

CHRISTMAS VILLAGE JUNCTION

Written by

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## LOGLINE

A wealthy developer finds himself reduced into his Victorian model train layout where he learns the importance of family and of Christmas.

## SYNOPSIS

Bernard Winfield is a wealthy developer, who busies himself with his beloved Victorian model train set and village. He says he has created it for his grandchildren but he doesn't let them touch it. He particularly does not want his young grandson to insert the primitive creche he has built for it.

After an accident knocks him out, he comes to inside his Christmas Village layout. There he meets people from his past and his present, but also figures from the Nativity story he dimly remembers. He thinks he has been placed in his own personal heaven.

However, He finds out the perfect little world he had built for himself has as many troubles as the one from which he was escaping. It still has poverty, suffering, cruelty, and violence. It is endangered by an evil tycoon, who wants to corrupt and recruit Bernard.

Bernard searches for the faith he had mislaid but it eludes him. With the help of his family and a faithful woman who loves him despite his fallings, he is able to confront and defeat the evils of the little world. He learns to appreciate the importance of family... and of Christmas.

FADE IN:

INT. CHRISTMAS VILLAGE MODEL - DAY

An HO gauge model train set weaves through its elaborate layout.

The 1880s-style steam locomotive pulls a baggage car and several brightly colored passenger cars. It emerges from a tunnel into a Victorian village of detailed model houses.

It slows through the train yard where several freight cars stand. It pulls up to the station, a grand wooden building with gingerbread gewgaws.

Several carefully painted model figures dot the platform, including the Station Master in his blue uniform, holding a lantern.

Behind the station is a block of downtown where two and three-story shop buildings shoulder each other. Beyond are several large residential buildings and a park with a band shell and gazebo.

Like a crouched lion on a papier-mâché hill, its proudest building, the Winfield Inn, overlooks the town.

INT. HOBBY ROOM - DAY

The train layout takes up over half of what was once a small bedroom in a large house.

Hovering over this exquisite little world is the face of BERNARD Winfield, 62, its creator. He wears an engineer's cap and controls the transformer with one deft hand.

The doorbell downstairs rings.

His smile turns to an annoyed frown as he reluctantly gets up to answer it. He stops the train and exits the room.

INT. THE DOOR - DAY

He opens the door to his son BERT, mid-thirties, wearing a shoddy sports coat, and stained white shirt, with a poorly knotted tie.

BERNARD

What do you want?

BERT

Can't a son stop by to wish his father a Merry Christmas?

BERNARD  
Merry Christmas. Good bye.

Bernard starts to shut the door, but Bert steps in.

BERT  
Wait! It's about the children's  
Christmas.

BERNARD  
What is it. I'm busy.

BERT  
Busy doing what? Evicting people?  
Do you say "Bah, humbug" when you  
evict someone on Christmas?

BERNARD  
If you must know, I'm getting the  
Christmas village train layout  
ready for your children.

BERT  
That is such bullshit, Dad. You  
never even let them touch it.

BERNARD  
When they're older...

BERT  
No, you just made your perfect  
little world where you can control  
everything. Where your grand Inn  
hasn't become a flophouse for  
immigrants and indigents.

BERNARD  
What?

BERT  
A perfect little world where wives  
don't get cancer and die on you.  
Where...

BERNARD  
You're drunk

BERT  
I've never been sober...  
sober...er.

BERNARD  
Get out!

Bernard maneuvers Bert to the door. Bert does not resist. As he exits, he turns and speaks.

BERT  
A perfect little world where  
painted plastic sons aren't always  
disappointing their painted plastic  
fathers.

Bernard slams the door.

INT. THE HOBBY ROOM - DAY

Bernard is again hunched over his train layout. This time he is gluing the foliage on miniature trees and bushes. The doorbell rings again. He starts to rise but this time he hears someone else answer the door. He returns to work.

There is a brief pause. His daughter-in-law BETTY, 35, calls from downstairs.

BETTY (O.S.)  
Bernie? Are you up there.

Bernard looks annoyed. He waits a moment before answering.

BERNARD  
Here. I just finished the layout.  
Are the children with you?

BETTY (O.S.)  
They're in the kitchen trying out  
Carmella's Christmas cookies.

Betty enters the room. She's an attractive woman in a business suit.

BERNARD  
I want them to see this.

BETTY  
They would be more enthusiastic if  
you let them help you.

BERNARD  
I can't. It's too delicate.

BETTY  
I have to leave them with you for  
the afternoon. I'll send them up.  
Keep them entertained.

BERNARD  
Your husband was here.

BETTY

I hope you didn't give him any money.

BERNARD

No. He wanted to get the kids something for Christmas.

BETTY

No, I'm going to put presents under the tree and say they are from him. Like I did last year and the year before.

BERNARD

Do you need any money...?

BETTY

No, I can manage. I could manage better if I were a man.

BERNARD

What do you mean.

BETTY

At the bank, I work twice as hard as any of the men, know twice as much, and still get paid half as much as they do.

BERNARD

Keep working hard. Bloom where you are planted.

BETTY

Yeah. That's what Edith kept telling me. Never sure what she meant.

BERNARD

My grandfather used to say that too. Make the best out of what you've got. It's all any of us can do.

BETTY

Bert... With all his advantages, how could he have thrown it all away like that.

BERNARD

I keep asking myself that.

BETTY  
I must get back.

Betty exits quickly. Bernard returns his attention to the train.

It pulls from the station, leaves the village and follows the main line to the far end of the layout winding through papier-mâché mountains covered with brush-bristle pine trees and spongy dyed liken underbrush.

His grandchildren, CAROLYN, 12, and KENNY, 9, enter. Carolyn is attractive but a bit boyish. walks with a severe limp since he has braces on his legs. He has a mild cerebral palsy.

Carolyn is munching on a cookie. holds an object behind his back.

BERNARD  
There it is! Almost finished and ready for Christmas!

CAROLYN  
Ew! What's that smell.

BERNARD  
Solvent. I just finished cleaning up a few glue spots.

KENNY  
Cool! Can I drive it this time?

BERNARD  
The train? Not yet, Kenny. Maybe when you're older.

is disappointed but not surprised.

Carolyn walks around the layout examining everything carefully.

CAROLYN  
Why's there only snow by the tunnel. If it's Christmas, shouldn't there be snow everywhere?

BERNARD  
Good question, Carolyn. I didn't want to spray the buildings with that fake snow. It would have hidden their fine detail. Anyway, snow belongs up on the mountain where it doesn't make such a mess.

KENNY

Grandpa? I brought you a present  
for the village.

From behind his back, he shyly pulls out an assemblage of  
Popsicle sticks, upon which figures cutout from a coloring  
book were pasted.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I made it myself. In Sunday school.

BERNARD

That's wonderful. What is it.

KENNY

It's the manger. Where Jesus was  
born. See, there's his mommy Mary,  
and his daddy, and the cow, and the  
sheep.

Bernard carefully takes the primitive crèche from him.

BERNARD

We'll put it downstairs by the  
tree.

KENNY

No! It's for the Christmas village.

BERNARD

It's very nice, Kenny, but it  
doesn't go.

KENNY

Why not? It's for Christmas.

BERNARD

You see, Christmas is to remind us  
of a simpler time when people were  
joyful, and hopeful, and kind.

KENNY

I thought it was Baby Jesus'  
birthday.

BERNARD

People back then believed in that  
too.

KENNY

So, if they did, why can't I put my  
stable there.



BERNARD

Well... It's not to scale.  
Everything's supposed to be to  
scale. Even the figures.

He picks up a figure from the platform and holds it up to the cutouts on the Popsicle stick construction.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

And another thing. Look at the detail.

He reaches over and picks up the Inn from its perch. He kneels beside him and shows him the detail work.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Do you recognize this?

Kenny pouts.

KENNY

No.

Carolyn comes over to look at it closely.

CAROLYN

It's the old hotel. Mom says it's a shame you're going to tear it down.

BERNARD

The city won't let us tear it down. It's a historic building. We're going gut it inside.

He points out details on the model.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

This is an exact model. I had the architect make it to scale. Every detail's authentic. Look, it even has door handles.

KENNY

Will it still be a hotel?

BERNARD

It's not really a hotel, now. We're converting it to condos. You know what a condo is?

KENNY

No.

CAROLYN  
It's where people live.

BERNARD  
It's what your grandpa builds. For people to live in. First, we tear out all the inside walls and floors. Then--

KENNY  
Are all these little houses condos.

BERNARD  
No. They're models of Victorian homes.

KENNY  
For little people to live inside?

BERNARD  
Not real people.

CAROLYN  
We know all the people in Christmas Junction.

KENNY  
They're our friends.

BERNARD  
Oh, you do? Who's this?

He reaches down and picks up a figure from the station platform.

CAROLYN  
That's the conductor.

BERNARD  
Actually, Carolyn, it's the Station Master. The Station Master sells tickets to the passengers and dispatches the trains. The Conductor rides on the train. He's like the captain of a ship.

CAROLYN  
Can the station master or the conductor be a girl?

BERNARD  
Not back then. All the conductors were men.

points out another figure being careful not to touch it.

KENNY

That one looks like Rosanna.

BERNARD

My secretary? It does, kind of.

CAROLYN

Don't say secretary, Grandpa. Say administrative assistant.

BERNARD

Oh, ho. A young feminist.

KENNY

And that one looks like Grandma.

CAROLYN

Grandma's in Heaven, not in a train station.

BERNARD

Your grandmother is not with us anymore. She loved you very much.

KENNY

Does she still love us if she's in heaven?

BERNARD

I miss her too.

(pause, then with forced excitement)

Hey! It's time for the Express to come through!

He picks up a long steam locomotive and places it gently on a track siding. He puts three passenger coaches behind it and hooks them up.

The train leaps forward as he touches the control and a semaphore signals go. It speeds down the main line.

The phone rings in the next room. Bernard gets up to answer it.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I should get that. Don't touch anything.

He exits.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

Bernard enters and picks up the ringing phone.

BERNARD

Bernard here.

EXT. WINDFIELD INN - DAY

ROSANNA, 37, Bernard's assistant, attractive, businesslike, is on the other end. She holds her cell phone standing in front of the Winfield Inn as it is now. The building looks far more decrepit than its model, with overgrown shrubbery, peeling paint, cracked masonry, and several boarded-up windows. A couple of junked cars sit in the graceful, curved driveway.

INTERCUT

ROSANNA

Sorry to bother you at home, but I needed to ask you before I deliver these eviction orders.

BERNARD

Ask me?

ROSANNA

You do realize the twenty-fourth is Christmas eve?

BERNARD

Of course. I didn't intend it. It just worked out that way. Is it a problem?

ROSANNA

No. It's that it's not a very nice thing to do. Evict someone on Christmas eve.

BERNARD

It's the city. The permit says we must start demolition by the end of the year. Everyone must be out a week before.

ROSANNA

I guess the tenants knew it was coming.

BERNARD

They certainly should have!  
Deliver the notices today.

(MORE)

BERNARD (CONT'D)

That gives us a week until January first to begin demolition.

ROSANNA

Okay, boss. Oh, one more thing.

BERNARD

Yes?

ROSANNA

When I was on the front desk, a young couple came in and asked if we had a vacancy.

BERNARD

You told them no, didn't you?

ROSANNA

We do have a lot of empty rooms.

BERNARD

Rosanna, we are supposed to be getting rid of tenants, not finding new ones.

ROSANNA

The girl is very pregnant. She might have her baby at any time.

BERNARD

Tell them to go someplace else.

ROSANNA

I told them I would have to talk with you. They are right here. You want to explain it?

END INTERCUT

The two young people stand on the corner. JOE, 24, is bearded and has a large back pack. His girlfriend, 18, wears a long peasant dress that does not hide her swollen belly. She carries a hand-written cardboard sign.

INSERT - CARDBOARD SIGN.

"Anything Helps. God Bless."

BACK TO SCENE

Rosanna walks over to the couple and hands Joe the cell phone.

ROSANNA (CONT'D)

Here. It's Mr. Winfield, my boss.  
He owns the Inn.

JOE

Sir? We only need a place to stay  
for a couple--

BERNARD (OS)

I'm sorry but the Inn is being  
closed for renovations starting  
Christmas. There is no room for  
anyone new.

JOE

My lady is--

BERNARD (OS)

-- I know. If she's that far along  
she belongs in a hospital not a  
flop house.

JOE

We don't have no insurance for a  
hospital.

BERNARD (OS)

Then find somewhere else. Ask  
Rosanna, she might have an idea.

JOE

Thank you, sir.

He hands the phone back to Rosanna.

INTERCUT

BERNARD

Rosanna, get rid of them

ROSANNA

Yes, sir

She hangs up.

END INTERCUT

Bernard hangs up and leaves the home office.

INT. HOBBY ROOM - DAY

Bernard enters and sees the children smiling guiltily.

He looks over the layout and spots the Popsicle stick construction placed directly behind the model of the Inn.

The two children run from the room. He calls after them.

BERNARD

Did you climb up and put that there?

He examines where they might have knelt.

Bernard reaches over to retrieve the offending stable without disturbing anything further. He's off balance. He falls.

The stable flies from his hand and sails across the layout.

His foot catches the electrical connections to the transformer sending a shower of sparks.

He is more concerned that his fall has not damaged any structure so he doesn't notice that the sparks have landed in a pile of solvent soaked rags. They ignite into fast spreading flames.

He tries to beat out the flames with his bare hands. This only makes them spread worse.

He gets up and runs from the room. The fire spreads to the scenery.

BERNARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Get out of the house! Call 9-1-1.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Bernard rushes out the front door leading a child with each hand. CARMELLA, 20s, the Latin housekeeper follows.

Bernard sets down the children a safe distance from the house. Smoke pours from an upstairs window.

BERNARD

You kids stay right here until the fire engines arrive. I'm going to see what I can save.

He rushes back through the front door.

INT. HOBBY ROOM - DAY

The room is filled with smoke. Flames lick the train layout. Bernard stumbles in carrying a small fire extinguisher.

Coughing badly, he tries to spray foam onto the flames. He clutches his chest and falls onto the burning layout.

White foam drifts down like snowfall onto his face as he loses consciousness.

EXT. A TUNNEL - NIGHT

He is standing in a completely dark place. He can make out a light in the distance. It is the light at the end of a tunnel. A backlit FIGURE stands there. It waves a lantern.

Bernard walks slowly toward the light where the figure seems to be beckoning to him. Its voice reverberates so it sounds deeper than it is.

FIGURE  
Walk into the light.

Bernard walks a little faster.

FIGURE (CONT'D)  
The twelve-eighteen is due. Hurry!  
Get out of there!

The figure is too backlit to make out the face but he can tell it is wearing the blue uniform and cap of a STATION MASTER.

FIGURE (CONT'D)  
Hurry! Run!

Bernard hears a sound behind him. He looks back to see another light; this one growing closer. It takes him a moment but he recognizes it as a steam locomotive. A deafening whistle shrieks through the tunnel.

Bernard runs with all his might toward the figure. He makes it to the entrance just as the train hurtles past.

The windows of coaches glow fiery orange and red. Silhouettes of passengers press against the windows as if they were trying to escape. Faces show what could be looks of horror but the train passes too quickly to be sure.

He turns to the figure and as his eyes slowly adjust, recognizes his granddaughter Carolyn dressed as the Station Master.

BERNARD  
Carolyn!

As they exit the tunnel together Carolyn's voice no longer booms like a man's.



CAROLYN

You're here and you're safe,  
Grandpa. That's all that matters.

After composing himself, he looks around and sees that he's in a full-sized village identical to his train layout.

BERNARD

This is really my...

He examines the scenery. On close examination, the pine trees are made of huge wire brushes. The majestic oaks and maples, bare of leaves, are actually twigs, carefully chosen and stuck into the plaster-of-Paris ground.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I'm dreaming! What a beautiful dream!

CAROLYN

It's not exactly--

BERNARD

It must be. You're the station master? I painted that uniform myself. Testor dark blue. What is this.

He reaches down and picks up a handful of "snow".

BERNARD (CONT'D)

See? Soap powder.

As the soap powder drifts between his finger it turns to snowflakes. The wire of the pine tree morphs into the branches of an actual tree. The ceiling of the room becomes a bright blue sky with little puffy clouds.

Directly ahead is the familiar station. The figures instead of being still, mill around. Off to one side and on a small rise stands the majestic Winfield Inn.

Behind the station lays the train yard with various freight and passenger cars on sidings. Further back are the buildings of downtown all exactly as they appeared in the model layout.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I am in a sort of dream where my little Christmas Village has all come to life. That's the only explanation, isn't it?

CAROLYN  
You are not dreaming. Do you  
remember going to sleep?

BERNARD  
No.

He pauses to reflect and it slowly comes back to him.

They walk together in silence down the tracks toward the town.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

The two of them stroll toward the station. Bernard looks around in wonder.

They reach the station platform.

CAROLYN  
What do you remember?

BERNARD  
There was smoke. A fire. I  
blacked out.  
(pause)  
Am I... dead? Oh God. I must be  
dead!

Bernard looks stunned. He sinks to the platform. Carolyn helps him up.

CAROLYN  
You would have been if the twelve-  
eighteen had been a second or so  
early.

BERNARD  
Did we all die in the fire? I  
thought...

CAROLYN  
No, you rescued us Grandpa. Then  
you went back.

BERNARD  
I was the only...

CAROLYN  
You saved us, Grandpa.

BERNARD  
Is ...?

CAROLYN  
He'll be in on tomorrow's 11:47  
Northbound Express.

BERNARD  
He's on the train?

CAROLYN  
It's his train. Kenny is the  
conductor.

BERNARD  
I was killed in the fire? Am I in  
Heaven?

CAROLYN  
Not exactly, Grandpa.

She beckons Bernard to follow her.

BERNARD  
Then what?

CAROLYN  
It's hard to understand all at  
once. Right now, I must tend to  
this train. Come by the station  
after she leaves and I will try to  
explain what I can.

BERNARD  
It must be that it's my own  
personalized heaven. The little  
village that has always given me so  
much joy,

CAROLYN  
Take a walk around, then come back  
to the station. You won't get  
lost.

He jogs toward the station. The platform is crowded with  
people.

Bernard stands alone in shock. He hears distant singing. It  
is coming from the park.

He wanders toward the sound and sees a group of CAROLERS in  
the park. They sing carols like "God Rest Ye Merry  
Gentlemen."

One of the carolers beckons for Bernard to join them. Instead  
he hurries away.

As the singing fades into the distance he passes two WORKMEN on ladders decorating a large pine as a Christmas tree in the square. One of them calls out and raises his hat.

WORKMAN 1

Good afternoon, Mr. Winfield.

WORKMAN 2

Merry Christmas, Sir.

Bernard runs faster. He runs through Main Street. Several people try to greet him. He does not acknowledge them.

He ducks out of the way of a carriage being driven down the street. He almost slips on a pile of horse manure.

He looks down the street and sees what seems to be a woman riding side-saddle on a donkey led by a bearded man. Bernard moves in for a closer look but they disappear around a corner.

He continues wandering down the street.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Bernard comes to the little church on Main Street. He stands back to look at it. He goes up to the door but laughs to himself without trying to open it.

As he turns to leave the door opens. The Pastor comes out.

PASTOR

Merry Christmas, Mr. Winfield!  
We've missed seeing you here for  
quite a few Sundays.

BERNARD

My wife...

PASTOR

She was a good woman. But you  
should honor her by coming to  
church occasionally.

BERNARD

I...

PASTOR

Wednesday's Christmas day. You  
could at least show up for our  
special service. Come inside and  
I'll show you our decorations.

BERNARD

Inside? There's nothing inside.  
It's a hollow shell. I built it  
from a kit.

PASTOR

Some people do think the Church is  
nothing but a hollow shell, but  
come look inside. It won't hurt  
you to look.

Bernard goes up the front steps and follows the Pastor  
inside.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Pews, decorated with ribbons, fill the interior. The altar  
is covered in flowers and lit candles. The stained-glass  
windows set the entire interior aglow.

BERNARD

It's lovely. I didn't build all  
this.

PASTOR

No, not consciously. Your longing  
built it for you.

BERNARD

When I was a child, I remember  
being impressed...

PASTOR

Come to our service. Join your  
neighbors in their worship. Your  
wife would have liked that.

BERNARD

Who are my neighbors? The little  
figures that people my village?

PASTOR

The word neighbor means whomever  
you find yourself near. The person  
next to us is whom we are commanded  
to love. It's easy to say we love  
an abstraction like "humanity,  
"mankind." It's easy to love  
things we have a vested interest in  
like "country," "family." Loving  
our neighbors, whomever we find  
ourselves next to, with all their  
faults and foibles, that's more of  
a challenge.

BERNARD  
I try to be kind...

PASTOR  
I know you do. Come and join us  
here in this little church you  
built.

The pastor opens the door to show Bernard out.

PASTOR (CONT'D)  
Right now, I have a lot to do. I  
hope to see you Wednesday.

Bernard shakes his hand and departs.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Bernard wanders lost in the town. He turns down a tree lined  
street.

There are large buildings set back from the lane. He sees a  
huddled figure in a tweed jacket walking with a cane ahead of  
him.

BERNARD  
Professor. Professor Steinwald,  
it's you!

The PROFESSOR turns around. He fumbles for his glasses and  
examines Bernard.

PROFESSOR  
Why young Bernard Winfield. How  
are you my boy?

BERNARD  
Professor! What are you doing  
here? I didn't build this campus  
replica.

PROFESSOR  
Tell me, have you pursued your  
biochemistry career?

BERNARD  
No, I'm sorry, but I took over my  
father's construction business.

PROFESSOR  
Doing well?

BERNARD  
Yes, financially.

The Professor nods and gives it some thought

PROFESSOR  
You make good money.

BERNARD  
Yes. Pretty good money.

PROFESSOR  
Money is one metric of success, but  
not the only one.

BERNARD  
The other is satisfaction?

PROFESSOR  
Yes, that's another but much less  
quantifiable. That's not what I had  
in mind.

BERNARD  
What else then, besides money.

PROFESSOR  
It ought to be possible to measure  
to what degree the world is a  
better or worse place for you  
having lived in it.

They walk together in silence

BERNARD  
It is strange, seeing my old  
campus. I never built it as part  
of my model layout.

PROFESSOR  
Perhaps you might have if you'd  
been given the time.

BERNARD  
Professor, you studied dreams. I'm  
having a whopper of one right now.  
Let me tell you about it. I'm sure  
I won't remember it when I wake up.

PROFESSOR  
My dear boy. I hate to be the one  
to tell you, but you might not wake  
up.

BERNARD  
What?

PROFESSOR

Tell me the last thing you remember?

BERNARD

My model train layout. The fire. Trying to put it out.

PROFESSOR

This may be hard to accept, but did you perhaps hit your head, or have a heart attack, or pass out from the smoke?

BERNARD

It's possible... then... I'm dead? What is all this?

PROFESSOR

There have been well documented studies of people who were clinically dead, but revived. Their recollections of the experience follow a consistent pattern. Did you find yourself in a long tunnel?

BERNARD

Yes.

PROFESSOR

With someone beckoning you toward the light?

BERNARD

Yes, my granddaughter, Carolyn.

PROFESSOR

Usually it's a religious figure, but often it is a family member. Is she deceased also?

BERNARD

No. In fact, she saved me...

PROFESSOR

Then did you find yourself in an impossibly beautiful place?

BERNARD

Yes, my train layout, except this wasn't a part of it.



PROFESSOR

Next, you are supposed to meet people who were important in your life. I should be flattered it includes an old teacher like me.

BERNARD

But Professor...?

PROFESSOR

Since it's so consistent we can assume that the experience of those who are not revived follows the same patterns. There is no way of testing the hypothesis, of course.

BERNARD

Revived? Then it's possible I'm not dead.

PROFESSOR

What we believe is, when it senses imminent death, the body floods the brain with a chemical by the name of n-dimethyltryptamine, DMT, a powerful natural hallucinogen.

BERNARD

Why?

PROFESSOR

As I told you in class many times, science answers the what and the how, but never the why. We don't know what evolutionary function this mechanism serves, after all people who are about to die are not going to have a chance to reproduce and hand on that gene.

BERNARD

But if it only occurs for near death experiences, I may not be dead at all.

PROFESSOR

The mind has difficulty conceiving its nonexistence.

They come to a blackboard, incongruously standing beside the lane. Professor Steinwald pulls a piece of chalk from his tweed jacket and starts to draw the molecular formula for DMT.

Bernard, deep in thought, walks on without him. He is suddenly no longer on the college campus but back in the village.

EXT. NORTH ELM STREET - DAY

He turns a corner and finds himself on a residential street of graceful Queen Anne style homes.

BERNARD  
 (to himself)  
 This looks exactly like North Elm  
 Street! When I was a kid.

An elderly man, GRANDPA, shambles out of the front door of one house and down the porch steps.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 Grandpa! Grandpa! You shouldn't be  
 outside!

GRANDPA  
 Oh, young Bernie! And why  
 shouldn't I be outside?

BERNARD  
 I'm not supposed to let you wander  
 off. It's because Mom and Dad say  
 you are a little senile.

GRANDPA  
 Senile? I may be old but I  
 certainly don't have that old  
 timer's disease.

BERNARD  
 Alzheimer's. Yes, you do.

GRANDPA  
 My mind is sharp as an ice pick.  
 Ask me anything.

BERNARD  
 Okay, what's nine times nine?

GRANDPA  
 Eighty-one. Ask me another one.

BERNARD  
 Who is the president of the United  
 States?

GRANDPA  
 Easy! Ike, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

BERNARD

No Grandpa, it's twenty... But if you're still alive it must be the fifties or sixties. And, I'm just a kid.

GRANDPA

You may be big for your age, but don't get too big for your britches.

Grandpa sits down on the steps. Bernard sits beside him.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

My mind is clear as window glass. Why, I can remember when my grandfather, your great-great, opened the Winfield Inn. He finished it right after Christmas, just in time for the inauguration of William McKinley.

BERNARD

That was after he built the smelter. Why was it shut down?

GRANDPA

Said it was poisoning people.

BERNARD

But the Inn is still there.

GRANDPA

Yes. We had big parties there. The Inn was all lit up with the new electric lights.

BERNARD

It must have been grand.

GRANDPA

It was. Soon, it will be your turn to take care of the Winfield Inn, as your Dad does now.

Bernard's voice becomes that of a seven-year-old child.

BERNARD

He always works. He never has any time for me.

GRANDPA

He works hard to support you and your mother.

(MORE)

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

He works hard so the business will be in good shape when you take over.

BERNARD

I don't want to take over. I want to be an engineer.

GRANDPA

That's good. Building firms need good engineers.

BERNARD

No, an engineer on a train.

GRANDPA

An engineer on a train? You don't want to be the engineer. He's only a driver and since the train is on tracks, there isn't much driving for him to do. No, you want to be a conductor. The conductor is a professional. He runs the train like the captain of a ship.

BERNARD

That's why he wears a uniform?

GRANDPA

Or you could be the station master. He dispatches all the trains. Set your sights high, Bernie. Set your sights high.

BERNARD

I will, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

But, really, I think you should plan on being a builder, like your father, like I was. Bloom where you are planted, I always say.

Bernard reverts to his adult voice.

BERNARD

Oh, Grandpa. How I wish you never had dementia, and that I wasn't so young. I wish we could have really talked like this.

GRANDPA

That's what this place is for: So things we wish could have happened, happen. Regrets are never lost. They are saved up for us for when we are given new chances.

Bernard hugs his grandfather.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

I'm starting to get a little cold now. You run up to the Inn and see if you can help your folks with the Christmas decorations.

Grandpa goes back in the house.

Bernard looks out over the town which has expanded greatly from his little train layout. He sees the roof of the Winfield Inn on its rise overlooking the village.

He starts toward it.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Bernard continues toward the Inn. He looks around to catch his bearings.

Across the street is the corner pharmacy with "Apothecary" lettered in gold leaf on the window. In front, a woman hurries down the wooden sidewalk.

Though he cannot see her face, Bernard catches his breath in recognition. He calls out barely above a whisper.

BERNARD

Edy?

She does not hear him. He runs across the street, dodging an oncoming dray. She is gone. He rushes to the corner and looks around. She's not in sight. He shakes his head.

He peeks through the door of the nearest building, the bank. He enters.

INT. BANK - DAY

It's an old-fashioned bank lobby with caged tellers' windows. The lobby and windows are empty except for one teller who is preoccupied with paperwork.

Bernard walks in and looks around. His wife is not there.

BERNARD

Excuse me...

The teller looks up, rises and smiles. It is his daughter-in-law Betty.

BETTY

You made it! I was wondering if you'd get here!

BERNARD

What are you doing in this dream?

BETTY

You'll never guess who I am. Branch Manager! I run the entire bank!

BERNARD

The bank you hated?

BETTY

I always loved the job. It was the way I was treated that I hated.

BERNARD

And you aren't treated...

BETTY

I am the bank. I can be president, vice-president and manager here without being a man.

She comes out from behind her tellers' cage.

BETTY (CONT'D)

In this world, I can be whatever I want; whoever I want.

BERNARD

I know it's impossible but I thought I saw...

BETTY

Edith?

BERNARD

I thought I did, just now but it couldn't be.

BETTY

Yes, it could. Before she died, after it became obvious she couldn't watch the kids for me anymore, she asked me to pray with her. I'm ashamed of it now, but I really let go and vented on her. How could I give thanks for being stuck with two small children, one of them disabled, stuck with an alcoholic for a husband, stuck in a dead-end job? She let me go on, then replied quietly. "Bloom where you are planted."

BERNARD

My grandfather used to say that.

BETTY

Then I really lost it. I thought she was telling me a woman should be nothing more than a sweet little wife, tolerating any kind of abuse.

(beat)

After she passed, I realized that wasn't it at all. I was just hearing the "planted" and not the "bloom" part of the phrase. I ran into her in the village the other day. I tried to tell her I now understood what she meant, but she couldn't hear me.

BERNARD

You met her here, but you couldn't communicate?

BETTY

Yes. This place is for us to say what we need to say, not necessarily for anyone else to hear it.

BERNARD

I have so many things to say to Edith.

BETTY

Then find her and tell her.

Betty shows Bernard to the door.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

He is suddenly tired and leans on the wooden pillar of the storefront.

He sees a young boy swipe an apple from a bin in front of the store.

BERNARD

Hey!

The boy stops running and turns around. He looks exactly like Kenny, despite his dirty face and ragged clothes.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

?

The boy turns and resumes running with the apple.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(To himself)

No, it couldn't have been. is  
supposed to be on the train.

He looks up at the Inn. Beginning up the driveway, he stops and turns when he hears a train whistle.

Bernard trots toward the station where the train that almost hit him in the tunnel is now pulling out.

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - DAY

Bernard reaches the platform which is now virtually empty. Carolyn sits inside a caged window.

Bernard approaches her.

BERNARD

Is this heaven or what?

CAROLYN

This is Christmas Village Junction.  
It might be heaven to some. It  
might not be to others.

BERNARD

Will I wake up?

CAROLYN

Probably not.

Bernard starts to run over toward where the controls for the electric train would be.



CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Don't...

He reaches the edge of the table and looks down into an abyss. All he can see is seething red and orange clouds below him, like lava in a volcano crater.

Carolyn takes his arm and gently pulls him back from the edge.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

That's the slag pit from the smelter. I wouldn't get too close.

BERNARD

Why? Where am I?

CAROLYN

The station. You were booked on the Southbound. Somehow you ended up in the tunnel instead. Now you've missed her. The Northbound Express is due tomorrow. I'd sell you a ticket if she weren't booked solid.

BERNARD

I thought I saw my wife, your grandmother.

CAROLYN

That could be.

BERNARD

No, it couldn't. It couldn't. It's been three years since...

CAROLYN

This is Christmas Junction Station, where you catch a train to wherever you're going.

BERNARD

But my Edith... If she's dead, am I?

CAROLYN

She has a reserved seat on the Northbound express.

BERNARD

Then I could see her...

CAROLYN

And she could see you, if you took  
the northbound train together.

BERNARD

Northbound? Southbound? The train  
doesn't go anywhere. It just goes  
in a big circle. It enters that  
tunnel,  
    (points to the tunnel)  
and comes out there  
    (points to the far end of  
    the village),  
before returning to this station.

CAROLYN

Maybe life is a big circle, too

BERNARD

I built this layout.

CAROLYN

Everyone builds their own Christmas  
Junction. Then they decide which  
direction they're going. Where do  
you want to go?

BERNARD

I want to join my wife.

CAROLYN

Northbound's booked solid.  
Except...

BERNARD

What?

CAROLYN

There was a young man and his  
pregnant wife. You told them there  
was no room at the Inn.

BERNARD

How did you know about that?

CAROLYN

They bought tickets but she was so  
close to her time they wanted to  
redeem them.

BERNARD

So, you do have seats available,  
then?

CAROLYN

No, the tickets are non-refundable, but if you could find the couple and get them to sell you one of their tickets...

BERNARD

They tell me I died. I'm stuck in this dream of an afterlife. Is that so?

CAROLYN

I told you. This is the junction. Here you can catch a train going North or a train going South.

BERNARD

What do you mean. The train goes into the tunnel and back out the other end where the tracks come back to the station.

CAROLYN

That's true. Except this is not identical to your little layout in the house. This is your part of a greater universe. What did you see when you looked over the edge of the table?

BERNARD

Fire. Smoldering embers and smoke. The fire!

CAROLYN

No. That's a fire that's never put out.

BERNARD

Let me understand this. You're saying that when the express goes into the tunnel, it ends up somewhere else?

CAROLYN

It does if you believe. Grandma believes, and Kenny does too. So do I.

BERNARD

Where?

CAROLYN

I've heard it's a wonderful land.  
That's all I can tell you. I work  
here dispatching the trains to and  
fro. Ask Kenny when you see him.

BERNARD

If I can find a ticket I could  
accompany him and your grandmother?

CAROLYN

Yes. You're not supposed to just  
stay here.

Bernard looks up at the papier-mâché mountain above the  
tunnel.

BERNARD

This village is my dream. My  
dreaming made it real. If anything  
were on the other side of that  
mountain, would it be part of my  
dream?

CAROLYN

I'll tell you what. In the morning,  
you can talk to and decide if you  
want to try getting a ticket.  
Right now, you head up to your  
hotel. Rosanna has your room ready.

BERNARD

Rosanna? She's here?

CAROLYN

Of course.

BERNARD

But she's not...

CAROLYN

Dead? No.

Bernard hesitates, then walks slowly toward the Winfield Inn.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Bernard enters through the large doors. Rosanna stands behind  
the front desk.

ROSANNA

Good morning, sir. Your room's  
ready.

BERNARD

My room?

ROSANNA

One-oh-one, as usual.

BERNARD

I live here?

ROSANNA

Mr. Tice and his staff have the entire second floor. He arrives in his private car this afternoon.

BERNARD

Who?

ROSANNA

N. Tice, the tycoon. You are expected to dine with him at six. He says he has a business proposition for you.

BERNARD

A business...? What time is it now?

ROSANNA

Only a little after two so you have time to bathe and dress for dinner.

BERNARD

I have clothes here?

ROSANNA

Of course, sir. Your trunk has been unpacked.

He turns to go down the hallway to his room.

ROSANNA (CONT'D)

And sir? Three Oriental gentlemen have reserved rooms next to yours. I hope you don't mind.

BERNARD

No, why should I. It's fine.

ROSANNA

And that young couple?

BERNARD

Young couple?

ROSANNA

The pregnant woman and her husband.  
I told them they could stay in that  
abandoned stable outside of town.

BERNARD

There's an abandoned stable?

ROSANNA

Yes, you know the one. It's not  
much, but it would give them a bit  
of shelter. I hope you don't mind,  
sir.

Bernard appears agitated.

BERNARD

Where is it exactly? I need to find  
them.

ROSANNA

You remember? You said it looked  
out of place.

BERNARD

Yes, but I don't remember where...

ROSANNA

Just follow the road toward the  
smelter.

Bernard rushes out. Rosanna calls after him.

ROSANNA (CONT'D)

Don't forget about your dinner  
engagement!

EXT. MAIN STREET -DAY

On the way, he again catches sight of the pregnant woman on  
the donkey. The bearded man leads them around a corner.

BERNARD

Wait. Your train tickets. I need  
to make you an offer.

Bernard runs up to the corner and looks around. They have  
again vanished.

EXT. STATION - DAY

A passenger train has just pulled into the station. A young  
boy in a conductor's uniform jumps off onto the platform.

It is Kenny. He has no braces or limp now. He greets his sister, Carolyn, the Station Master.

KENNY

Hi, Sis. You see Grandpa?

CAROLYN

You just missed him. He went to the Inn.

KENNY

Does he know why he's here?

CAROLYN

He's confused.

KENNY

Of course.

CAROLYN

Is what we're doing right?

KENNY

He's our grandfather.

CAROLYN

But if you look at it objectively, he did a lot in his life that was wrong.

KENNY

Love doesn't look objectively. Mercy doesn't look objectively.

CAROLYN

Yes, but justice does.

KENNY

He wasn't all that bad.

CAROLYN

No, that's what Christmas Village is for, to give people who weren't all that bad a chance to change.

KENNY

To become better.

EXT. IN TOWN - DAY

Bernard wanders through the streets near the railroad yards. He pauses next to a labyrinth of wooden fencing with ramps and chutes. He looks puzzled.

Suddenly he hears a rumbling which quickly grows louder. He looks up at the sky and holds out his hand checking for rain.

The rumbling grows even louder and a dust cloud appears at the end of the dirt street. It's soon apparent that it is a dust cloud raised by a herd of, bawling, stampeding cattle driven by unseen riders.

Before Bernard can react, they are upon him. He's engulfed by the dust and the bellowing sea of horns and hide. He struggles to keep his footing and to avoid being gored or trampled.

He is pushed against a fence and is about to fall when an arm reaches down and pulls him up.

When the herd has passed he looks up at his rescuer. It is a young man dressed in sheep skin.

SHEPHERD

Are you all right?

BERNARD

Yes, thanks to you.

SHEPHERD

We are shepherds. I saw you were in trouble.

Bernard sees that there are three shepherds and a small flock of sheep.

He approaches them. The SECOND SHEPHERD is a middle-aged man. The FIRST SHEPHERD and THIRD SHEPHERD are in their late teens or early twenties. They all are dressed in heavy sheepskin coats.

SECOND SHEPHERD

We are used to rescuing sheep, not people.

BERNARD

Why is all this livestock in town?

FIRST SHEPHERD

The cattle are being herded and loaded on the southbound train.

SECOND SHEPHERD

To the slaughterhouses in the stockyards down south.



FIRST SHEPHERD

You would have been swept along  
with them if I hadn't pulled you  
out.

BERNARD

Are your sheep going to the  
stockyards too?

FIRST SHEPHERD

No, we are good shepherds. We raise  
them for their wool not meat. We  
know all our sheep and they know  
us.

THIRD SHEPHERD

We came here because we were sent.

FIRST SHEPHERD

Should we tell him what we saw?

SECOND SHEPHERD

Yes, he might help us find the  
stable.

FIRST SHEPHERD

Could you direct us to the stable?

BERNARD

Stable?

FIRST SHEPHERD

We were sent to find a stable.

SECOND SHEPHERD

Last night we were out in the  
fields with our flocks.

FIRST SHEPHERD

It was a silent night.

SECOND SHEPHERD

Cold night, but we had a good fire.

FIRST SHEPHERD

We huddled together, watching the  
sparks rise to join the cold  
burning stars.

SECOND SHEPHERD

Then, the whole sky burst open with  
light.

THIRD SHEPHERD

Stars came streaking down from the heavens.

FIRST SHEPHERD

And there was music, beautiful music, coming from all over.

SECOND SHEPHERD

Angels singing, I'm sure of it.

THIRD SHEPHERD

Then we each heard voices speaking in our heads.

SECOND SHEPHERD

Telling us not to be afraid.

FIRST SHEPHERD

The voices said to come into town and find a stable.

BERNARD

There is no stable in this... Except... No.

FIRST SHEPHERD

There's supposed to be a newborn child in the stable...

BERNARD

Oh! This is a dream. A Christmas dream. Well this may be Christmas Junction, but it isn't Bethlehem.

The men stare at him blankly.

FIRST SHEPHERD

Well, excuse us then. We'll be on our way.

They proceed down the street guiding their sheep around a corner. Bernard continues in the other direction.

EXT. OUTSIDE INN - DAY

Bernard climbs the drive to the Inn. He takes a deep breath and goes through the grand entrance.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

As he marches through the front door Bernard almost runs into three oriental gentlemen XERXES, YUSSEF, and ZEPHRON.

XERXES

Excuse us. Would you be Mr. Winfield, the proprietor.

BERNARD

I am Winfield but... You must the three foreign gentlemen Rosanna mentioned?

XERXES

Yes, we have traveled far.

YUSSEF

In our own land, we are scholars and naturalists.

XERXES

We have brought our gifts to your country.

BERNARD

Well, welcome to my little layout, or my dream of it.

Zephron points out his two companions.

ZEPHRON

Xerxes here has developed a method for plating gold on paper. Yussef has invented a soap that uses palm and olive oils instead of tallow. I am a humble perfumer.

XERXES

Even more talented than he is humble.

ZEPHRON

We wish to present our gifts to your king.

BERNARD

We don't have a king we have a president.

ZEPHRON

We were told there was a king to be born in your town.

BERNARD

Wait a second. In a stable? I get it now. The Christmas story.

(MORE)

BERNARD (CONT'D)

This dream is nothing but a mishmash of childhood fairy tales and wishful thinking. I suppose you'll tell me you followed a star here.

ZEPHRON

In our religion, we believe we can determine the Divine Will by studying all nature: animals, plants, weather, and yes, even stars.

BERNARD

Well, supposedly, there's a stable on the outskirts of town where a baby is about to be born. Why don't you scurry over there?

YUSSEF

Thank you, Mr. Winfield.

BERNARD

I'd take you there myself but I have a dinner engagement.

XERXES

We understand.

BERNARD

Let me know if you find him.

The three depart. Bernard stands there looking pensive. He talks to himself out loud.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

What tricks the dreaming mind plays on us! Edy, Rosanna, my little town... all stirred in with childish Christmas memories.

INT. INN - DAY

Rosanna is still at the desk. She works on the books with a pen. Bernard walks in.

BERNARD

It's just a dream. All a dream.

ROSANNA

Did you find the young couple you were looking for?

BERNARD

They keep vanishing into thin air.  
There is no stable.

ROSANNA

It's getting late now, sir. You'd  
better get ready for your meeting.

BERNARD

Do you know what this Mr. Tice  
wants?

ROSANNA

No sir. I wouldn't know.

BERNARD

Rosanna?

ROSANNA

Sir?

BERNARD

You know Mrs. Winfield.

ROSANNA

I did, sir. Before she passed away.  
You knew that.

BERNARD

I think I saw her.

ROSANNA

Sir?

BERNARD

Oh, never mind. I'd better get  
dressed for dinner.

ROSANNA

Yes, sir.

Bernard exits. Rosanna resumes book-keeping.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

It's empty except for a few scattered diners. Mr. N. TICE,  
sits alone in a window-side booth. He is bald with an  
imposing white beard. His ample girth is emphasized by a red  
waistcoat.

The WAITER, dressed in full livery, points him out to  
Bernard, who then approaches the table. Mr. Tice stands and  
puts out his hand.

MR TICE

Nick Tice, here. I presume you are Bernard Winfield. Please have a seat.

BERNARD

What's your role in this dream?  
Santa Claus?

A deep mirthless chuckle arises from Tice's belly.

MR TICE

I may have been called Old Nick  
once or twice but never Saint Nick.

Bernard takes the opposite seat.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

If you care to join me for dinner,  
I have a proposition that may  
interest you.

BERNARD

You realize this is all my dream.

MR TICE

I have a proposition for you that  
will be the answer to all your  
dreams.

BERNARD

No, I mean I am really dreaming.  
Shepherds, stables, wise men, the  
whole Christmas mythology.

MR TICE

What do you mean?

BERNARD

Well today, I met a group of  
shepherds, real shepherds, and they  
said a sort of vision was telling  
them to look for a stable.

MR TICE

I guess there are sheep being  
raised around here.

BERNARD

That's not the point.

MR TICE

Hey, you know a good shepherd takes  
care of his flock, right.

BERNARD

I guess.

MR TICE

But a better shepherd shears and fleeces them.

He laughs.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

But the best shepherd, the best shepherd, He's the one who cuts them up into lamb chops.

Tice roars at his own bad joke. Bernard fakes a little laugh.

BERNARD

They said they saw a vision in the sky. Stars falling.

MR TICE

I believe there was a meteor shower last night.

BERNARD

And strange music.

MR TICE

The wind no doubt. Or more likely the carolers down in the village. The hills echo every little noise.

BERNARD

I guess.

MR TICE

You and I are practical men. We don't mind if fools believe in myths and fairy tales because we can make money off them. But, we shouldn't believe that stuff ourselves.

BERNARD

Business men do have to be practical.

MR TICE

As it is, as it always was, and as it always will be. Men like you and I are maintained in our position by the work of the weak and foolish.

BERNARD

I don't like to think of myself that way.

MR TICE

But you do, don't you. This is the ground truth of all human society. The chief lives off the tribesmen, the lord lives off his vassals, the master his slaves, and the factory owner his workers.

BERNARD

Isn't that...

MR TICE

The prey exists to be eaten by the predator. If we do not want to be eaten, we must consume the weak.

BERNARD

Must people be either prey or predator? Isn't there something in between.

MR TICE

There are occasional aberrations of society. Some of the preyed upon might obtain a bit of property and call themselves "middle class." Eventually, they are stomped back to where they belong.

BERNARD

A lot of very well-off people prefer to call themselves middle class.

MR TICE

They look at those of us above them and see the heights they cannot scale rather than the multitudes below. Few reach the heights.

BERNARD

How? By hard work? Investment?

MR TICE

Mostly inheritance. To be on top, choose your parents well.

BERNARD

But, where do we invest? Banking, equities, real estate?



MR TICE  
Perhaps, but I believe in investing  
in people.

BERNARD  
That sounds good, but...

MR TICE  
It's who you invest in. I invest in  
politicians, judges, mayors, and  
congressmen.

(beat)  
Have you priced a congressman  
lately? It's almost enough to make  
you run for office yourself. Cut  
out the middle man.

BERNARD  
Back to this proposition you say  
you have for me.

MR TICE  
It's simply this. I propose to buy  
this entire town.

BERNARD  
Why?

MR TICE  
This town sits upon one of the  
richest mineral deposits on the  
continent.

BERNARD  
It's a table top, not a continent.

Tice again appears not to hear the comment.

MR TICE  
Not just lead, but zinc, copper,  
tin, mercury.

BERNARD  
It's only plaster of Paris on top  
of chicken wire.

Tice ignores him.

MR TICE  
Your smelter just makes toys.

BERNARD  
It's Christmas Village. The smelter  
was supposed to make toy soldiers.

MR TICE

I'm more concerned with real soldiers. War is coming. A great war. Wars require munitions. I propose expanding the smelter and the mine to supply those munitions.

BERNARD

How would you expand?

MR TICE

Into the town. I am buying out the owners and intend to demolish the buildings. Except for the Inn, of course. I have other plans for it.

BERNARD

What will happen to all the homeowners?

MR TICE

I will give them free travel to my big vacation development down south. They can trade their old housing for property there.

BERNARD

Are you getting permits for all this?

MR TICE

Permits? No. Keep the government out of this. There are only two legitimate functions of government. Fighting wars and furthering the interests of the ruling class. You and me.

Looking in the window at the diners are several children dressed in ragged clothing. Bernard shoots them an uncomfortable glance.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

Don't pay any attention to those street urchins.

The waiter arrives.

BERNARD

There are a lot of other--

MR TICE

Everything else is irrelevant, a distraction and a waste of money.

The waiter points to the children outside the window.

WAITER

If they are bothering you gentlemen, I will chase them off.

MR TICE

Let them watch. It does them good to see how their betters live. Reminds them of their place.

BERNARD

I guess they will never taste a meal like this.

MR TICE

Nor should they.

BERNARD

I don't know...

Bernard studies the grimy faces in the window. He notices one of them.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

!

Bernard jumps up

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Excuse me. That's the boy I thought was my grandson out there.

Bernard runs to the door.

EXT. INN - NIGHT

The boys who had been looking in the window scatter. Bernard runs after one of them and catches him by the shoulder. The boy spins around.

BERNARD

You're not Kenny! Who are you?

BOY

Let me go!

BERNARD

I'm sorry, I just thought... You looked like...

BOY

Let me go!

Bernard lets go of the boy who turns to run.

BERNARD

Wait! Don't go! Are you hungry?

BOY stops and looks back.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Wait! I can get you some of that food.

The Boy shoots him a dubious look.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Yes, I can go to the kitchen and get you anything you want... anything my imagination lets me.

BOY

Why would you do that?

BERNARD

I don't know. Because you remind me of my grandson... because of the way you looked at us when we were eating... Just wait here.

Bernard hurries off to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

There is no one in the kitchen. He finds the pantry.

Bernard takes a few items from shelves.

He exits.

EXT. INN - NIGHT

He returns with a loaf of bread and a few pastries.

He hands the bread to the boy who sticks it under his jacket and turns to leave.

BERNARD

I thought you were hungry.

BOY

There's more that are hungry at home.

BERNARD

Who.

BOY  
My sister. My Pops, he's sick.

BERNARD  
I'll get more and help you carry it  
to your house. If that's all right.

BOY  
I live across the tracks.

BERNARD  
Across the tracks? There is no  
across the tracks... at least there  
wasn't. The tracks ran along the  
edge of the table.

BOY  
Maybe you just never noticed. Maybe  
you didn't want to see the ugly  
side.

BERNARD  
Wait until I get you more  
groceries, then you can take me  
there.

Bernard returns to the kitchen.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Bernard and the boy make their way along a muddy, darkened  
street, past hovels and shacks, some lit by candlelight or  
fireplace reflections, but most others dark.

They pass the smelter, lighting the night with a hellish  
glare. The boy points it out.

BOY  
The smelter. That's where I work.  
I have a job. I paint the faces on  
the tin soldiers. Pa use to work  
there too, until he got the shakes  
too bad.

They arrive at one dilapidated shack. The boy motions for  
Bernard to stay back as he peeks inside the half open door.  
The boy then motions him forward.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

By the light of the single candle a child can be seen  
huddling in a corner. On a cot, an elderly man lays, asleep  
or perhaps passed out.

BOY  
That's my sister.

The child, a GIRL about six pulls herself up on a makeshift crutch and hobbles to a darker corner.

BOY (CONT'D)  
She doesn't walk too good.

BERNARD  
Wake up your grandfather so I can give him these.

BOY  
He ain't my grandpa, he's my pa,  
and he's hard to wake up.

BERNARD  
I see.

BOY  
No, he don't really drink that  
much. I think breathing all those  
vapors in the smelter all those  
years made it seem like he's always  
drunk.

Bernard walks over toward the girl.

BERNARD  
And what's your name, young lady?  
You remind me of my little girl  
when she was your age.

BOY  
She don't talk anymore either, not  
since the foreman took her in the  
back room that time.

BERNARD  
And where's your mother.

BOY  
Dead.

BERNARD  
I'm sorry.

BOY  
It was a long time ago.

Bernard hands a pastry to the girl who grabs it from his hand and stuffs it in her mouth.

BERNARD  
Who takes care...

BOY  
I do. I work when there's work. I  
scrounge when I can't work. We get  
by.

Bernard puts the rest of the food on the table. He turns to  
leave.

BERNARD  
I must leave. I'll come back with  
more food tomorrow.

BOY  
More?

BERNARD  
And it's so cold in here. Do you  
need fuel? Warm clothing? I can  
get you...

BOY  
You don't need to.

BERNARD  
I want to. See you tomorrow

He exits.

EXT. BAD PART OF TOWN - NIGHT

Bernard walks with care through the dark streets leading back  
to the Inn. The noise of people arguing in a strange language  
comes from one of the dimly lit hovels.

Nervous, Bernard looks over his shoulder. A drunken figure  
lurches past him without noticing him and disappears into the  
night. Bernard shutters and crosses to the other side of the  
street.

Two large men jump out of the darkness and stand in front of  
him. He tries to continue around them but they move to block  
his path.

One of them speaks in an angry voice.

MUGGER 1  
What are you doing here? This is  
our turf.

MUGGER 2

Yeah, you don't belong here rich man.

BERNARD

I don't want any trouble...

MUGGER 1

This is the wrong place for that. All we got here is troubles.

MUGGER 2

Maybe he came to give us some of that money.

MUGGER 1

Yeah. Maybe he should just hand it over.

BERNARD

I don't...

MUGGER 1

You shouldn't be here then. You need to pay to be on our streets. Don't we have to pay to use yours?

MUGGER 2

Or they throw us in jail.

Bernard tries to run but they again block his way.

MUGGER 1

Leaving so soon, rich man?

BERNARD

I...

Suddenly another figure strides up. It's the pastor.

PASTOR

Leave him alone, you two.

MUGGER 1

Evenin' Reverend.

Mugger 1 doffs his hat and elbows Mugger 2 who also doffs his.

MUGGER 2

Evening, Sir.



PASTOR  
Do I need to tell your parents what  
you were up to?

MUGGER 1  
No! No.

MUGGER 2  
We didn't mean anything.

MUGGER 1  
We were just having a little fun  
with this...

MUGGER 2  
We wanted to see if we could scare  
him. Weren't you scared?

BERNARD  
Yes...

PASTOR  
(to Bernard.)  
Good Evening Mr. Winfield. I'm  
sorry this had to happen.  
(turning to boys)  
Why would you want to scare someone  
like this poor fellow?

MUGGER 1  
He ain't poor, he's rich.

MUGGER 2  
It was funny. He's rich and  
powerful but he was feared of us!

PASTOR  
You boys should be helping lost  
strangers in your neighborhood, not  
frightening them half to death.

MUGGER 1  
Yes, Reverend.

MUGGER 2  
Yes, Sir.

PASTOR  
Now run along and maybe I won't  
have to speak of this to your  
parents.

MUGGER 2  
Yes, Reverend.

The boys run off.

BERNARD

Thank you.

PASTOR

Sometimes a little bit of shame is more effective than force.

BERNARD

They seem to respect you.

PASTOR

It wasn't easy to win that respect. I keep working at it. Here, I'll accompany you to the Inn.

They walk along.

I know both their parents. They are all having a rough time and can't always supervise their children as much as they would like.

BERNARD

This place is so different from the perfect little world I thought I had constructed.

PASTOR

You can't build your own world by ignoring pain and suffering.

They continue toward the Inn.

EXT. INN - NIGHT

The two men approach the Winfield Inn, its windows lit for celebration.

PASTOR

I'll leave you here. I must get back to prepare for the Christmas service. Maybe we'll see you there. A lot of folks we don't see except on Christmas and Easter.

BERNARD

Thanks, I'll try to be there.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Rosanna is at the front desk. Bernard enters.

BERNARD  
Working kind of late, aren't you?

ROSANNA  
Just a few things for tomorrow.

BERNARD  
Christmas Eve. Shouldn't you be home with your family.

ROSANNA  
I belong here. I have no one at home.

BERNARD  
I appreciate you being here.

ROSANNA  
Sir? Could I ask you something?

BERNARD  
Of course.

ROSANNA  
Some of the staff are concerned. Is Mr. Tice going to buy the Inn?

BERNARD  
He seems to be buying the whole town.

ROSANNA  
If he does, will he keep us on?

BERNARD  
Your jobs? I'll take the matter up with him. But nothing is definite yet.

ROSANNA  
Thank you, sir.

BERNARD  
Bernie.

ROSANNA  
Bernie, thank you.

Rosanna continues working at the front desk. She does not notice Bernard across the lobby staring at her.

Eventually, he crosses to her. She looks up.

BERNARD  
Rosanna?

ROSANNA  
Sir... Bernie?

BERNARD  
We've known each other a long time.

ROSANNA  
Yes, sir.

BERNARD  
And we've been pretty close.

ROSANNA  
Very close...

BERNARD  
But Rosanna, this dream. Are you  
just in my dream, or are you  
dreaming too.

ROSANNA  
I don't understand.

BERNARD  
Am I in your dream like you're in  
mine. Are you really you or just  
out of my imagination.

ROSANNA  
I have dreams. Dreams with you in  
them, but they are dreams I could  
never share.

BERNARD  
That's what I thought. This is a  
dream land for me but what is it  
for everyone else. You are the  
only one I can trust to tell me.

ROSANNA  
Sir, everyone who has ever been  
important to you is here for you.  
And, along with others who should  
have been important to you.

BERNARD  
You are very important to me, you  
know that.

ROSANNA  
Yes, sir.

BERNARD  
Don't call me sir.

ROSANNA  
Yes, Bernie.

BERNARD  
I have always relied on you in my  
life, can I rely on you in this  
dream life too?

ROSANNA  
Of course, sir... Bernie.

BERNARD  
You have been more than an  
assistant. You have kept me  
organized, kept me from making  
mistakes, been my conscience.

ROSANNA  
I try.

BERNARD  
How much do you know? Am I dead or  
dreaming? Are you real or part of  
my dream?

ROSANNA  
I think I'm real. I might be  
dreaming, myself or I might be just  
a part of your dream. Either way,  
I've been sent to help you. It's  
my job.

BERNARD  
I can talk to you. You understand  
me.

ROSANNA  
I try to, sir.

BERNARD  
I saw Edith, my wife. Alive. In the  
village.

ROSANNA  
I know.

BERNARD  
I spoke with her, but she didn't  
know I was there. Carolyn said her  
Grandmother would be able see me,  
once I rode Kenny's train with her.

ROSANNA  
Are you going to?

BERNARD  
I think so, if I can get a ticket  
North.

ROSANNA  
You should take that chance.

BERNARD  
But what about you? What about  
this village?

ROSANNA  
You need to be with her. Get your  
ticket and get on that train with  
her tomorrow.

Bernard tries to hug her but she backs off.

BERNARD  
Merry Christmas!

ROSANNA  
Merry Christmas, Bernie.

Bernard goes to his room.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

A few minutes later Rosanna is putting out the gas lights in  
the lobby. Tice comes out of the dark.

ROSANNA  
Oh, Mr. Tice. You startled me.

MR TICE  
About to creep up to Winfield's  
room, I wager.

ROSANNA  
No!

MR TICE  
But you were thinking of it?

ROSANNA  
I wasn't!

MR TICE

You, Miss hidden passion. Why don't you let loose that raging nymphomaniac hiding behind that mask of prim efficiency?

He grabs her arm.

ROSANNA

Mr. Tice! Let me go!

MR TICE

Why don't you tear off all your clothes and pour your naked body into his arms? You know you want to.

He lets go.

ROSANNA

I don't...

MR TICE

It is what you want, isn't it? Well do it. There are no consequences here. It's all just a dream, isn't it? You can be his dream and he can be yours.

She collapses into a chair and hides her face in her palms.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

Think about it.

He leaves her sitting alone.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bernard enters the room and collapses on the large bed. He starts to doze off without undressing.

He's abruptly awoken by bright lights in the sky outside his window.

He throws open the sash. He hears indistinct distant singing.

He listens for a while and then returns to the bed.

BERNARD

Can you dream when you are dreaming?

INT. LOBBY - DAY

It's the next morning. Bernard comes from the kitchen with his arms loaded with food. He encounters Tice.

MR TICE

Oh, there you are. You disappeared last night just as I was about to make you a very lucrative offer.

BERNARD

That boy...

MR TICE

Young rascal! These people are so lazy they only drink, gamble and breed more young rascals. This town will be well rid of them.

Bernard looks as if he's going to object but says nothing.

BERNARD

It's Christmas, I thought...

MR TICE

The purpose of Christmas is business. Don't you know that?

BERNARD

Yes, of course. Rosanna, my manager, is concerned about your plans for the staff of the Inn.

MR TICE

Rosanna? Yes, the fetching young lady at the desk.

BERNARD

We've worked together for years.

MR TICE

Oh, I see. You've got a little fringe benefit going on here. Well I don't blame you, she is a looker.

BERNARD

No, that's not it exactly. We never...

MR TICE

But you would if she gave you half a chance. Well go for it. I've noticed how she looks at you.



BERNARD  
She's my employee... and my friend.

MR TICE  
And you should be taking advantage  
of that. I would.

BERNARD  
She's...

MR TICE  
We'll talk again later. I would  
stay out of town today if I were  
you. There may be trouble.

BERNARD  
Trouble?

MR TICE  
Nothing my men can't handle though.

Tice turns and strides toward his room. Bernard picks up his  
parcels and exits the building.

EXT. INN - DAY

As Bernard is leaving the three foreign gentlemen come up to  
the Inn.

ZEPHRON  
We found him!

XERXES  
The infant!

ZEPHRON  
And his parents.

YUSSEF  
They were in a stable just as you  
predicted.

BERNARD  
Were the shepherds there too?

ZEPHRON  
Yes, with their flock. How did you  
know?

BERNARD  
I've heard this story before.

YUSSEF

They were kneeling, worshiping the newborn.

ZEPHRON

Who had been put into one of those things you use to feed animals. What are they called?

BERNARD

A manger, a manger.

ZEPHRON

I don't think so. It's called something else.

BERNARD

No. A manger. "She wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger."

YUSSEF

Maybe.

BERNARD

The stable? Where did you find it?

Yussef points down the road.

YUSSEF

A little way outside of town.

XERXES

Near the smelter.

Bernard hurries in the direction pointed. They call after him.

ZEPHRON

But you should hurry, though.

YUSSEF

They were getting ready to leave town.

XERXES

On the donkey, instead of the train.

ZEPHRON

There was talk about danger to the baby.

Bernard keeps on running.

EXT. IN TOWN - DAY

In the town, Bernard sees Edith struggling with two suitcases.

BERNARD

Here, let me take those.

He puts down the bags of food so he can take the suitcases. She seems to ignore him and continues her struggles.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Edy, what's wrong? Are you mad at me? For what?

Carolyn runs out from the station and takes the bags.

CAROLYN

She can't hear you. She can't even see you.

BERNARD

Why? You say I am dead, not dreaming. If we are both dead...

CAROLYN

It doesn't work that way, Grandpa. This is Christmas Junction, the place where life and death intersect. Grandma's got a ticket for the Northbound. You must stay here. If you had a ticket you could catch the train with her. When you got there, she could see and hear you again.

BERNARD

I might be able to. You said I had a chance to get a ticket.

CAROLYN

Yes, if you can find the couple, if they will sell you one.

Carolyn looks at the bags of food on the sidewalk.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

What are those bags for?

BERNARD

Food. I almost forgot. There's this family-- Oh Carolyn, the conditions they're forced to live in!

CAROLYN  
You're bringing them food?

BERNARD  
They are hungry. You should have seen the way that little girl ate the little bit I gave her last night! And their clothing, rags! I need to get them something better.

CAROLYN  
You were planning to feed and clothe them? And, still get the ticket?

BERNARD  
Yes, I was going to drop this off on my way to find the stable. The people with the ticket are in a stable. Then I'll come back here to catch the train.

He ignores her protest and picks up the food bags.

CAROLYN  
If you stop off, you might not make the train. It must leave promptly.

BERNARD  
This is important too. I promised. Can you hold the train for me, if I hurry? Rosanna can send my bags, can't she?

CAROLYN  
No, Grandpa. I'm the Station Master but I have to follow the rules. I can't change the schedule, even for you.

BERNARD  
I'll hurry.

He hurries off carrying the bags of groceries.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

Bernard arrives at the shack with the groceries.

The old man lays on the bed.

BERNARD  
Where is your son?

The man raises to one elbow. His words slur.

OLD MAN  
At work, at the smelter.

Bernard puts down the bags.

BERNARD  
Here. I must go. The smelter.  
That's where the stable is.

Bernard exits quickly.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

As Bernard runs down Main Street a horse drawn carriage comes toward him. He sees Tice inside.

Tice orders the carriage, driven by one of his tin soldiers, to halt.

MR TICE  
Winfield! I've been looking for  
you. I have something to show you.  
I think we can still do business.

Bernard walks with caution to the carriage.

BERNARD  
I don't think so. I'm leaving town  
on the express.

MR TICE  
Well, at least let me explain my  
offer.

BERNARD  
It's important that I catch that  
train.

MR TICE  
I'm offering you the chance of a  
lifetime. Trains run every day,  
opportunities don't.

BERNARD  
I suppose, if I missed the train, I  
could catch the next one.

MR TICE  
Get in.

Bernard climbs into the carriage

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

Mr. Tice orders the driver to proceed.

MR TICE

You see, I own a small but very profitable operation in this town. Unfortunately, it will have to be demolished with the surrounding neighborhood. I need to move it to a new location.

BERNARD

So, you want to move your business into the Winfield Inn?

MR TICE

Exactly. We are almost there.

The carriage stops in front of a saloon that looks out of a Hollywood western.

BERNARD

That's the saloon I built for the village.

MR TICE

And a wise investment it was. Come inside.

They exit the carriage.

EXT. OUTSIDE SALOON - DAY

They step down to the street. A DRUNK is passed out in the gutter between them and the entrance. Tice steps over the man and motions for Bernard to do the same, but Bernard gingerly steps around with an expression of distaste.

The drunk's face cannot be seen.

They enter the saloon.

INT. SALOON - DAY

There's loud music and boisterous laughter inside. Drunken men dance with provocatively clad women. Others are face down on the tables.

Tice raises his voice to be heard.

MR TICE

They say money can't buy happiness.  
Maybe so, but those who believe it  
might, hand over loads of cash to  
us.

BERNARD

Us?

MR TICE

Yes, as the building owner you  
profit as well as I. Don't you  
realize that?

He leads Bernard into a room off to the side.

INT. CASINO - DAY

There are rows and rows of slot machines each with a glum  
faced gambler.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

More praying goes on in this room,  
I bet, than at that little church  
of yours down the street.

He walks along the rows, Bernard following.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

They all think God controls random  
events. So, every coin they drop  
is a prayer, every spin of the  
wheel a prayer answered.

Tice issues a mirthless laugh.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

If the lights flash and the bells  
go off and coins pour out, it means  
God loves him. Or, if nothing  
happens, it means God doesn't even  
care he exists, so he tries another  
coin, another prayer.

BERNARD

Most of the time he doesn't win.

MR TICE

True, but you and I always win. A  
certain percentage of those  
prayers, those coins end up with  
us, not Him.

He points upward in mock piety.

BERNARD

Do they know the odds?

Tice waves his hand in front of one gambler's eyes. There is no reaction.

MR TICE

It's a religious trance. Ecstasy.

They return to the saloon room.

INT. SALOON - DAY

A large FACELESS MAN comes up and whispers to Tice.

Tice addresses Bernard.

MR TICE

I must go. An important shipment of chemicals just came in from across the border. Our scientists are always trying to make happiness faster, cheaper, and more profitable. Please excuse me.

BERNARD

That's all right. I'll wait here.

Tice calls over to a nearby woman. She is dressed in a revealing semi-formal gown.

MR TICE

No, Carmen here will take care of you until I get back. She's only eighteen but you'll be amazed at what she's learned in those eighteen years.

CARMEN comes over and cuddles up to Bernard.

CARMEN

How you doin', big man.

Bernard has a chance to see her face and pulls back in shock.

BERNARD

Carmella! What are you doing here?

CARMEN

It's Carmen now, not Carmella.

BERNARD

But how...?



CARMEN

I ran away from my pueblo. There was no food and my Padre always beat me. I met a man who wanted to be my boyfriend. He beat me too, but at least he bought me food and nice dresses. Then he sold me to Senior Tice. He gives me food and pretty dresses but he doesn't ever beat me.

BERNARD

Carmella, you need to leave this place. Get another job.

CARMEN

Why? I'm good at my work and I don't know how to do anything else.

BERNARD

There must be something else...

Carmen thinks for a moment.

CARMEN

I can bake cookies.

BERNARD

That's it then! Come with me to the Winfield Inn. I could get you a job in the kitchen.

CARMEN

I wouldn't be able to wear my pretty dresses.

BERNARD

No, but the dresses you would wear would stay on.

CARMEN

I'm sorry Senior Winfield. You are a nice man, but I need to stay here and do what I know how to do.

She walks off. Bernard starts to follow her but loses her in the crowd. He runs out of the saloon.

EXT. OUTSIDE SALOON - DAY

The Pastor has arrived. He struggles to lift the drunk out of the gutter.

PASTOR  
Mr. Winfield, can you give me a  
hand with this fellow?

Bernard goes to help the pastor lift the drunk to his feet.  
He gets a look at the drunk's face.

BERNARD  
This is my son! Bert! Bert!

Tice comes out of the saloon and overhears him.

MR TICE  
You don't have a son.

BERNARD  
I do, this is my son.

MR TICE  
You disinherited him, remember.  
You told everybody you no longer  
had a son.

BERNARD  
Everyone said I should try "tough  
love." Let him hit bottom. Tough  
love is no love at all when there  
is no bottom in sight.

BERT begins to focus.

BERT  
Dad? Oh no. Put me down.

PASTOR  
No, we're going to take you  
someplace where you can get a hot  
cup of coffee and a nice soft cot.

They get him almost walking

BERNARD  
Where?

PASTOR  
We have a small homeless shelter in  
the church basement.

They continue toward the church.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

They arrive at the steps of the church.

PASTOR

We are all looking at the stars.  
There are two ways to see them.  
Some look up in awe at the glory of  
the firmament. But others of us  
can look down and see it reflected  
in the gutter at our feet.

They take Bert inside.

BERNARD

Pastor, you sober him up. I'm  
going to let his wife and children  
know he's been found.

He exits.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Bert is sitting in a pew drinking coffee. Bernard enters  
followed by Betty, Kenny, and Carolyn. Bert looks at them in  
shock and hides his face.

BERT

What is this? You could at least  
have let me get myself cleaned up.

BETTY

We're here to help you.

KENNY

We love you, Dad.

Bert turns away from them.

BERNARD

You need to stop drinking!

CAROLYN

You're an alcoholic, Dad.

BERT

Why you bunch of sour-faced  
hypocrites. You can't stand to see  
anyone else happy. Can't a man go  
out to a Christmas party with his  
friends without being called names?

BETTY

What friends? Where are they?

BERT

Still in the saloon partying, I  
guess.

BERNARD

What were you doing laying in the street?

BERT

I was resting. I would have gotten up without you.

BERNARD

How did you get there?

BERT

That tin faced freak... When it came time to pay my tab everyone disappeared.

BETTY

Your friends?

BERT

After all the rounds I bought...? Hey, Dad you don't think I could borrow... No, I guess not.

Bernard shakes his head.

BERT (CONT'D)

Shit!

BETTY

Watch your language, you're in a church, you know.

BERT

You self-righteous hypocrite! You always enjoyed smirking at me when I came home a little high.

BETTY

I dreaded that you'd lost another job.

BERT

You, kept yours, didn't you? And you rubbed it in.

BERNARD

Son, Betty put up with a lot from you, we all know that.

BERT

And you, always working or fiddling with your trains, even when your son needed you.

BERNARD

I...

BERT

Why were you always at work? Were you carrying on with that secretary of yours behind Mom's back?

BERNARD

Rosanna? We never...

BERT

And Mom, my dear sainted mother, I used to watch her trips to the liquor cabinet when you had to work late. I used to tip-toe behind her and help myself.

BERNARD

You were drinking as a child?

BERT

You weren't there. She never paid attention. Too busy saying her prayers I guess.

BERNARD

Don't talk about your mother that way. We did the best we could.

KENNY

Grandma's here.

BERT

She's not here, son. She's not anywhere. She's dead.

BERNARD

No, Kenny is right. I saw her. So did they.

BERT

My mother's... what... a ghost?

CAROLYN

Not a ghost. She's on her way to another place...

BERNARD

A better place than she left, a better place than here, even. I'm going to join her if I am able.

BERT

Do you really believe in all that?

BERNARD

Yes, now I do. I do believe.

BERT

What I believe in is being happy,  
here and now. I believe in being  
free.

BERNARD

Are you happy? Are you free?

BERT

Yes! I think.... I try to be happy.  
I want to be free.

BETTY

There's more to life than searching  
for happiness.

CAROLYN

Especially in the bottom of a  
bottle.

BERNARD

Bert, being free is not being a  
slave to anything. Liquor,  
gambling, sex... or even work.  
You're right that I was addicted  
too. I'm sorry.

BERT

I'm sorry too.

The pastor enters.

PASTOR

I want to take you downstairs to  
the shelter.

BETTY

The children and I need to get back  
to work. We're not addicted but we  
do have responsibilities.

CAROLYN

The northbound express has been  
delayed. It should be fixed soon  
and ready to go.

BERNARD

I can still make Edy's train?

CAROLYN  
If you had a ticket.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

The room is crowded with men, women and children, some on cots, others huddled in blankets on the floor. Bernard enters with the Pastor and Bert

BERNARD  
Who are these people?

PASTOR  
The homeless. Families who were evicted from their homes when they lost jobs at the smelter.

BERNARD  
Oh, no. You are going to need a lot more room.

PASTOR  
There is no more room. Why?

BERNARD  
Tice plans to demolish the whole village. He's already bought out all the land owners. The tenants will have to fend for themselves.

BERT  
He can't do that. The government won't let him.

BERNARD  
Bert, he owns the government. He owns everything. He wants to own me.

BERT  
Then we won't let him.

PASTOR  
We can't shelter more people.

BERNARD  
I suppose I could put some of them into the Winfield Inn.

PASTOR  
Would you?

BERNARD

It still wouldn't be nearly enough.  
I can't think of what more we can  
do.

PASTOR

There is always something we can  
do, even if it's only pray.

BERNARD

Do you believe? Last night a child  
was born. Born in a manger, with  
shepherds there. Three wise men  
said He's a king. Does that sound  
familiar?

PASTOR

You mean...

BERNARD

Maybe it wasn't just something that  
happened once, long ago in ancient  
history. Maybe it's happening all  
the time, over and over, all around  
us.

PASTOR

Have you actually seen this?

BERNARD

No, I just take it on faith.

PASTOR

I can't say anything against faith.

BERNARD

I'm going to find that stable and  
see for myself.

He leaves the building. Bert follows him at a distance.

EXT. SLAG HEAP - DAY

Bernard runs toward the smelter road. He comes to the slag  
heap. He can make out what might be the popsicle stick  
construction partly hidden behind it.

There's a narrow path cut into the cliff overhanging the  
glowing pit. Bernard edges his way along it.

Pieces of loose slag dislodge under his feet and bounce down  
the cliff into the molten fires below.



EXT. MANGER - DAY

Bernard comes to the stable. It leans to its side a little but is still an enlargement of the Popsicle stick construction his grandson had proudly presented. A large crumpled paper star with a bent tail is pasted to the peak.

As he approaches he sees figures gathered around a manger in the center. There are the young couple he had been following. Behind them is their donkey accompanied by an ox.

A little further out are the shepherds he had encountered in town and a few of their sheep. A little further are the three foreign gentlemen from the Inn.

In front of the manger are piled gift-wrapped boxes with bright ribbons, as if the manger were a Christmas tree.

Everyone remains motionless, en tableau as Bernard approaches. No one seems to notice him. He approaches one of the shepherds.

BERNARD

Is this what you were searching  
for?

The man does not answer or even appear to hear or see Bernard. He crosses to the shepherds. They remain still as statues, eyes fixed on the manger.

He turns to the three foreign gentlemen.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

And you...

They do not acknowledge him.

The woman speaks. Bernard is startled.

WOMAN

They can't see or hear you.

BERNARD

Like my wife...

WOMAN

Yes.

BERNARD

But you can.

WOMAN

Yes, and so can he.

She points to the manger.

He can see the baby in the manger for the first time. It squirms slightly and appears to be clutching an envelope in its hand.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

He wants you to have it.

Bernard approaches and kneels before the manger. He gently takes the envelope from the baby's hand.

INSERT

Envelope. He opens it. There are three train tickets.

RETURN TO SCENE

BERNARD

Northbound!

WOMAN

Take them. They are for you.

BERNARD

Me? Why. I turned you away.

WOMAN

That is over with.

BERNARD

Don't you need them yourselves?

WOMAN

No, we must travel by foot... and donkey. We have far to go, but we will meet you when you get there.

The woman resumes her statue pose. A circle of light appears above her head.

BERNARD

I have so many questions...

She remains still, not seeming to hear him. He looks around. Everyone appears to be vanishing, dissolving into thin air.

He looks around in awe.

He doesn't notice that Bert is edging his way along the path behind him.

There's a single cloth draped over the manger. He picks it up, looks at it with tears in his eyes. He presses his face into it.

He rises, drops the cloth, and staggers off.

He doesn't notice Bert, still struggling along the narrow path. There is a wider road leading to the village, so Bernard takes it instead. He hurries toward the station.

EXT. THROUGH TOWN - DAY

Bernard runs through the town, not stopping to notice a platoon of faceless tin soldiers marching in formation down the street. People are gathering watching them fearfully.

INT. STATION - DAY

Bernard enters, out of breath. Edith sits there primly with several suitcases. Bernard waves the tickets.

BERNARD

Look, I can go with you!

She doesn't see or hear him.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I thought I was in a perfect little world, a world I had built for myself.

She looks straight ahead without noticing him.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

But it wasn't perfect at all. There's still suffering. There's still poverty, still injustice, hatred and violence in this world, just like the last.

He reaches out to take her in his arms, but stops when he realizes she is not aware he is even there.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Maybe you were right about there being a better world. Is it where you are going? I thought little Christmas village was it. How has it turned out so hideous? I can use one of these tickets. Escape with you. Let Tice do--

Edith stands and points out the window behind him.

He turns, looks and sees that the entire town is ablaze.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Oh no! He's started!

Edy stands and carries her suitcases toward the train.  
Carolyn runs out of her ticket cage.

CAROLYN

Hurry! We must get this train out  
of here before the fire reaches us!

enters, frantic.

KENNY

All aboard!

BERNARD

It's Tice, he's demolishing the  
village. Hold the train. I need  
to go back and save some of them.  
Wait for me.

He runs out leaving Carolyn, Kenny, and Edy standing there.

EXT. THROUGH TOWN - DAY

Faceless tin soldiers are setting fire to all the buildings.  
People are streaming down the street ahead of the soldiers.  
Bernard tries to take away the torches from them but there  
are too many. They push him away and continue wordlessly.  
He runs toward the hovel where the boy lives.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

It is the only building not yet on fire though all its  
neighbors are burning. Bernard looks inside.

INT. SHACK - DAY

The old man sits helpless on the cot.

BERNARD

Where are they?

The man motions outside.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

Down the street, the boy struggles with one of the soldiers.  
The tin man carries the sister over his shoulder as he fights  
off the boy.

Bernard runs toward them and the soldier drops the child. The boy starts to chase him down the street, but is restrained by Bernard.

The boy's face is badly bloodied.

EXT. THROUGH TOWN - DAY

Bernard, the boy and his father run through the streets of the burning town. Bernard carries the little girl.

The soldiers are chasing them.

EXT. STATION - DAY

They arrive out of breath at the station. The tin soldiers give up their chase when they see the train.

The train is steaming up, ready to leave. Kenny is on the platform.

KENNY

Hurry Grandpa! We're ready to leave!

Bernard puts the child beside Kenny and motions for the boy and father to get on board.

He hands the three tickets to his conductor grandson.

KENNY (CONT'D)

But what about you?

BERNARD

I have business to finish up in town. There'll be another train, won't there?

BOY

I'm going with you.

BERNARD

No, you must take care of your sister and father. Take them to that land I promised.

The boy re-boards the train.

KENNY

All aboard!

The locomotive steams up and the train starts to move. Edy is visible in one window, smiling sadly. Bernard runs alongside until he reaches the platform end.

He turns toward the town. Carolyn and Bert are standing there.

CAROLYN  
Are you going to confront him?

BERNARD  
Yes.

CAROLYN  
Alone.

BERNARD  
Yes.

BERT  
No, not alone, Dad.

BERNARD  
It was me he tried to corrupt. I was the one who just smiled and went along with everything he said. I was the one who let him think I approved of it all.

CAROLYN  
Why?

BERNARD  
Why couldn't I stand up to him? Sometimes something you know is wrong seems the only thing for you to do. Now I must face my own failure. Face it alone.

Bernard strides toward the burning village.

Carolyn and Bert follow at a distance.

INT. TOWN - DAY

Bernard encounters the villagers running with buckets of water toward one of the burning buildings. The Pastor is with them.

PASTOR  
Help us!

The two would-be muggers arrive carrying more buckets. He also recognizes the workers from the Christmas tree. They all form a bucket brigade passing buckets of water down the line. Bert and Carolyn join the line. Bernard calls out to the Pastor.

BERNARD

It's useless. They are setting  
fires faster than we can put them  
out.

PASTOR

What else can we do to save our  
village?

BERNARD

I know who's responsible for this.  
I can make him stop!

Bernard steps out of the line and starts toward the Inn.

BERT

Wait. We'll go with you.

BERNARD

No. Stay here and fight the fires.

Bernard continues toward the Inn.

EXT. INN - DAY

Bernard rushes up the steps and enters the Inn. Smoke curls  
from the town below.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Rosanna sits behind the desk but comes out to greet Bernard.

ROSANNA

Thank God you're safe. I thought  
Tice had--

BERNARD

Excuse me. Where's he?

ROSANNA

Tice? He left. I think he intends  
to gather up his men and go back to  
the smelter. Then, burn the rest of  
the town

BERNARD

Thanks.

Bernard rushes out.

ROSANNA

Wait! Why didn't you leave on the  
train?

BERNARD  
I'll explain later.

EXT. SLAG PIT. - DAY

Tice stands close to the edge of the slag pit, backlit by its eerie glow. Several tin soldiers flank him.

He sees Bernard approaching but addresses his men.

MR TICE  
I heard he gave up his seats for a drunk, a thief, and a little tart in training.

BERNARD  
You have no right to destroy the village, to burn these people's homes.

MR TICE  
I have every right. It all belongs to me. I can destroy whatever I own.

BERNARD  
Tell your men to stop the burning or I swear...

MR TICE  
Swear? Swear allegiance to me!

Bernard grabs Tice by the neck and holds him. Tice hoarsely squeezes out his words.

MR TICE (CONT'D)  
Do you think you can somehow stop me? What can one man do against the way of the world?

Rosanna, Carolyn, and Bert come up quickly and line up behind Bernard.

ROSANNA  
He's not just one man.

Tice slips out of Bernard's hold. He waves his hand and three of the tin soldiers appear. They grab and hold Rosanna, Carolyn, and Bert from behind.

BERNARD  
Stop burning those people's homes! Don't you care about them?



MR TICE

Of course not, and neither should you. What does it matter if they live or die, if they're of no use to us. Forget about them. You and I have more important concerns.

Bernard lunges at Tice.

BERNARD

You can't discard people like trash!

Two fencing blades appear in Tice's hands.

MR TICE

You prefer violence to make your point? Perhaps you are familiar with the manly arts.

He throws one of the blades to Bernard.

BERNARD

I don't believe this.

MR TICE

En Garde!

Tice makes a thrust at Bernard who parries it awkwardly. The next blow causes Bernard to lose his sword. He tries to retrieve it.

Tice knocks him down and points the tip of his blade at Bernard's throat.

CAROLYN

He can't kill you! The baby that was born in the stable last night? That baby will grow up to be a man. A man who will teach us how to live. That man will endure a lot of pain and suffering. He will die just to show us that death has no hold over us.

Carolyn breaks loose from the tin man's arms.

Tice tries to force the blade into Bernard's neck. The blade bends.

He turns his attention to Carolyn.

MR TICE

You think you will spend your life pushing trains around, sending them here and there. Don't you?

CAROLYN

(defensively)

So? I like trains.

MR TICE

Then retire after thirty years with a fat pension.

CAROLYN

I never thought about retirement. I just like trains.

MR TICE

Well, let me tell you something, Ms. Carolyn. Computers will do all that stuff.

CAROLYN

So?

MR TICE

Let me tell you how you will spend your real-world life. You'll be struggling to pay off your student loans with a series of meaningless minimum wage temp jobs, unless...

CAROLYN

Unless what.

MR TICE

Unless Grandpa here decides to go along with my little plan. Unless he takes advantage of his chance to join the one percent who own the world. Then you and your brother grow up as trust fund babies. Snorting coke, driving fast cars and partying on Grandpa's money. Just as anyone of your class and generation ought. How about it Grandpa? Take your rightful place at the top or see your prodigy all struggle fruitlessly forever. Join me in ruling the world or have your gullet split. No brainer.

BERT

Leave my father alone! I'll fight you!

Bert breaks free from his tin soldier and pushes Tice off Bernard. Tice levels his sword at Bert and laughs.

MR TICE

You? Fight? The wino can barely stand up and he wants to fight me? Fight? You can't even fight off a six-pack of beer. You are weak. I am temptation and you've lost every battle you've ever had with me.

Bert backs off.

MR TICE (CONT'D)

But weakness? That's what I like about you. If your dad joins me, it wouldn't matter if you were a drunk. You'd be a member of a wealthy family. If you were pulled over by the police, instead of a DWI you'd get an apology. Instead of begging for cheap wine you could drink Champagne by the case. You could drink 'til you passed out every night and forget regrets.

BERNARD

Leave him alone. I'm never joining you. I'm going to see that he gets help he needs.

MR TICE

Did I misjudge you? Are you as much of a weakling as he is? Like son like father!

Bernard jumps up and lunges toward Tice.

BERNARD

Why you...!

ROSANNA

Bernie, be careful.

Bert and Carolyn rush to assist him.

MR TICE

Grab them, you tin idiots!

The tin soldiers restrain Bert and his daughter but are too slow to hold Bernard who knocks one of them down.

Tice runs down the tracks. Bernard pursues him.

EXT. TUNNEL - DAY

Tice runs toward the train tracks. Bernard gives chase.

Tice comes to the mouth of the tunnel and enters it.

Bernard hesitated but follows into the tunnel.

Tice shouts in a loud, reverberating voice.

MR TICE

Darkness is my realm. Fear me!

INT. TUNNEL - DARKNESS

Tice runs deeper into the tunnel laughing. His laughter booms as he gets further inside. Bernard charges after him.

There's a light from the darkness. The cackling laughter turns into the clacking of railroad wheels, the sound of an oncoming train.

Bernard stands firm facing the on-rushing locomotive holding his sword upright.

BERNARD

You cannot harm me!

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

The light of the train becomes the overhead light in a hospital emergency room. The impact of the train hitting Bernard becomes the shock of cardiac paddles applied to his chest. It causes Bernard's limp body to jerk upon the gurney.

DOCTOR

Clear!

Another shock is applied.

INSET

A cardiac monitor with a flat line turning into a spike.

NURSE

He's responding!

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Doctor enters and takes off his surgical mask. Rosanna rises. Carolyn and Kenny also rise. She puts her arms around them. Betty stands at the door to the waiting room. Bert stands behind her.

DOCTOR

It was touch and go there, but I think he will be okay now.

Rosanna hugs the children. Betty joins them.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

In addition to the cardiac arrest, he has third and second degree burns on his lower torso and extremities.

ROSANNA

It was a miracle he survived.

DOCTOR

The burns will take a long time to heal.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM. - DAY

Bernard sits in a wheelchair. Rosanna, Kenny, and Carolyn are gathered around him.

CAROLYN

So, the Inn's going to stay just the same?

BERNARD

It will need to be fixed up a bit.

ROSANNA

But all the tenants can stay?

BERNARD

If they like. At the same rent in fact.

Kenny gives him a big hug.

CAROLYN

Merry Christmas, Grandpa.

BERNARD

I had the best Christmas ever.

KENNY

Even though you almost died?

CAROLYN

Even through you slept through most  
of it?

BERNARD

Even though.

EXT. INN - DAY

A week later. Bernard still in a wheelchair rolls up to the front of the Inn. He holds Kenny and Carolyn by the hand. Rosanna comes out of the door. He drops the children's hands and rolls to her putting an arm around her waist.

Betty and Bert come up. Bernard gives an apprehensive look.

BERNARD

Son?

BETTY

He's been sober since the fire.

BERT

Almost losing you and the children  
woke me up to what I was missing in  
life. I joined a twelve-step  
program. I need to let you know  
how sorry I am for all the pain I  
brought you and mom... and Betty  
and the children.

BERNARD

And I'm sorry for not seeing the  
pain you were going through.

BETTY

Good news.

BERT

They promoted Betty at the bank.

BERNARD

Even though she's a woman?

BETTY

It was hard for them to admit, but  
I was the best one for the job.

ROSANNA

Congratulations!

BERNARD

Children? We have good news too.  
How would you like having a new  
grandmother? I have asked Rosanna  
to be my wife.

CAROLYN

Rosanna? Yes!

KENNY

Cool!

Group hug in front of the Inn.

Closing shot of the model of the Inn and the layout of the  
village behind it. A group of tiny figures placed in front  
of the Inn resemble the family.

The train pulls out from the station below.

FADE OUT.