

their concern about that awkward entrance you gave them, so I restaged it the right way. No need to thank me. *(She exits back into the sanctuary.)*

HONEY RAYE. *(To John Curtis.)* Stick close, John Curtis, 'cause I may need to use that rifle just once before the show starts. *(Blackout.)*

Scene 8

Lights come up on the employee dressing room at Super SmartMart. Dub, in Santa suit and camo cap, sits on a bench in a sour mood, holding his back. Justin enters with a backpack. He wears brown pants.

JUSTIN. *(He's nervous.)* Hey, Dub, funny I should run into you.

DUB. I don't see nothin' funny about it, Justin, 'specially since we've enjoyed this little nightmare together every day for the past six weeks.

JUSTIN. *(He sniffs the air.)* Oh, brother, something is definitely wrong. It smells like rancid meat in here.

DUB. It's me. Since Frankie's had to cut back doing laundry, my Santa suit hasn't been washed as often as it shoulda been.

JUSTIN. You sure? *(He checks under the bench.)* 'Cause it really smells like an armadillo crawled up in here and died.

DUB. I let it get a little ripe, okay? But it does keep the kids from staying in my lap too long. Which is absolutely what you want when you're faced with a bunch of 'em wearing real suspicious-looking diapers.

JUSTIN. *(He pulls a brown turtleneck sweater out of his backpack and puts it on.)* Oh. Well, it's a blessing it's working out for you. But we only have a second and I wanted to talk to you about Gina Jo and me.

DUB. What about my daughter and — *(A pain hits Dub in his back.)*

JUSTIN. *(He doesn't notice Dub is in pain.)* As you know, we've been dating for about six months now, and uh, and I think we both agree this is the real thing and uh, well ... I wanted to know if I

could ask you for — *(He notices Dub.)* Are you okay?

DUB. I been better. *(He doubles over and grabs Justin's hand.)* Sorry, I just gotta hold onto something 'til this passes.

JUSTIN. *(He struggles to hide the fact that Dub's grip is killing him.)* What kind of pain is it?

DUB. My back. It comes in waves. Unbearable killer waves. Started this morning.

JUSTIN. *(He sinks to his knees trying to counteract Dub's grip.)* Maybe you're having sympathetic labor pains for your wife.

DUB. No way. That kind of bull hockey only happens in California. *(The pain subsides. He releases Justin's hand.)*

JUSTIN. Maybe it's a kidney stone.

DUB. On Christmas Eve? No way. I'm never going through that. Besides, I drank a full glass of water just last week. I probably pulled a muscle lifting that fat Munnerlyn kid last night.

JUSTIN. Yeah, he's a big 'un. I had a hard time fitting both of you in the picture. *(He struggles to his feet, massages his nearly-broken hand.)* Well, if you're feeling better, we ought to get out there. It's our final shift. *(He pulls antlers and a red nose from his backpack and puts them on.)*

DUB. I really don't know how I'm gonna face them kids one more time.

JUSTIN. Deuteronomy Thirty-one, Verse Six: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you."

DUB. *(Beat.)* Does that ever really work for anybody?

JUSTIN. They said it would in my crisis management course at seminary.

DUB. They lied. I can't do it. Give me one good reason to go out there.

JUSTIN. We don't get paid unless we finish this shift.

DUB. That's the one. Let's go, Rudy. It's Snow Time! *(Dub puts on his beard and hat. They exit, Blackout.)*