

KILLING SANTA

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND/BASEBALL FIELD - DAY (1988)

We're HIGH ABOVE a playground on a cold, cloudy Christmas Eve, a working-class Newark, New Jersey neighborhood.

A single SNOWFLAKE drifts toward SCHOOLCHILDREN playing a game of catch. They look like ants from here. The snowflake blows toward a pale skinned, isolated BOY standing on the pitcher's mound: RICHARD FLEETING (6).

He's wearing a thrift store "Star Wars" sweater, two sizes too big. Makes him look like a homeless elf no one wants to play with. He has a big Christmas BOOK.

The snowflake falls toward Richard. He looks up.

The school bell RINGS. Children march to class.

TODD BORUTSKIE (6), tall and thin like a noxious weed, and three BULLIES (6), walk by Richard.

Richard opens his mouth to catch the snowflake and then...
...SPLOOSH! A snowball hits him in the face. He drops the book.

TODD

Think faster, white trash!

BULLIES

Good one, Toddy! Fun-eee! Cool!

Richard picks up the book - and the boys attack. They circle him and start kicking. Richard curls into a ball, covering his head with his hands.

CHARLES (6), a boy with DOWN SYNDROME, shouts:

CHARLES

Stop it!

Todd and the bullies chase after Charles, laughing and teasing.

Richard dusts himself off, picks up the book. We see the title: "Wanted: Santa Claus, a.k.a., Father Christmas." He hangs his head, the last kid to go to class, eyes on the ground.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A photograph of President Ronald Reagan hangs next to an American flag and a CALENDAR, open to: DECEMBER, 1988.

Richard sits at a desk in the front of the classroom.

His teacher, MRS. DONALDSON (41), scribbles on the chalkboard: "Days that matter in December: The 26th, 1893." She wears a sweatshirt that has "Baby Boomer and Proud" on it.

MRS. DONALDSON
Can anyone tell me whose birthday
this is and why it matters?

RICHARD AGE 6
Santa's!

MRS. DONALDSON
Wrong again, Richard.

TODD
Yeah, Richard Retard.

MRS. DONALDSON
Todd. Don't be unkind. Richard is
not retarded. He's slow. Say it
with me class: sloooow.

CLASS
Sloooow.

MRS. DONALDSON
The truth is, Santa doesn't have a
birthday. I'm talking about people
that matter. Santa doesn't matter.

Richard carves "I hate Toddy!!! I hate Mrs. Donaldson!!!" on his homework.

DRAWINGS of penis shaped rocket ships flying to round vagina-like planets fill the paper's edges - Richard's "Star Wars" doodles - but at a glance the artwork looks like hardcore space porn.

MRS. DONALDSON (V.O.)
Mao Tse-Tung was born in China...

Richard writes "I love Santa and Santa loves me" next to a doodle of a BASEBALL BAT with "Oakland A's" on the barrel.

MRS. DONALDSON (V.O.)
...on December 26th, 1893...

Beat. Richard continues to write, then freezes, looks up.

Mrs. Donaldson stands in front of him, arms crossed, holding a stapler. She snatches the homework, eyes shooting to: "I hate Mrs. Donaldson!!!" She squeezes the stapler. It clicks out a staple.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Snowing hard now, school in the background. Richard walks home, a DISCIPLINARY NOTE STAPLED to his jacket. He cradles the Santa book.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

A poky, run-down Newark brownstone spruced up with cheap decorations. A frayed artificial Christmas tree twinkles in the corner.

LYNETTE FLEETING (28) hurries into the kitchen. She slips on a waitress apron with "Joy's Freedom Diner" printed on it, checks the oven, the time, running late.

She has the face of a grieving mother, bitter as hell.

JOE FLEETING (35) stomps into the house, snow and New Jersey steelyard blues all over him. He goes straight to the kitchen, opens the fridge, slapping Lynette's ass with the door. Pops a beer, guzzles.

A beat, then Lynette pushes by.

JOE

Hiya, honey.

She hustles it to the front door. Richard opens it as she reaches for the handle. She kneels in the doorway, half in/half out.

LYNETTE

Hi, baby. How's school? Holidays start tomorrow, huh? Woo-hoo! Guess who's coming tonight?

RICHARD AGE 6

Santa!

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

Santa!

She kisses Richard's cheek - doesn't notice the note stapled to his jacket. On her way out, she hisses over her shoulder:

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

Joe! Better not forget the milk and cookies this time!

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Richard sits on the floor, an uneaten plate of food by his side, inches from the TV. Watching a CARTOON about Santa.

Drinking a beer, Joe walks by and ruffles his hair.

JOE

Hey, Richie. Eat your dinner.

Richard shoots his father a faraway smile, face immersed in blue pulsating television light.

In the background, Joe climbs the staircase like he's scaling Everest, oxygen deprived - lights a cigarette, takes a swig of beer, keeps climbing.

We hear Santa ELVES from the cartoon TALKING in high-pitched elf VOICES, the characters reflected in Richard's wide eyes.

ELF 1 (V.O.)

But don't forget the secret!

ELF 2 (V.O.)

To make sure Santa knows what you want for Christmas...

ELF 1 (V.O.)

You wish upon a star!

ELF 2 (V.O.)

You wish upon a star!

The elves sing a SONG about wishing on stars, no doubt from Richard's expression that he believes every word.

INT. SECOND STORY BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lights off - not your typical messy bedroom, but a serious garbage dump of PARENTAL NEGLECT the darkness cannot hide.

Oakland A's paraphernalia covers every inch of the bedroom, including a POSTER on the wall opposing the window: an Oakland A's BAT bathed in a glorious beam of light.

VHS classic claymation Christmas movies lie scattered around.

In his pajamas, Richard looks out the window, finds a star to wish upon, and like magic it twinkles.

RICHARD AGE 6
 Santa, oh, I wish, I wish...

Moonlight falls through the window, highlighting the Oakland A's poster behind him.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Christmas morning - we pull out of Richard's screaming MOUTH and see the tear-stained face of the most disappointed boy in the world.

Joe and Lynette staring uncomprehendingly at him.

LYNETTE
 Shifts are killing me. I gotta go.

She wipes Richard's tears.

LYNETTE (CONT'D)
 Mind your father, OK? I'll bring a chocolate shake for Christmas dinner, for desert. Love you.
 (to Joe)
 Fix it. I'm tired of fixing everything. And this is strike... It can't be one. Can it, Joe? This is strike...? Ah, hell, let's start over and call it one. Understand, Joe? Strike one. Two more and I'm out.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Playing catch in the snow and cold.

RICHARD AGE 6
 Catfish Hunter knocks it outta the park! Go Oakland A's!

JOE
 Nice. But watch your grip - if that's supposed to be a four seam fast ball, thumb placement, Richie, thumb placement.
 (beat)
 So, uh, Richie?

RICHARD AGE 6
 Yeah, dad?

JOE

Your mom and me, we're sorry Santa
fucked up this Christmas, OK? Maybe
he'll do better next year.

(beat)

I'll do better. You'll see. I'll
fix it. Like your mom said. Next
Christmas I will do fuckin' better,
son. I Promise.

RICHARD AGE 6

So will I, dad. I promise too.

Richard's face glows with determination and hope.

Then we hear:

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Look at you, Richard. What a joke.
You're pathetic. Nothin' but a
liar..

INT. DISCOUNT DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY (2020)

And now we see Richard - at 38, tall and thin, face of a man
who stared too long into the abyss, dark circles under
bloodshot eyes, heavy five o'clock shadow, a total wreck of a
human being.

He's being chewed out by his boss, TODD BORUTSKIE (38), his
former classmate and bully - overweight, balding, Santa hat
perched on his head.

TODD

...a thief...

We can hear cheerful HOLIDAY MUSIC playing.

A pack of short FEMALE EMPLOYEES wearing elf hats encircle
Richard like angry pagan elves.

High shelves stacked with ladies undergarments and a display
stand with an image of STONEHENGE and a lingerie product line
called NAKED WOMYN tower above them.

Richard stands in the middle, the potential human sacrifice,
pockets stuffed with lingerie.

TODD (CONT'D)

...and surprise, surprise, you're
drunk.

Not just drunk. Annihilated.

RICHARD

And... you're a big fat fuck,
Toddy. You've always been a big fat
fuck. Even when you were a skinny
little prick and beat the shit out
of me? A big fat fuck. The only
difference now is, you are a big
fat fuck. My god, what happened to
you? You're as wide as Santa, the
biggest, fattest fuck of 'em all.

Richard jiggles Todd's belly.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Got a boooowl full of jelly.

The employees GROAN.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Oh, shut up! You... all of you
should call this place Big Fat
Fucks For Fuckin' Fat Fuckups
'cause each and every one of you
looks like a big, fat, fucking
Santa - and you're tiny, tiny
little people - and that's fucked
up.

TODD

Empty your pockets.

Richard pulls out a micro-g-string thong, holds it up.

RICHARD

As you can see, ladies, when I
pocketed this I was not thinking of
any of you.

TODD

You're fired.

RICHARD

There is a God!

TODD

Leave. Now.

Richard snags a handful of lingerie and RUNS.

INT. DISCOUNT DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Richard runs down an aisle toward the exit, three SECURITY
GUARDS wearing Santa hats giving chase.

TITLE OVER: IT'S 32 YEARS LATER

Richard tosses lingerie left and right, LAUGHING wildly.

RICHARD
Merry fuckin' Christmas, you big,
fat, fuckin' fuckups!

INT. APARTMENT DOOR/HALLWAY - DAY

Richard reads a NOTE stuck to his apartment door, stolen lingerie dangling from his fingertips.

We see an EVICTION NOTICE on the door: "You are hereby notified of your right to avoid eviction by payment..."

A METAL LOCK-OUT COVER prevents Richard from opening the door. He studies it, touches it, got it all figured out, then ATTACKS the lock-out, wiggles and jiggles it, slams a foot against the wall and pulls.

No good.

Defeated, he hangs his head, slumps his shoulders, walks down the hallway. He chugs a bottle of YUENGLING BEER.

INT. MANAGER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Richard blathers to his apartment manager, PHILLIP (50s), a soft spoken, six-foot-five Canadian of English/Scottish descent with a waxed handlebar mustache.

RICHARD
You Canadians are special.

PHILLIP
We are, eh?

RICHARD
Oh, yeah, Phillip. Canadians are superior to Americans. Sooo European.

PHILLIP
Richard.

RICHARD
You're not America's abandoned bastard children no one wants. Everybody loves you. I mean, what's not to like?

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You put gravy on your french fries,
add cheese curds, and call it
poutine. And you're all so fuckin'
nice, so I know you're gonna let me

-

Phillip yanks Richard's finger and bends it backward.

Richard SHRIEKS!

PHILLIP

In B.C., where I'm from, we call it
fries and gravy. We use brown
gravy, not curry sauce, and fuck
the cheese curds. You want poutine,
go to Toronto. Now, I'll let you
into your apartment...

Richard offers a handful of bras and panties to Phillip.

RICHARD

Here! Ow! Take 'em!

PHILLIP

...when you pay your back rent.

RICHARD

Let go, Phillip, let go! I love
Canada! I love Canadians! Shit!
Merde!

PHILLIP

We on the same page? Good. Now,
happy holidays and take off, eh?

Phillip slams the door in Richard's face.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Creepy place, dark, empty, made for drunks like Richard, the
name of the bar etched into a mirror: NICK'S DIRTY MARTINI.

Alone at the bar, Richard watches a beer splattered TV
showing the claymation classic "The Year Without Santa
Claus."

RICHARD

Tarbender! Another Yuengling if you
please!

The BARTENDER (40s) replaces his bottle with a fresh beer.

BARTENDER
Last one, mister.

RICHARD
Tarbender! Change the channel.

BARTENDER
Now why should I do that, huh? I
love this one. Everybody loves this
one, except for pixie's like you.

RICHARD
But think about it, man: a year
without Santa? Really? That's all?
If I had my way, it'd be for-
fuckin'-ever. Goodbye, Mr. Claus!

He points his fingers like cowboy pistols and fires them at the TV, making shooting SOUNDS. The bartender moves the beer away from Richard.

BARTENDER
Tarbender says you're eighty-sixed.
Pay up and go, either through the
door or out the window, I don't
care.

Richard opens his wallet, takes a long, drunken look inside: we see three twenties and two dollar bills. He smiles at the bartender, digs into his pocket, and dumps a pile of change on the bar.

RICHARD
(bad Oliver Twist accent)
Please, sir, I want some more.

The bartender points at the door. Beat, then Richard grabs the beer and guzzles it as he runs for the exit.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Richard weaves down the sidewalk, vomit on his chin, thick globs of it stuck to the front of his shirt.

Christmas lights and decorations adorn the neighborhood. He smiles at them in drunken awe, then spots a small ceramic SANTA DECORATION at the bottom of a steep flight of stairs leading to a brownstone.

He pulls out some of the stolen lingerie, picks a bra and puts it on the decoration.

RICHARD

There. That's better. Sexy Santa.

(to the decoration)

What? What's that? Take off, eh? Is that what you said? You and my landlord Phillip must be... Oh! I get it. You're not from the North Pole, are you? Not with an accent like that. Shhh. I won't tell on you, Santa. I never tell. I am a good secret keeper.

He unzips his pants and pees on the decoration. Then he puts a finger down his throat and vomits on it.

The light bar from a passing POLICE CAR flashes red/blue. The vehicle emits a Yelper Burst and pulls over. Two unimpressed and gigantic COPS (30s) get out.

Richard faces them, fly open, crotch stained with pee, fresh vomit on his clothes.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Oh, come on! I just wanna celebrate Christmas in my own way. Is that so wrong?

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

CLANK! A drunk-tank gate locks tight, the bars shuddering as a cynical female COP (35) says:

CYNICAL COP

Welcome to the sobering station, boys!

Richard takes in his new surroundings. Lots of DRUNKS, most of them old and ruined by booze. He steers himself to a cot.

RICHARD

I have an announcement to make, my friends! I am not supposed to tell, it's a secret, but it's a Canadian conspiracy and I must do my patriotical duty: Santa is from Toronto!

He reaches the cot and falls face forward onto...

...a DRUNK sleeping there: the BUM (60s), a short little fellow with snow-white hair, cheeks like ripe tomatoes, and a face full of stubble, a lovable-looking CHRONIC SEVERE ALCOHOLIC in filthy street clothes.

The Bum CRIES OUT. Richard bounces off him and lands on his back, THUMP!

The Bum peers over the edge of the cot. Their eyes meet. Richard squints as if he recognizes him, then passes out.

The Bum shakes his head.

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

The Cynical Cop beats the bars with a billy club.

CYNICAL COP

Rise and shine, boys! Your six
hours is up! See you tonight!

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Sunrise - on the steps, Richard half-drunk, shivering.

The Bum staggers out of the station in the background as POLICE OFFICERS, BAIL BOND AGENTS, and an assortment of LOSERS file in and out.

The Bum walks by Richard, then jerks to a stop as if he remembered something important. He spins around, wobbles, takes a beat to settle his stomach, belches.

BUM

Sorry. Yuengling did this to me.

He offers Richard a bottle of Yuengling.

Bum (CONT'D)

Here. You need this more than I do.
Take it. It's Yuengling. The oldest
beer in the country. Take it...
It's your favorite. Damn, you're
stubborn. Come on, take it...

Richard takes the bottle. The Bum hooks his arm like an old drinking buddy.

Bum (CONT'D)

"Beer is living proof that God
loves us and wants us to be happy."
Know who said that?

Richard shakes his head, allowing the Bum to lead him toward the highway.

Bum (CONT'D)
 Benjamin Franklin, so I'm told, a
 wise man if ever there was one.

They STEP INTO THE STREET and...

...a WHITE 1968 375 hp 440 magnum V8-powered Dodge CHARGER,
 parked on the road, revs its engine, VROOM, VROOM!

The Bum and Richard look at the car and freeze.

All we can see of the DRIVER (60s) is an unnerving BEARDED
 silhouette. A slash of light cuts across his face, revealing
 COLD BLUE EYES.

The car shoots forward!

Richard steps back, dropping the bottle. It smashes by his
 feet.

The Charger aims for the Bum, who leaps into the air, rolls
 onto the hood and into the windshield. The Driver hits the
 brakes and...

...LAUNCHES the Bum. He arcs through the air, lands on his
 feet, uninjured, then pats himself down to make sure he's OK.

The Driver WHISTLES at Richard through the open passenger
 window, face concealed in darkness. He tosses a handful of
 leaflets at him. They flutter to the ground, piling around
 Richard's beer soaked feet.

The Driver REVS the engine and we see a PERSONALIZED LICENSE
 PLATE on the back of the vehicle: it's a CANADIAN plate,
 covered in mud, the number unreadable.

But we can make out the province - ONTARIO - and we can read
 the words "TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS" written inside a BLUE
 CANADIAN MAPLE LEAF.

The Driver hits the gas and the mag wheels spinout. The car
 pulls away, splattering Richard with mud and snow.

The Bum flips the Charger off as it drives away.

Bum (CONT'D)
 Asshole!
 (to Richard)
 I'm so sick and tired of that
 rotten son of a bitch. And right
 now? I'm sick of dealing with
 losers like you.

Hand on a hip, the Bum limps away.

Richard picks up a leaflet and we see the headline: "Seasonal jobs! Hiring now! Call us today!" He crumples the leaflet into a pocket.