

ACT ONE
SCENE 5

The Greenway Press offices on an upper floor of the Empire State Building. Later the same day, shortly after noon. A sign in a reception area, stage right, indicates that we are in the offices of Greenway Press, "Children's Books Your Child Can Trust." A secretary, DEB, is seated at a reception desk. There is a large office area with EMPLOYEES working in cubicles. Stage center there's a door to a private office which opens as the scene begins. WALTER HOBBS appears in the door, he has a children's book in hand and a sheaf of papers.

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

How did that happen?

SAM

I don't know but you yourself okayed the final proofs. We'll have to recall all copies and reprint.

WALTER

No, we won't. Kids don't read the books, anyway, they just look at the pictures. No recall!

SAM

You really want to do that?

WALTER

No, I want to go to Greenway and say we're taking a fifty-thousand dollar bath so some stupid five-year-old can find out what happened to Jingles the friggin' Puppy on Christmas Eve.

SAM

But...?

Emily

WALTER

But nothing!

SAM

Whatever you say, boss.

WALTER

(calling to DEB)

Deb!

DEB

Yes, Mr. Hobbs.

WALTER

Coffee! Now!

DEB

Right away.

EMILY and 12-year-old MICHAEL enter.

EMILY

Hi, darling.

MICHAEL

Hi, Dad.

EMILY

Ready to go?

WALTER

Go where?

EMILY

I don't believe it. Christmas shopping, remember?

WALTER

Emily, you always do this to me.

EMILY

We planned this weeks ago! I took the day off—

WALTER

Well, I can't. I'm swamped. This is my busiest time of the year!

MICHAEL

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

WALTER stares at EMILY, baffled.

EMILY

What can I say; the kid likes NPR.

WALTER

Could we please continue this delightful conversation in my office. Away from the staff.

MICHAEL, EMILY and WALTER disappear into WALTER's office.

BUDDY enters the reception area and goes up to DEB.

BUDDY

Excuse me? I'm here to see a Walter Hobbs. I'm Buddy the Elf.

DEB

Buddy the Elf? Oh, what a riot! You look hilarious. Who sent you?

BUDDY

Santa.

DEB

Santa?!

BUDDY

Uh-huh, from the North Pole.

DEB

From the North Pole!

BUDDY

Yes.

DEB

I'm sure Mr. Hobbs will be delighted to meet you, but he's in a meeting right now, would you mind waiting for a few minutes? Sit. Stay here.

BUDDY

Sure.

BUDDY sits.

DEB

Can I get you anything? A coffee?

BUDDY

Chocolate milk would be fantastic...

WALTER, EMILY and MICHAEL burst out of WALTER's office.

WALTER

Emily. You're making it sound like it's my fault. I just can't. Today is impossible, isn't it Deb?

DEB leaves BUDDY and rushes over to WALTER.

#3 - In The Way

During the following scene, various other EMPLOYEES come out of their cubicles with papers in hand to speak to their boss. THEY then end up joining in the song. Among them would be SAM and the two staff writers. Eventually BUDDY gets swept up in the choreography himself, but is unnoticed by anyone.

DEB

Oh, yes, Mr. Hobbs, you have a very busy day...

(reading from a clipboard)

ONE P.M. MEETING WITH THE STAFF
LECTURE THEM ON THE BOARD'S BEHALF
AND CONDEMN GIVING WORKERS CARTE BLANCHE

WALTER

(To EMILY and MICHAEL)

MY JOB HAS MANY FACETS

DEB

ONE FIFTEEN CUT OUR PENSION SIZE
RECONVENE WITH THE UNION GUYS
IN BETWEEN CLOSE OUR DELAWARE BRANCH

WALTER

AND LIQUIDIZE OUR ASSETS

DEB

CHOOSE A DATE FOR THE MEETING WITH
GLOBAL FREIGHT

WALTER

TRY THE TWENTY-FIFTH

EMILY

WALTER, WAIT!

ALL

NO ONE WORKS ON THAT DAY

ACT ONE
SCENE 7

MUSIC underscores, "In the Way". The living room of the Hobbs Central Park West apartment. Later the same day, early evening. LIGHTS up on MICHAEL and EMILY in the living room working on an elaborate science project - a large, weird-looking contraption that's supposed to be a model of a turbine electricity-producing wind machine. There is a small electric fan on the table along with myriad parts strewn about; an upright light bulb is attached to the contraption. MICHAEL switches on the fan and the contraption makes a lot of clanking noise but obviously doesn't work.

MICHAEL

Ah, heck, it still doesn't work.

EMILY

Maybe you've got these spinny things on backwards.

MICHAEL

I don't know. Dad said he'd help me but he's not around. Again. He's basically not a dad.

EMILY

Michael, don't talk like that. Your father loves you. He's a caring man, but he—

Doorbell chimes.

Hold that thought.

EMILY opens the door and we see BUDDY standing between two POLICEMEN.

BUDDY

(arms out-stretched to hug EMILY)

Hi, Mom, I'm home!

EMILY

(stepping back)

Excuse me?

POLICEMAN #1

This the Walter Hobbs residence?

EMILY

Yes?

POLICEMAN #2

Our pal Buddy here says Mr. Hobbs is his Dad.

EMILY

Yes, Officer, we're aware that Buddy thinks he's Mr. Hobbs' son, but...

POLICEMAN #1

Good. Guess we came to the right place.

(to POLICEMAN #2)

Let's go.

EMILY

Wait a second, you can't just leave him here!

POLICEMAN #2

Hey lady, have a heart. It's almost Christmas and he's homeless.

EMILY

Well...

POLICEMAN #1

Okay, bye Buddy.

BUDDY

(as he hugs the two POLICEMAN)

Bye, Vinny. Bye, Doug! Thanks a whole lot. And Merry Christmas!

POLICEMAN #1 & #2

Merry Christmas!

(The two POLICEMEN exit with a wave.)

BUDDY

I can stay here! Yay, I can stay here!

EMILY

Well, yes, but just for tonight. Then you'll have to find a place of your own.

BUDDY

But I like it here.

(notices the contraption on the table)

Oh, wow, a model of a turbine wind machine!

MICHAEL

You know what it is?

BUDDY

Sure. I've built a few of them at Santa's workshop.