creating a dotting pattern.)

ACT II, SCENE ELEVEN

(MARK continues to run. He comes upon a sleazy bar and stops, a car approaches and he hides behind a car. GUS' drives up in his green station wagon and park near a bar. GUS is wearing his Santa outfit with a beard. He gets out and goes into the bar, MARK sneaks up to the car after GUS is gone and gets in the car, finds an old coat, lays down in the back seat, and pulls the coat over him. He shivers for a minute and then falls asleep with the coat concealing him.)

(GUS goes in the tavern and sits at the bar, He has a beer placed in front of him by a middle-aged heavy barmaid who looks tired. There are only 5 people in the tavern. The scene passes to show 5 or 6 crumpled cans of beer on the bar.)

BARMAID: *(Yelling harshly as she wipes the counter and removes the beer cans.)* It's bar time!

GUS: You know she left me two years ago. *(Looks up at barmaid.)*

BARMAID: *(Disinterested)* Who?

GUS: My ex-wife and she took the kids. She ran off with them the day after Christmas.

BARMAID: Well, that happens.

GUS: *(Looking at his can of beer)* She said she didn't want to spoil Christmas, so she waited until the next day.

BARMAID: About finished? *(Indicating beer can.)*

GUS: Yeah. *(He looks at a miniature Christmas tree on the bar. He takes his cigarettes and bums a hole in one of the ornaments.)*

BARMAID: *(Looks crossly at him from the end of the bar.)* Quit that!

GUS: *(Looks up. Pauses and appears contemplative and pensive.)* I wonder what my little boy is doing tonight?

BARMAID: Waiting for Santa.

GUS: Oh, how I wish I could. . .

BARMAID: *(Interrupts GUS by yelling)* Bar time!

(GUS gets up, throws a wadded dollar bill on the counter, and leaves.)

ACT II, SCENE TWELVE

(JOHN is driving around town; he comes upon a sleazy bar where several cars are parked. JOHN recognizes one of the cars as GUS' green station wagon, which JOHN saw at his traffic accident. JOHN slows down, pulls out his billfold and compares the tag number with his note. He nods his head in affirmation. GUS comes out still dressed as Santa. He appears a little drunk. GUS enters and starts his car and, as usual, it starts smoking. JOHN makes a u-turn in his vehicle and pulls up his driver's door beside GUS' driver's door.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Hatefully)* Remember me?

GUS: What? *(Ignoring him.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: You hit my car last week and left the scene.

GUS: Leave me alone, I ain't done nothing. *(GUS spins his wheels and leaves, JOHN turns to follow.)*

(JOHN follows GUS through town which is a small suburban area. JOHN turns on his bright lights and tailgates GUS. GUS continues to try to elude JOHN often sliding in the snow and ice. The chase is slow speed since GUS' car can't go very fast in the snow. GUS cuts through alleys and store parking lots, and over humps. They drive a short way out of town to the railroad overpass bridge. The camera shows GUS' face from time to time, confused and scared and blinded by the bright lights. The camera shows JOHN smug. With JOHN's bright lights on the back of GUS, GUS has trouble making the curve which was seen in the opening scene with the truck driver. GUS steps on his brakes and slides off onto the shoulder of the road coming to rest against the bridge abutment without apparent damage to his car. It appears GUS could back out onto the roadway. JOHN drives on by and dims his lights. The dog, LUCKY, in JOHN's vehicle is barking.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Inside of his car as he gets on the bridge, passes GUS.)* Serves him right. *(The camera pans to GUS in car. There has been no noise from MARK in the back seat covered with an old overcoat of GUS'. GUS has a small amount of blood on his forehead as he lifts his head from the steering wheel. The engine of the car is dead. After some effort, the car engine starts and as usual, a great amount of smoke comes from the car. The gas pedal sticks again. The engine is screaming. ARK rises from the back seat but GUS does not see him. GUS puts the transmission in reverse and the rear wheels begin to spin dangerously; the car begins to slide down hill toward the railroad tracks below. Halfway down the hill, the car wheels hit a rock as it slides sideways and there begins to rollover. The car rolls slowly over twice and lands on its top on the tracks. Gas is seen dripping from the cars gas tank.)*

ACT II, SCENE THIRTEEN

(From high above the scene the camera shows JOHN's vehicle with lights on driving in the snow in a semirural area and coming back into town. The snow continues. JOHN drives by the earlier auto accident scene where GUS hit JOHN's car. The area is now empty of people and cars. The street lights give an eerie lonely feeling. He drives by the bar where he first saw GUS. JOHN continues to look for MARK. The camera shows him looking from side to side. JOHN drives by again the quick food restaurant where he looked for MARK. At the parking lot of the quick food restaurant, JOHN stops the car, opens his door, stands between the door and vehicle, and surveys the scene again over the roof of his vehicle. D.J. McKAY comes on the Radio after a Christmas song concludes. It is silent outside with no movement, the streets are empty.)

DJ.McKAY: *(Somber)* It can only be a mystery why it takes losing a small boy like MARK STUDEBAKER to awaken the spirit of Christmas in me. Thank you to each who called and looked for MARK this evening. It appears to me it is this gift of caring and sharing that is the spirit of Christmas. Only if it didn't take a tragedy like this one to stir that spirit of life. Only of that spirit could remain awake and alive year round. *(Plays "Silent Night.")*

(D.J. McKAY has been dressed as an elf all day and evening. The camera shows him in the radio station control room as he takes off his elf cap and puts his head into his hands.)

(JOHN at his vehicle puts his face down in the snow on the roof of the vehicle. Suddenly the dog barks bringing JOHN out of his stupor. He looks around again and takes a determined posture and gets into the car. He leaves the restaurant and drives to the bridge where GUS ran off the road. JOHN at the bridge scene notices the roll marks going down the hill. The dog upon arrival is barking wildly. When JOHN stops and opens the door the dog jumps out and runs down the hill to GUS' car. As JOHN is leaving his vehicle, GAIL drives up.)

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(Exits her car)* JOHN, I'm sorry.

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(They embrace and hug)* It's okay. *(After a long embrace JOHN pulls himself away from GAIL; there are tears in GAIL's eyes.)* Go get the police! There has been an accident. *(JOHN points to GUS' car.)*

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Okay. *(Pauses and looks back)* Anything on MARK?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: No. *(GAIL leaves in her vehicle)* JOHN goes down to GUS' car where LUCKY is barking and bouncing around excitedly. JOHN finds GUS' car upside down with gas leaking from the gas tank. With his flashlight, he looks in each window and finds GUS' face up against a window. He bangs on the car door. GUS stirs.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Yells to GUS) Back away! (GUS moves a little and JOHN kicks out the door glass. He helps GUS out.) GUS no longer has a beard on, but has a three day growth of a beard. (To GUS) Are you alright?*

GUS: *Yeah. (Each struggles to get up part of the embankment. LUCKY, the dog, is barking wildly at the car. A train is heard in the distance.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *Is there anyone in there?*

GUS: *No.*

(LUCKY stops barking and goes into the car through the window that GUS exited. LUCKY comes out dragging MARK's backpack. LUCKY drags it up to JOHN.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *It's MARK's! (JOHN hurries back down to the car with the LUCKY who begins to bark at a door barely visible because of the position of the car and the snow. LUCKY then tries to paw away the snow. JOHN falls to his knees and pushes away the snow and sees a hand against the glass and recognizes the shirt.) It's MARK!*

GUS: *(Who has joined JOHN at the car) I didn't know anyone was in there. (The train sounded again louder.)*

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *Push! Hurry, the train! (JOHN and GUS put their backs to the vehicle and push it enough to roll on its rooftop and exposed the door and window where MARK is. The train sounds closer. A train engine light appears down the track. JOHN kicks out the window and JOHN and GUS pull MARK out. He is still unconscious. They drag MARK hurriedly up the hill. The train arrives hitting the car, spinning it around and causing it to burst into flames. As they near JOHN's vehicle they collapse in the snow with MARK between them. The car explodes as the train is heard slowing. With the fire reflecting in JOHN's face, he rubs snow on MARK's face.) MARK! MARK! Wake up!*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(MARK slowly starts to regain consciousness) Daddy!*

(They hug as the sun rises with an orange hue. JOHN grabs GUS' hand in an embrace of thanks. GAIL drives up. Police are seen coming in the background. As she exits the vehicle, she sees MARK, runs to him, sits beside him in the snow and holds his head to her chest.)

GAIL STUDEBAKER: *(With appreciation) Mark, Mark!*

ACT III, SCENE ONE

(A large number of people are gathered at the STUDEBAKER home for Christmas dinner. All of the relatives who helped look for MARK and friends are there with their families. Also, GUS is there in regular clothes, and cleaned up, appearing revitalized. The mood is festive. Children are playing politely. Adults are visiting. The house is crowded. JOHN has his arm around GAIL. D.J. McKAY is there. Each adult has a wine glass. Christmas music is playing in the background.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Raises a wine glass in a toast)* A toast to each of you and a special thanks to those who helped look for MARK. *(JOHN touches glasses with several people including GUS and D.J. McKAY.)* Now it's time for dinner.

(The group stands around the serving table ready to take plates in a buffet style meal.)

JOHN STUDEBAKER: I'd like to say a prayer on this very merry day.

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Interrupting JOHN)* Daddy, can I say it?

JOHN STUDEBAKER: *(Pleased, but miffed)* Sure. *(Smiles)*

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Bows his head, then the others lower their head. MARK looks up again in a trancelike countenance. He is a radiant child.)* Dear God, I learned a lot yesterday. I found out who puts the presents from Santa Claus under the tree. I thought I was cheated and ran away. *(Pause and MARK grabs JOHN's hand)* But today, I learned why those presents were put under the tree. The presents are put there because someone loves me and because I love them. And that is the spirit of Christmas. You just need someone who cares and will share their love with you. Thank you for the best Christmas ever. Amen.

(The others look up slowly with smiles and an occasional tear. The children immediately begin playing.)

GAIL STUDEBAKER: Let's eat. *(Everyone starts filling their plates)*

(D.J. McKAY is in front of MARK and JOHN at the table and offers to put some food on MARK's plate.)

MARK STUDEBAKER: *(Looking serious)* Why can't we have the spirit of Christmas all year long?

D.J. McKAY looks seriously at JOHN and JOHN looks equally seriously at D.J. McKAY. Suddenly each breaks into a mischievous grin, as if an idea sprung into their minds at the same time.)

ACT III, SCENE TWO

(The roar of a diesel truck is heard and the camera opens out of the dark shadow on a sweaty young truck driver in an apparently hot place on the interstate highway. He pulls his billfold from his back pocket and sets it unfolded and upright on the dashboard showing his wife and 2 children ages 3 and 5.)

TRUCKDRIVER: Honey, it's been a couple of days. (To photograph) Kids, I'll see you tomorrow, maybe tonight. I sure miss you all.

D.J.McKAY: *(Reaches over to the radio, searches for a radio station on the dial, finds it and looks at the pictures again.) (Over the radio) This is D.J. McKAY on WXMS here is Tulsa. It may get up to 100 degrees today. Find some shade, friends. Here is one of my favorites from the 24-hour, 7-days-a-week and 365-days-a-year noel station. (He plays "Handel's Messiah," with a high chorus version.)*

(The truck driver smiles and blows a kiss to the photographs, as the song plays the shot changes to D.J.McKAY in a D.J. sound room where he is playing records. The camera pulls back to show JOHN STUDEBAKER in the adjoining room. On the glass partition between JOHN and D.J. McKAY is the station logo and statement which says "WXMS, Keeping the Christmas Spirit Year Round." D.J. McKAY signals okay to JOHN, who smiles. The music continues. Credits roll.)

(The camera pans to the BURLY ATTENDANT in the convenience store waiting on people with the radio in the background playing WXMS music. Customers smile as the BURLY ATTENDANT pats a small boy on the head. Next, the camera pans to GUS working as a mechanic in a large automobile dealer's garage with the radio at his station playing WXMS music. As fellow mechanics and customers walk by they smile and indicate their approval of the music. The camera next shows GAIL at home cleaning with WXMS in the background; she sits on a couch, puts her feet up, keeps time to the music with her finger and smiles. The POLICEMAN who talked with JOHN is in his squad car watching traffic and listening to WXMS. The camera pans back to the WXMS station to D.J. McKAY in the DJ room as MARK STUDAKAKER sneaks up behind D.J. McKAY and puts his hands over D.J. McKAY's eyes. D.J. McKAY grabs MARK and hugs him. JOHN STUDABAKER walks in and puts one hand on MARK's shoulder and his other hand on D.J. McKAY's shoulder.)

END