

CHRISTMAS HAS FALLEN

written by

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Fade In:

INT. NATURAL FOODS MARKET (LOS ANGELES) - DAY

CHRISTMAS MUSIC jingles as BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE in summer wear shop the pristine aisles for gluten-free and organic food.

ON DOUG MAHARIS

early fifties, ruggedly handsome, sniffing melons for ripeness. Doug is fit for his age. So much so that a STUNNING REDHEAD throws him a sexy smile. Doug moseys over to a bin of twisted greens. As he fills his bag, a SWEET ELDERLY WOMAN leans in.

ELDERLY WOMAN

What are those interesting looking greens you have there?

DOUG

Fiddlehead ferns. They make a great addition to any stir fry. I recommend them sautéed with a bit of brown butter and prosciutto.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Are you a chef?

DOUG

No, ma'am. But I like to cook when I'm not working. It relaxes me.

ELDERLY WOMAN

What is it you do for a living...?

MEANWHILE -- AT THE FRONT OF THE STORE

TWO MEN in CAPS, one KNIT, one BASEBALL, enter. BASEBALL hangs by the door. KNIT heads toward a stunning BLONDE CASHIER (20s). One last look between the men wearing caps then -- out come the guns.

KNIT CAP

Down on the ground! This is a robbery!

BACK IN PRODUCE

Doug reacts quickly to the commotion up front, handing his bag of fiddleheads to the Elderly Woman.

DOUG

Would you mind holding these for me?

Drawing a gun from underneath his t-shirt, Doug makes his way toward the front of the store; hears yelling.

KNIT CAP (O.S.)

Move it!

BLONDE CASHIER (O.S.)

I'm going as fast as I can!

Craning his neck past bottled water, Doug sees the Blonde Cashier filling a bag, Knit's gun pointed at her. Doug clocks Baseball standing nervously at the door. Pulling back, Doug is on his phone, speaking low:

DOUG

Two-eleven in progress at the Natural Foods Market on Fifth and Wilshire. Requesting back up.

Doug pockets the phone, pulls back on the hammer. Crouching, he inches toward the checkout stand. A BOY (5), by himself, looks wide-eyed up at Doug. Doug motions him to hide.

A few more steps and Doug is in position. He stands upright, squarely aiming his gun at Knit.

DOUG (CONT'D)

LAPD! Drop your weapon.

BASEBALL OPENS FIRE -- CANS EXPLODE near Doug's head -- Doug RETURNS FIRE -- Baseball is blown back through the glass. SCREAMS, PANDEMONIUM. Knit grabs the Blonde Cashier, uses her as a shield as he backs out of the store.

EXT. NATURAL FOODS PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

As Knit drags Blonde Cashier out, POLICE CRUISERS SCREECH UP. Knit throws her to the pavement, takes off on foot.

Doug, rushing from the store, stops at the shaken girl.

DOUG

Are you all right?

She nods, breathless. Doug takes off after Knit.

EXT. BUSY SIDEWALK - DAY

Knit plows through stunned holiday shoppers. Doug's gaining on Knit, but the chase takes a physical toll.

DOUG

Move-move-move.

SALVATION ARMY SANTA, cheerfully RINGING HIS BELL, gets knocked to the ground as Knit barrels through. Doug, breathing hard, vaults over Santa, works to keep up.

Knit makes a sudden turn onto --

EXT. WILSHIRE BOULEVARD - DAY

HORNS BLARE, CARS SCREECH, as Doug chases Knit through traffic. Knit is fast. Too damned fast. He adeptly slides across the hood of a car, runs into an alley.

Doug slides across the same hood... keeps sliding... falls out of sight on the other side.

A lengthy amount of time, no sign of Doug.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

CUT!

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF WILSHIRE BLVD.

A studio-sized FILM CREW looks on. The DIRECTOR yanks off his headset, pinches the bridge of his nose.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Will someone please check on Doug?

FIRST A.D. hurries to the other side of the car. Doug is on the ground, holding his back.

FIRST A.D.

Are you okay, Mr. Maharis?

DOUG

(in agony)

I'm fine. Give me a hand, will ya?

First A.D. helps Doug up, the Director right there.

DIRECTOR

Dammit, Doug. I told you I wanted to use Phil.

DOUG

No. No stuntman.

DIRECTOR

You think you got one more in you?

DOUG

Just need a minute.

DIRECTOR

It had some real juice up until there.

As Doug limps away, Director leans into First A.D.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
I want Phil suited up and ready to go.

EXT. MOVIE BASE CAMP - DAY

Passing cast and crew, Doug works to hide the pain. The actor playing Knit calls out from craft service:

KNIT CAP
Hey, Doug. Third time's gonna be the charm.

A weak thumbs up from Doug. The stunning actress playing the Blonde Cashier, BETHANY BELAMONTE, bounces up to Doug.

BETHANY
Ouch, you okay?

DOUG
I'll live.

BETHANY
We still on for dinner? I really need help with tomorrow's scene.

DOUG
Let's talk later, okay?

Bethany bounces away as FREDDIE (20s), hurries to Doug with a stack of messages. Freddie, noticing Doug's limp:

FREDDIE
Need help?

DOUG
Touch me, and I'll break your arm.

FREDDIE
(reading messages)
Irv called. The studio is threatening to replace you with Ty Scott if you don't come down in price.

DOUG
I've been playing Jack Nile for almost twenty years. The audience will never buy some punk like Ty Scott in the role.

FREDDIE

I guess they figure they can do like they did with the Batman films. Bring in a younger actor to reboot the franchise.

Doug shoots him a stern look.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

You're right. The audience won't buy someone else in the role.

(more messages)

"Off Duty Dad" will premier in New York instead of L.A. Shooting on "Christmas Dog Miracle" has been pushed till spring. Oh, this is so fire. You made the list of celebrities who are aging gracefully.

Not fire, at all. Doug lets out a surrendering sigh.

DOUG

Tell Irv to do whatever it takes to close the deal on the Jack Nile film. Anything else?

FREDDIE

... Your wife called.

DOUG

Ex-wife.

FREDDIE

Not until the first of the year.

DOUG

What does she want?

FREDDIE

She wants the kids for Christmas.

DOUG

No. She had them last year.

FREDDIE

Do I have to call her back?

They arrive at Doug's trailer.

DOUG

I wouldn't do that to you.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - PARKING LOT (CENTURY CITY) - DAY

KATE MAHARIS (40s), lovely, doesn't mean to be intimidating but is, struggles to get out of her SUV with an armful of papers. A gust of wind blows the papers, they scatter. Kate kicks off her high heels, runs around, gathering them.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Still barefoot, arm full of papers, Kate gets on the elevator.

INT. DOUG'S TRAILER - DAY

Doug wills himself to the refrigerator gets out an ice pack. As he eases onto the couch, ice against his back, a HORROR FILM RINGTONE PLAYS. Doug reluctantly answers his phone.

DOUG

Yeah.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - 26TH FLOOR - DAY

The entire floor is an upscale real estate firm. The elevator door opens, Kate gets off. She's on the phone.

KATE

Freddie give you my message?

DOUG

He did.

KATE

And?

DOUG

You had the kids last Christmas.

KATE

We were still together last Christmas.

A nod to the receptionist, Kate continues through.

DOUG

If you recall, I was on location in Bulgaria and got snowed in.

A lost Kate weaves through rows of cubicles.

KATE

If you recall, it was because you decided to stay two extra days to help out on second unit and you...

Kate finds herself in the wrong department, makes a u-turn.

KATE (CONT'D)
... and you missed your flight. I
think that speaks volumes.

DOUG
Abbey and Ben are going with me.
End of discussion.

BRIDGET (30s), sees Kate, points her in the right direction.

KATE
Is this you putting your foot down?

DOUG
I've said yes to everything you
wanted, including a divorce.

KATE
Let's not pretend you didn't already
have one foot out the door.

INT. KATE'S OFFICE - DAY

Kate enters, dropping papers and shoes on the desk. Her eyes land on a FAMILY PHOTO -- herself, Doug, and their DAUGHTER and SON on vacation in Aspen.

DOUG
Let's not pretend you didn't push
that door wide open.

KATE
The kids need stability right now.

DOUG
Don't use the kids as an --

Doug grabs his seizing back.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Mother of --

KATE
What's wrong?

DOUG
Nothing. It's just my back.

KATE
Sciatica or your L4/L5?

DOUG
All of the above.

KATE
Do you want me to make an appointment
with Dr. Tyler?

DOUG
I have people who can do that, Kate.

KATE
Of course.

A heart-broken pause. Each can hear the other breathing.

DOUG
How's the new job? Coming back to
you?

KATE
Slowly.

DOUG
Can we pick this up later?

KATE
Sure. Later.

Then, for no explainable reason, Kate ends the call with --

KATE (CONT'D)
Oh, and Doug? Do yourself a favor.
Let Phil do the stunts; you're not
twenty anymore.

Doug hangs up, tossing the phone.

DOUG
Witch.

Kate hangs up.

KATE
Mule.