FADE IN:

INT. THE LEONARD HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Heavily decorated for Christmas. Tinsel and mistletoe hang from the ceiling, a tree in the corner is lit from head to toe.

In front of a roaring fire, THOMAS (8), a mop of jet black hair and wearing pajamas, lies on his stomach as he writes on a piece of paper.

INSERT: PIECE OF PAPER

Dear Santa,

This Christmas, if it’s not too much trouble, I would like a Teddy Bear, some books to read and a puppy. I think I have been a good boy all year and they would be the best presents ever.

Thank you,

Thomas.

BACK TO SCENE

Thomas smiles, happy with his work, folds the paper in half and jumps to his feet.

As if in a desperate rush, he sprints out the door.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

At a large oblong table, sits Thomas’ brother KYLE (13), broad with curly blond hair, his mother BARB (40), stylishly dressed with wavy golden hair, and his father RICK (40), black hair and a thick black mustache.

They are in the middle of a game of Snakes and Ladders, when Thomas bursts through the door and hands Barb the piece of paper.

BARB

Oh, Thomas, must you disturb us during our game?

The look of excitement drains from Thomas’ face as she opens the letter.
BARB
What’s this now?

She examines the writing closely.

BARB
Ah, you’d like a Teddy Bear, books and a little puppy from Santa?

Rick and Kyle scoff.

Thomas gives a slow, timid nod.

BARB
Well, say the words and you shall get your wish.

Thomas opens his mouth, nothing comes out. He tries again, nothing.

The three at the table erupt into laughter, Rick bangs on the table in delight.

BARB
Santa Claus doesn’t bring gifts to little mute boys. I’m sure I’ve told you this before.

Rick grabs Kyle around the shoulders and brings him in close to him.

RICK
He only brings gifts to big, strong boys like your brother.

Again, they break into uncontrollable laughter.

Thomas slumps his shoulders and plods out the door.

INT. THOMAS’ BEDROOM - LATER

Dull grey wallpaper, a single bed and a small wardrobe. Drab.

A small stocking hangs from the doorknob.

Thomas sits against a wall, bounces a tennis ball against the opposite wall.

He catches it in two hands, looks down at a smiley face drawn on with marker, he flashes a smile back.

A roar comes from downstairs.
KYLE (O.S.)
(screaming)
But I want to open them now!

A moment passes, Thomas sits wide-eyed and listens.

BARB (O.S.)
(calling)
Thomas? Stop bouncing that ball and
come down stairs, your brother is
going to open some of his presents.

Thomas gently puts the ball down, leaves the room.

INT. THE LEONARD HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Thomas sits in the corner, away from his parents who sit
beside his brother as he tears into the pile of gifts under
the tree.

RICK
Remember son, not all of them.
You’ve got to leave some for
tomorrow.

Thomas fixes an envious stare onto his brother.

BARB
Thomas, dear?

He breaks his gaze, darts a hopeful look at his mother.

BARB
It’s getting late. Time for bed,
don’t you think.

He nods, slowly gets to his feet.
The family stare as he leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Thomas trudges up the stairs, laughter fills the room he
just left.
INT. THOMAS’ BEDROOM – LATER

Thomas lies in darkness, eyes closed.

A sound of bells and heavy footsteps from outside force his eyes open.

His door creaks open.

A tall, dark creature, DARK SANTA, wearing a traditional Santa costume that hangs off his thin frame, stoops through the doorway.

He walks to the middle of the room, grunts, looks around.

Thomas, although afraid, cannot take his eyes off the creature.

Dark Santa’s beady red eyes scan the room, until he settles on the stocking that hangs from the door.

He walks to it, takes a long thin box from an inside pocket in his red coat and places it into the stocking.

He turns, stares at Thomas. He raises a stick like finger to where his lips should be, although not distinguishable, and gives a ‘shhh’ gesture.

He leaves the room.

Thomas sits up, stares toward the stocking. After a moment of thought, decides against checking it out, lays down and slams his eyes shut.

EXT. THE LEONARD HOUSEHOLD – DAY

The sun sits low in the sky, birds tweet and chirp.

INT. THE LEONARD HOUSEHOLD – THOMAS’ BEDROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Thomas’ eyes fling open, a sharp stare immediately locks onto the stocking hanging on the door.

He leaps from his bed, straight to the stocking.

He pulls the long box from within, holds it in his hands.

It’s navy blue in colour, with bright blue letters across the front, which spell out: 20 QUESTIONS.

He smiles as he spins it slowly in his grip, gathering every little detail of the box.
INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rick, Barb and Kyle sit on the floor around the tree as Kyle opens more gifts.

KYLE
Is that it?

RICK
Well you opened a lot last night, son.

KYLE
So what!

BARB
Easy now, Kyle. There’s so much for you play with.

Kyle jumps up and down, banging his feet on the ground.

KYLE
I want more!

Thomas walks through the door, clutches his one and only gift close to his chest.

Rick, Barb and Kyle stare at him as if he had grown an extra limb.

BARB
What’s that?

Thomas points a finger at his chest.

BARB
It’s yours? Let us see.

He walks to his mother, reluctantly hands over the box.

BARB
Twenty Questions?

She looks to Rick and Kyle.

BARB
Who did this?

They both shrug. She stares back at Thomas.

BARB
Where did you get this?

He stares at her, then shrugs.
She giggles.

**BARB**

Well, it’s obviously a mix up. It was obviously meant for your brother.

Thomas makes a swift grab for the box, she pulls it away at the last second.

She flashes him an ice cold stare.

**BARB**

I’ll let you away with that because it’s Christmas.

She turns with a warm smile to Kyle.

**BARB**

Here you are, honey.

He snatches it from her hands.

**KYLE**

Awesome! Can we play after dinner?

**BARB**

Of course, darling.

**KYLE**

And let Thomas watch.

He flashes an evil grin at Thomas.

Thomas turns and shuffles back into his corner, watches as they go through the assortment of gifts that surround his brother.

**INT. DINING ROOM – LATER**

Thomas sits across from Kyle at the table, Barb across from Rick.

A small plate, with no sign of food sits in front of Thomas. Big plates, full of leftovers and bones lay in front of the rest.

Rick leans back and pats his stomach.

**RICK**

As always, great dinner, dear.

Barb cracks a confident smile.
BARB
When you’re good, you’re good.

She continues to smile, shifts her eyes to Thomas.

BARB
What do you say?

He stares at her.

BARB
Typical.

KYLE
Let’s play the game.

RICK
Great idea, son.

Barb holds up a hand, as if to stop that thought.

BARB
First, Thomas has to clean up.

As soon as the words leave her mouth, Thomas is up, takes the plates from the table.

Kyle reaches under his seat and brandishes 20 Questions, sets it down and opens it, revealing a single deck of cards.

Thomas comes in and out of the room, gathers plates and anything else on the table.

RICK
Ok, you know the rules?

Kyle shrugs his shoulders.

RICK
A person picks a card, the others have twenty questions to ask to guess what’s on the card.

With the table now clear, Thomas retakes his seat.

BARB
And the questions have to be able to be answered with either ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

RICK
Got it?
Thomas stares at his brother, confusion washes over Kyle’s face.

RICK
Ok, I’ll go first.

He picks a card from the box.

RICK
Ok, go.

BARB
Are you human?

RICK
No.

KYLE
Oh, I get it. What colour are you?

Thomas silently laughs.

BARB
No, dear, only a yes or no answer.

KYLE
I know. Eh, are you an animal?

RICK
Very good, son. But no.

A proud smile grows across Kyle’s face.

BARB
Are you a toy?

RICK
Yes.

KYLE
Are you soft?

RICK
Yes.

Involuntarily, the words just tumble out of Thomas’ mouth.

THOMAS
A Teddy Bear!

In a poof of red smoke and gold glitter, Rick vanishes, a soft, fluffy teddy bear takes his place.

Barb, Kyle and Thomas look on in terror.
KYLE
Dad?

Barb moves to get up from the chair, she can’t. She’s stuck.

BARB
I can’t move.

She looks to Thomas, narrows her eyes.

BARB
What have you done?

He shakes his head, confused.

KYLE
I can’t move either, Mom.

A card flings from the box and lands in front of Barb.

Slowly, she picks it up.

BARB
We have to play, son.

Nervously, Kyle nods.

KYLE
Are you a human?

She shakes her head.

KYLE
Are you a toy?

Another shake of the head.

KYLE
Do I own it?

She shakes her haid again.

Like uncontrollable vomit, words spill out of Thomas’ mouth.

THOMAS
Books!

Another poof of red smoke and gold glitter. Barb is gone and replaced by a pile of books.

A nervous smile appears on Thomas’ face.

Kyle sobs, a card slides in front of him. He picks it up.
KYLE
Please don’t.

Thomas tries to talk, nothing.

Kyle breaks into laughter, points a finger at his brother.

Thomas looks to one side of him; a Teddy Bear, the other side; a pile of books.

He smirks, in full control now.

THOMAS
A puppy.

Kyle’s eyes widen for a second, before a big poof of red smoke and gold glitter. He’s replaced by a tiny Beagle puppy.

The puppy walks across the table, into Thomas’ arms.

Surrounded by a new Teddy Bear, a pile of books, he strokes his new puppy, a grin spreads across his lips.

FADE OUT.