

Sam, Walter, Deb, Emily, Michael

SAM

We got a problem, Mr. Hobbs. *Jingles The Jolly Christmas Puppy* is tanking in every bookstore in the country.

WALTER

Why?

SAM

Because two whole pages are missing from the last chapter.

WALTER

What?

SAM

Without them the end of the book makes no sense.

WALTER

(calling to DEB)

Deb!

DEB

Yes, Mr. Hobbs.

WALTER

Coffee! Now!

DEB

Right away.

WALTER

(EMILY and twelve-year-old MICHAEL enter.)

EMILY

Hi, darling.

MICHAEL

Hi, Dad.

EMILY

Ready to go?

WALTER

Go where?

EMILY

Christmas shopping, remember?

WALTER

I can't. I'm swamped.

MICHAEL

Dad, it is well documented that the children of workaholics are prone to self-esteem issues.

Deb, Buddy, Mr Greenway, Walter

DEB

Mr. Greenway, sir.

BUDDY

(standing up)

Hi, Mr. Greenway, I'm Buddy the Elf!

MR. GREENWAY

What? Who the devil is that?

WALTER

Well, he is, uh, he is my, son.

MR. GREENWAY

What?!

WALTER

Deb! Buddy needs a break.

DEB

(to BUDDY)

Buddy, why don't you come help me put these documents through the shredder?

BUDDY

What is a shredder?

DEB

It is a machine that makes snow.

BUDDY

No way!

(BUDDY and DEB leave the office.)

MR. GREENWAY

Hobbs! My phone has been ringing off the hook. Angry mothers, kids crying, What happened to Jingles, the jolly Christmas puppy?

WALTER

It was an unfortunate oversight, Mr-

MR. GREENWAY

Hobbs, you're out of a job unless you can come up with a blockbuster idea for a new Christmas book. I mean a through-the-roof national bestseller!

WALTER

Well, sir, that's easier said than done

MR. GREENWAY

Yes, it is. So you better get your top writers on it, because I will be back in New York on the evening of December twenty-fourth. At that time, you will present to me, in exact detail, your plans for the book! Happy holidays, Hobbs.