

Lonely This Christmas

by

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FADE IN:

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

BRANDON HUNTER (7), peacefully asleep in bed, clutches his worn teddy bear close to his chest. His eyelids flicker open.

A look of realization. He jolts awake and rubs his eyes. He bounces up from his bed, runs to the...

HALLWAY

He slows to walking pace, looks into the doorway up ahead. Christmas decorations. Flashing lights.

He smiles, drops the teddy bear and quickens his pace again as he enters the...

LIVING ROOM

He looks on in amazement. Many wrapped-up presents sit under the beautifully decorated Christmas tree, which provides the only source of light to the room.

Excited, Brandon moves towards the tree.

He grabs a present, rips off the wrapping paper. It's an expensive action figure.

He holds the action figure up, admires it, then his eyes catch someone at the other side of the room.

BRANDON

Daddy?

He drops the action figure to the floor.

ON THE COUCH, is the body of GEORGE HUNTER (32). His now yellow skin looks even scarier with every flash of the nearby Christmas lights.

Brandon SCREAMS, takes a few steps back. He trips over something, falls onto his back.

ON THE FLOOR, is the body of SHARON HUNTER (30). Her eyelids and mouth still wide open in terror.

Brandon SCREAMS again.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

DETECTIVE WRIGHT (35), looks slightly worse for wear, flicks a switch, turns off the Christmas lights. DETECTIVE NOLAN (44) smartly dressed and notepad in hand, looks up.

WRIGHT

What? I'm not even gonna pretend
I'm in the Christmas spirit
anymore.

No reply from Nolan, he turns his attention back to his notepad.

The remaining presents under the tree remain untouched. COPS and FORENSIC EXPERTS crowd the scene. TWO BODY BAGS are zipped up.

NOLAN

Your thoughts, detective?

WRIGHT

It's Christmas fucking day and I'm
here, that's my thoughts.

NOLAN

It's what you signed up for.

WRIGHT

I've got two kids and a pissed off
wife waiting back home wondering
where the hell I am, see if that
line washes with them.

Nolan draws him a disgusted look.

NOLAN

Keep it down, will ya? At least you
have somewhere to go. Spare a
thought for the little guy, huh?

IN THE HALLWAY, Brandon sits against the wall, holds his new action figure against his chest as tightly as he can.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

SUPER: 23rd DECEMBER. TWO DAYS AGO...

Brandon holds Sharon's hand. He looks impatient. A queue of parents and kids form behind them. The sign at the front of the queue reads "SANTA'S GROTTO".

Sharon leans down, fixes Brandon's messy hair.

SHARON

Brandon, honey, make sure you let
Santa know all of the presents you
want. We don't want him missing
any, do we?

BRANDON

I will, Mommy.

George leans down to Brandon's ear.

GEORGE
And don't forget to ask for the
Playstation.

He nods enthusiastically. Sharon hits George on the arm as Brandon turns away.

The dressed-up ELF approaches the front of the queue, unclips the velvet rope and waves Brandon through.

ELF
Next, please. Santa is right this
way, follow me.

The Elf takes Brandon's hand, leads him into...

SANTA'S GROTTO

A typical MALL SANTA, looks fake to everyone unless you're a kid. The Elf escorts Brandon towards him, helps him sit him on Mall Santa's lap.

Brandon's demeanor has changed. He looks uneasy, his expression blank.

MALL SANTA
Ho ho ho! What's your name, son?

No answer from Brandon. He looks into Mall Santa's eyes.

MALL SANTA (CONT'D)
Santa can't bring you any presents
if he doesn't know your name.

More silence from Brandon. Mall Santa looks unsure.

MALL SANTA (CONT'D)
Okay then...have you been a good
boy or a bad--

BRANDON
Why?

A beat of silence. Mall Santa looks confused.

MALL SANTA
Ho ho! Why what, little one? Why do
I spread happiness and joy?

The Elf approaches with a Polaroid camera.

ELF
Say cheese!

Brandon SCREAMS at Mall Santa.

BRANDON
NO! I want my Mommy. I WANT MY
MOMMY!

The camera FLASHES as Brandon's tantrum continues. Mall Santa slips from character.

MALL SANTA
Look, kid--

Brandon SCREAMS as loud as he can, attracts the attention of everyone in the mall. George and Sharon rush over.

SHARON
Baby, what's up? It's Santa, it's
okay, everything's okay.

Brandon jumps down from Mall Santa's lap, hugs his mom tightly.

GEORGE
(to Mall Santa)
Sorry 'bout that, he's not too
great around strangers. We're
working on it.

The Elf shrugs apologetically and hands George the Polaroid picture.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - BEDROOM - PRESENT

ON THE PICTURE, an angry Brandon sits next to Mall Santa, but Santa's face has been scribbled over with a black marker.

NOLAN
Looks like someone else wasn't
exactly in the Christmas spirit
either.

Detective Nolan holds the picture up.

WRIGHT
When Santa looks as bad as that, no
wonder the kid figured he was a
fake.

Wright takes the picture, throws it down on the desk.

WRIGHT (CONT'D)
And now his parents are dead too.
If that's not a shit week, I don't
know what the fuck is. But hey,
life is shit., and this kid is
learning that early.

Wright leaves the room. Nolan sighs. He turns to the hallway. Brandon, who remains in the same position, action figure still clutched tightly against his chest.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: 22nd DECEMBER, THREE DAYS AGO...

Sharon YELLS as loud as she can.

SHARON
George! Get in here!

She stands on the couch, her eyes scan the floor frantically. George and Brandon enter the room, both alarmed.

GEORGE
What's wrong, hun?

Her eyes nearly bulge out of her head, she points feverishly.

SHARON
A rat! There's a rat in the house!

George looks. Nothing. He grins.

GEORGE
That's where Brandon gets his wild imagination.

She hits him on the arm, deadly serious.

SHARON
It was over there! I saw it!

Sharon points to the corner of the room.

GEORGE
A mouse, maybe, it can't be a rat. Don't be a drama queen.

Annoyed, she raises her voice.

SHARON
I don't care what it is, just get rid of it already, will you?!

George turns to Brandon.

GEORGE
Hey, buddy. Go grab a DVD and watch it in our room. I'll give ya a call when it's safe. Daddy has to deal with this problem for mommy, okay?

Brandon nods his head, goes to the DVD rack. He pulls out a "SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS" DVD.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 You'd better hurry.
 (mockingly)
 Your mommy's scared.

Sharon looks like she's going to have a panic attack. Brandon leaves the room.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brandon approaches the TV and DVD player. He takes the disk out of the case, opens the DVD player...

Sharon SCREAMS in the other room.

Startled, Brandon drops the disk, knocks the DVD stand over. LOADS OF CASES AND DISKS litter the floor. He regains focus, shuffles through the mess on the floor.

He finds the Spongebob DVD, but his eyes catch one next to it. On it, "50 SHADES OF SANTA CLAUS" handwritten on the disk.

Oblivious, Brandon smiles, he picks up the Santa disk and inserts it into the player. He presses 'PLAY'.

ON THE TV, Sharon appears, dressed in a very revealing Sexy Santa outfit. She laughs directly into the camera as she sets it to face the bed.

Brandon watches on. His eyes widen as he recognizes her.

BRANDON
 Mommy?

ON THE TV, Sharon turns at the sound of a familiar voice.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)
 Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas!

A very convincing dressed-up Santa Claus enters the picture, carries a large sack over his shoulder.

BRANDON
 Wow...Santa.

Brandon's face lights up at the sight of Santa and his mother on the same screen.

ON THE TV, Santa forcefully throws Sharon down on the bed.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)
 Someone's been a naughty girl this
 year. A very naughty girl!
 (MORE)

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Do you know what Santa does to
naughty girls?

Sharon licks her finger seductively.

SHARON (V.O.)

What *do* you do to naughty girls?

Santa reaches into his sack, pulls out a PINK FRILLY WHIP. Sharon flashes a cheeky grin. He pulls her dress up, reveals her bare bum, gently lashes the whip.

Sharon lets out a playful yelp as the whip makes contact. He lashes her again, this time harder. She lets out another cry.

Brandon looks on open mouthed at the TV as the sound of the whip lashing continues.

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)

I've got plenty more in my sack for
you, dear.

ON THE TV, Santa WHIPS her hard again. She SCREAMS.

Sharon SCREAMS O.S in the other room.

ON THE TV, Sharon SCREAMS again, a scream of pleasure and pain but Brandon doesn't know the difference.

He closes his eyes, holds his hands over his ears. Sharon continues to scream and shout in the other room.

Brandon opens one of his eyes, looks at the TV.

ON THE TV, Sharon CRIES OUT as Santa throws her against the wall.

Brandon hits 'STOP' on the DVD player. He sits with his back against the wall, his mind trying to process everything.

Sharon SCREAMS from the other room again.

SHARON (O.S.)

There it is! I told you!

Brandon covers his ears, traumatized.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - PRESENT

Wright picks up the DVD case of "SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS" from the floor, looks at it.

WRIGHT

What I would give to be watching
this crap with my kids right now.

Nolan looks at him like he's from another planet. WRIGHT hits 'PLAY' on the DVD player.

NOLAN
You want to be home in time for
dinner? Focus on the job.

A SCREAM from the TV! Detective Nolan turns, watches on.

WRIGHT
What the fuck?

ON THE TV, Santa has pinned Sharon against the wall. He grips her hands over her head with one hand, tries to pull down his baggy trousers with the other.

NOLAN
What's this, some low budget porn
crap? Turn it off already, will ya?

SANTA CLAUS (V.O.)
(out of character)
Shoot, my beard.

Wright chuckles.

WRIGHT
Hey, you recognize this guy?

Nolan turns, walks closer the TV.

ON THE TV, Santa picks up his fallen stick-on beard. He turns towards the camera. It's George.

NOLAN
Jesus. Have some respect, will ya?
Turn it off.

Wright rolls his eyes, obliges. Nolan shakes his head. He looks towards the hallway. Brandon sits, eyes tightly shut, both hands over his ears.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: CHRISTMAS EVE, TWELVE HOURS AGO...

George looks like an excited kid.

GEORGE
I told ya this would work.

Sharon enters the room. George holds A DEAD MOUSE by the tail.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Looks like we *will* be spending
 Christmas alone. Just the three of
 us.

George smiles proudly but Sharon still looks uneasy at the sight of the mouse.

Brandon enters, looks at the dead mouse in wonder and amazement.

SHARON
 Well? Get rid of it already.

George walks towards the bin. Sharon points towards the door.

SHARON (CONT'D)
 Outside, George!

George leaves the room. Sharon spots Brandon by the doorway. She approaches him.

SHARON (CONT'D)
 Oh sweetie, you weren't supposed to see that. You see, that...that *thing* can carry diseases and could hurt all of us. Daddy had to stop it. You understand that, right?

Brandon nods.

SHARON (CONT'D)
 Great, honey. Now how about we get everything ready for Santa, huh? Why don't you set out the cookies and milk and I'll make sure everything is nice and clean so he has space to leave you lots and lots of presents?

Brandon smiles. Sharon pats him on the head, smiles and leaves the room. Brandon looks at something on the table.

ON THE TABLE, a small bottle. The label reads: "STRONG RODENT POISON - KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN"

He picks up the bottle, heads to the kitchen.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - PRESENT

ON THE BOTTLE OF RODENT POISON.

Nolan picks it up, looks inside. Not a drip remains. Both detectives exchange glances.

Nolan looks at his notepad. He has several FLASHBACKS.

The photo with the Mall Santa's face scribbled out - the screams from the DVD - Brandon covering his ears in the hallway - The empty glass and plate near the dead bodies in the living room.

NOLAN

It can't be.

He looks out of the door to the hallway.

IN THE HALLWAY, an OFFICER leads Brandon away. He turns his head and makes eye contact with both detectives as he goes.

INT. HUNTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: CHRISTMAS EVE, EIGHT HOURS AGO...

George sits next to Sharon on the couch.

GEORGE

Asleep yet?

SHARON

Like a baby.

GEORGE

Then it's time for celebration.
Another Christmas...

SHARON

Another five hundred bucks spent on
toys for us to fall over.

George laughs.

GEORGE

So...milk or cookies?

Sharon snatches the plate of cookies from the table.

SHARON

You know you don't get to choose.

GEORGE

But I killed the mouse.

SHARON

Good for you. Merry Christmas!

Sharon smiles. George picks up the glass of milk, raises it.

GEORGE

Merry Christmas, sweetheart.

They kiss.

FADE OUT: