

CHRISTMAS LIST

By

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INT. SHOPPING MALL - NIGHT

The mall is decked. Over-sized baubles hang from the rafters, fairy lights adorn every shop front and stood pride of place, in the centre of the mall, is Santa's grotto.

Eager children and their parents stand in line excited to see Santa.

The STORE SANTA beckons the next child in-line and an angelic little girl jumps up onto his lap.

Peering over the picket fence barrier is ABIGAIL HAMPTON (7), her eyes sparkle as she watches the little girl hugging the store Santa.

PAUL HAMPTON (40s) picks her up and carries her away towards her Brother, ZAC (10) and Mother, KATY (Late 30s) who stand waiting -- they too are not amused.

PAUL
What have I told you about running
off like that?

ABIGAIL
But I want to see Santa.

He plonks her down next to Katy.

ABIGAIL
Mum, I need to tell Santa about the
dolls house I want.

KATY
I've told you, that's too
expensive. We just don't have that
kind of money at the moment.

She looks to Paul, who drops his head in shame.

ABIGAIL
That's why I need to ask Santa.

PAUL
Abi...

ABIGAIL
If I ask Santa for it, I know I'll
get it.

PAUL
Abigail, look...

(CONTINUED)

ABIGAIL

Santa always brings me what I want
when I've been good.

PAUL

Jesus Abi, Santa's not real...

KATY

Paul!

Abigail looks up at her parents, tears well in her eyes.

Paul crouches to her level.

PAUL

Santa's not really here. That's
just a man in a suit making money
for the shopping centre. The real
Santa is too busy.

He stands -- he picks up two small shopping bags.

PAUL

It's getting dark, we need to start
heading home.

EXT. THE STREET - NIGHT

The family are walking home, cold and tired with a moody
Abigail in tow.

PAUL

Hurry up please, Abi.

A jingle of BELLS ring out from an alleyway.

The handle of a carrier bag SNAPS and Zac's Christmas gifts
roll out.

PAUL

Ah, Jesus.

Katy thrusts her hand over Zac's eyes.

KATY

Don't look.

Abigail is fixated on the alleyway.

Poking out of the alley is the muzzle of what appears to be
a reindeer.

It exhales frosty breath from its muzzle before it backs off into the alleyway -- Abigail follows.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Abigail enters the alley.

ABIGAIL
Hello? Come Dasher, come Dancer.

A feral caribou emerges from the dark end of the alley with a loud SNORT.

Abigail falls back and onto her backside.

A gloved hand reaches forward and lifts her back to her feet.

ABIGAIL
Thank you.

SANTA CLAUSE steps out of the darkness

ABIGAIL
Santa!

Santa gets down on bended knee -- Eye to eye with Abigail.

She stares into his eyes. His eyes glow ice-blue and cut sharply through the darkness.

SANTA
You shouldn't be alone, Abigail.

ABIGAIL
I'm not alone, I have my family
with me.

The caribou prods her, with its muzzle, towards Santa's knee -- She sits.

A flickering warm light, like that of a log fire, magically brightens the alley.

SANTA
What do you want for Christmas?

ABIGAIL
What I really want, more than
anything, is a Malibu Mindy beach
house, complete with a Malibu Mindy
doll, her horse Ludlow and her ever
trusted butler, Barclay.

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

And have you been a good girl?

ABIGAIL

I think so, but my dad says that doesn't mean I'll get such an expensive gift.

SANTA

Well, everything has a price.

ABIGAIL

But you can get it for me though, can't you, Santa?

SANTA

Did you write it on your Christmas list?

ABIGAIL

I wasn't allowed to write a list this year, my parents said we don't have any money.

PAUL (OS)

Abi?

Santa stands. He reaches into his deep pocket and hands her a small present.

SANTA

The list isn't for them, Abi, It's for me.

Santa and the caribou back off down the alley as the warm light flickers out, leaving, momentarily, Santa's glowing blue eyes -- darkness.

She is swooped up.

PAUL

What do you think you're doing?

He carries her out and into --

THE STREET

ABIGAIL

I wanted to see Santa.

PAUL

Santa doesn't come to see naughty little girls that run off.

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul, Katy and Zac are sat on the sofa. Zac has his headphones in.

KATY

Are you going to go up?

PAUL

Yes.

KATY

Things will get better, you'll find something. There's plenty of time to make it up to her.

PAUL

I don't want to have to make it up to her, I want her to have all the things I never had.

KATY

And she has them, she has us. Now get upstairs and be nice. It's Christmas.

PAUL

Don't I know it.

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE/ABI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abigail is sat crossed leg on her bed, crying.

A plate of untouched buffet party food rests on the carpet.

The gift from Santa sits on her dressing table.

She hops off the bed and sits at her dresser.

She opens her gift. In the box she finds an aged scroll, tied with a red ribbon.

She pulls at the ribbon and the scroll unfurls.

The scroll has the title 'Christmas List'.

She writes down 'Please Santa I would like a Malibu Mindy beach house with Malibu Mindy doll and her horse and her butler please'.

The DOORBELL chimes.

Abigail rushes over to the window and looks out.

(CONTINUED)

She can see the tops of bobble hats.

She opens her window and hears the joyful sound of carollers SINGING.

She hears FOOTSTEPS coming up the stairs. She closes the window and jumps back onto her bed.

A KNOCK at the door and Paul enters. He sees the tray of food on the floor.

PAUL
You haven't touched your food.

ABIGAIL
Not hungry.

PAUL
There's carollers at the door.

ABIGAIL
I know.

PAUL
If we asked nicely, I bet they
would sing Silent Night for you.

He looks at her and smiles.

PAUL
There's still time to enjoy
Christmas Eve, together, as a
family. We could even play that...

He catches a glimpse of the Christmas list - he picks it up.

PAUL
What's this?

ABIGAIL
My list to, Santa.

PAUL
I thought we agreed.

ABIGAIL
No, you agreed.

Paul crumples the list in his hand and throws it down onto the dresser.

PAUL

Abi, it's like talking to a brick wall. We told you no list this year, you'll get what you're given. There are Children all over the world who will wake up tomorrow to nothing. No presents. Not even a family.

ABIGAIL

Lucky them.

PAUL

Why don't you stay up here the rest of the night and think about that.

ABIGAIL

I hate you.

PAUL

Don't be surprised if all you find is a lump of coal in your stocking.

He leaves and SLAMS the door closed behind him.

She starts sobbing.

She goes over to her dresser and straightens out the crumpled list.

She adds an item to the list. 'I wish my family would leave me alone'.

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Abigail rushes in.

A roaring fire lights the room. A large present sits under a well lit tree.

She unwraps the present. Inside the box is the Malibu Mindy beach house that she wanted.

ABIGAIL

Mum! Dad!

She finds a smaller box under the tree. She slides it out.

The gift tag reads 'All our love, Mummy & Daddy xox'.

She opens it and inside is a cute, teddy bear, holding a heart that says 'Our Christmas Angel'.

(CONTINUED)

ABIGAIL
Mum! Dad! Zac!

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE/PARENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Abigail wanders the empty room.

No sign of her parents. The bed is fully made and the wardrobes are empty.

ABIGAIL
Mum? Dad?

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE/ZAC'S BEDROOM - DAY

Zac is also missing.

ABIGAIL
Zac? Come out, come out, wherever
you are.

EXT. HAMPTON HOUSE - DAY

Abigail stands at the door, cold, scared and confused.

ABIGAIL
Mummy? Daddy? Where are you?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

13 YEARS LATER

Abigail is 20. She drifts through the streets, miserable in the festive season, passing through a Christmas market.

She looks up at the string lights and faux Christmas trees.

ABIGAIL
Oh, God, no.

She takes a swig from a hip flask and quickens her pace.

A YOUNG GIRL is being pulled along the street by her DAD.

YOUNG GIRL
I want to see Santa.

(CONTINUED)

DAD
I said No. I'm not telling you
again.

Abigail stops and watches in horror as the girl YELLS at her Dad.

ABIGAIL
Just let her see Santa, you
horrible bastard.

Other parents usher their kids away from her.

A CHARITY SANTA rings a BELL.

CHARITY SANTA
Ho, ho, ho. Merry Christmas.

ABIGAIL
Screw you Santa. Ring that bell at
me again and I'll stick it up your
chimney.

She takes another large swig of her flask.

Poking out of an alleyway is the muzzle of an animal.

It exhales frosty breath before it backs off into the alleyway.

ABIGAIL
No, wait. Santa? Santa!

Abigail darts into the --

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The CLIP CLOP of hooves back away into the darkness.

Abigail, turns a torch on from her mobile and shines it down the alley. Two animal eyes shine in the torchlight.

ABIGAIL
Santa?

MAN
Do you mind?...

Abigail shines her light up into the face of a policeman on horseback.

(CONTINUED)

MAN

You'll scare the horse.

She turns the torch off.

ABIGAIL

Sorry, I thought --

MAN

And you better not be here by the
time I get back.

The flicker of a lighter flame lights the face of a HOMELESS
MAN sitting in the alley.

The policeman TROTS off back out the alley.

HOMELESS MAN

He who is majestic in his apparel,
marching in the greatness of his
strength.

Abigail walks off, disheartened.

HOMELESS MAN (OS)

Abigail.

She stops in her tracks and turns.

ABIGAIL

What did you say?

HOMELESS MAN

His apparel red, and his garments
like the one who treads in the wine
press.

ABIGAIL

You said my name. How do you know
my name?

HOMELESS MAN

He has trodden the wine trough
alone, and he also trod them in his
anger and trampled them in his
wrath; and their lifeblood is
sprinkled on his garments...

He flicks the lighter on and off.

HOMELESS MAN

For the day of vengeance was in his
heart, and the year of redemption
has come...

(CONTINUED)

ABIGAIL
Get stuffed, creep.

HOMELESS MAN
You must burn your houses with
fire. It will stop the playing and
you will no longer pay. It will
remove the evil of your deeds from
his sight and it will cease to do
evil.

The flame burns out -- darkness.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Abigail is sat at the bar, several empty shot glasses in
front of her.

She is talking to a DRUNK.

ABIGAIL
Whatever I wanted. I could write
down whatever I wanted. I was
seven, how could I know what I
wanted.

DRUNK
I know what I want. A drink

ABIGAIL
And now I think it's broken. Or
maybe it was just one-off. I tried
asking for them back and it didn't
work.

DRUNK
How do you know it was the
list? They might have just
left. You ever think of that? My
dad left me and I didn't ask for
that.

ABIGAIL
Because of the toy. Have you heard
a thing I've said. I got the toy I
wanted from my list.

DRUNK
You ever ask it for anything else?

(CONTINUED)

ABIGAIL
I just told you...

DRUNK
Yeah, yeah. You ever ask it for
another toy, now that there's no
one to buy it?

ABIGAIL
No.

DRUNK
There's no magic lists, your family
just left. Packed their shit and
done one.

Abigail takes his glass and SMASHES it against the wall.

DRUNK
Hey!

Abigail gives him the middle finger as she staggers out.

DRUNK
Magic list. Ha! Put a drink on it
for me.

INT. ABI'S FLAT - NIGHT

Abigail enters. She flips the light switch -- nothing.

ABIGAIL
Great.

INT. ABI'S FLAT - NIGHT

Lit candles decorate the room.

Abigail is sat crossed legged on her bed, drinking wine.

The sound of carollers SINGING 'Silent Night' make her start
to cry.

She puts her wine down on the dresser and crosses the room
to close the window.

She returns to her wine. A single candle lights a family
photo that is taped to the dresser mirror, taped to the
photo is the Christmas list.

The list has one item written on it several times 'I want my
family back'.

(CONTINUED)

She pulls the list down and grabs a pen.

She adds to the list. 'I want a teddy bear, holding a heart with the words our Christmas angel on it'. She takes a swig of wine. She then adds 'Please Santa I want my family back'.

INT. ABI'S FLAT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Abigail lumbers in -- hungover.

She looks under the tree for her present -- nothing there.

A tear rolls down her cheek and she slowly starts to sob.

The front door suddenly opens and in burst her family.

Her dad is joyful and carrying a large turkey, her mum smiling and carrying bottles of fizz and followed by her brother playing on his phone.

PAUL

Abigail, darling, aren't you dressed yet? -- Where should I put the bird.

ABIGAIL

The kitchen please, daddy.

KATY

Abi, sweetie, don't slouch. Now where do you keep the glasses?

Katy follows Paul into the kitchen.

ABIGAIL

Merry Christmas, Zac.

ZAC

Merry Christmas, Abs.

(calling out)

Get me a glass, I want a glass.

Abigail's tears turn from sorrow to joy.

Paul re-enters.

PAUL

Abi, darling, I meant to --

She hugs him like she hasn't seen him in over a decade.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Whoa, what was that for?

ABIGAIL
Just because I love you.

PAUL
Speaking of, here's just a little token?

He takes out a small gift box and hands it to Abigail.

ABIGAIL
What is it?

PAUL
Open it and you'll see.

She opens the box -- inside is a key-chain bear, holding a heart that reads 'Our Christmas Angel'.

ABIGAIL
Oh my God.

She hugs him again, extremely tight.

Abigail opens her eyes, a large present under the tree catches her eye.

She pulls it out from under the tree and opens it.

Inside the box is a Malibu Mindy beach house.

She turns back and her Dad is gone.

She looks back to the gift.

She sees a face of the homeless man at the window. He is holding a lighter which he flicks on and off.

Suddenly the Christmas tree is on fire.

The whole room is on fire.

The ceiling starts to cave in around her.

Santa and the caribou emerge from the flames, Santa's eyes glowing ice blue.

The eerie jingle of BELLS fill the room.

The room is spinning. Abigail clutches her head in her hands and falls onto her knees.

(CONTINUED)

ABIGAIL
(screaming)
No!

INT. ABI'S FLAT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abigail bolts upright from her nightmare.

The loud sound of BELLS ring out -- BONG.

She looks to the clock -- midnight.

The candle on the dresser has set light to her family photo.

BONG

ABIGAIL
Shit.

She rushes over.

BONG

She pulls the photo down and tries to put it out with her hand -- it burns.

BONG

She takes her wine glass and throws the remainder of her wine over it. It fizzles out.

BONG

She picks up the list and stares at it.

BONG

ABIGAIL
You won't hurt me anymore.

BONG

She picks up the candle and sets fire to the list.

BONG

The list starts to curl up with the flames, she drops it into the waste bin.

BONG

She watches as the list burns to ash.

(CONTINUED)

BONG

She climbs back into bed.

BONG

She closes her eyes.

BONG

INT. SHOPPING MALL - NIGHT

The mall is decked.

The joyful jingle of BELLS ring out

A seven year old Abigail, stares over the railings at a store Santa.

Paul lifts her up.

PAUL

What have I told you about running
off like that?

ABIGAIL

Sorry Daddy. It's getting
dark. Can we go home now.

PAUL

Of course darling.

Paul carries Abigail back to her family.