

EVERGREEN

Written by

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FADE IN:

Blue sky.

A steady breeze. We're way up high. Somewhere.

We descend until the tip of something pierces bottom frame.

It's green.

More green... Getting wider.

Oh, this is the top of a tree. But not just any tree.

A hushed NATURE DOCUMENTARY-TYPE voice narrates:

NATURE NARRATOR (V.O.)
The Douglas fir. An evergreen
conifer species in the pine family.

The huge pine tree sways in the breeze, flanked by others.

NATURE NARRATOR (V.O.)
Also known as the Douglas spruce,
Oregon Pine and--

BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)
CHRISTMAS TREES!

A spry young voice of optimism cuts in out of nowhere.

BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)	NATURE NARRATOR (V.O.)
And this season I--	I was just about to--

BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)
I can take it from here, it's my
story after all. Like I was saying,
this season I--

A tan truck putters to a halt at the forest floor.

BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)
Oh sap! Hang on, wood ya?

Driven by a PARK RANGER(more like a boy scout). He surveys
the area with binoculars... *surely the voice of our V.O.*

He scribbles notes in his journal, then drives off. We watch
him go...

TWEET! A sharp WHISTLE from off screen. We WHIP TO the sound--

Landing on a SMALL PINE TREE.

Once the coast is clear, the tree's eyes blink open. His frond eyebrows raise as he looks around.

This is our hero. He speaks to camera.

SMALL TREE

Sorry, didn't wanna spook Ranger Ned. He's new here. Come to think of it, I don't think we've met.

The tree smiles at us... *oh, he's talking to us?*

SMALL TREE

What's sappenin'? I'm Tim Timbers. And welcome to my home! Can you say "Great Big Forest"?

He waits for us to respond...

Oh wow, he's still waiting.

TIM

Very good! And can you say...

(laughs)

I'm just pulling your limb, this isn't one of those movies. Anyways, *this* is going to be the most balsam season ever because I am getting picked to be.. *drum roll, please?*

A WOODPECKER in a nearby tree starts drilling... DUDUDUDUDUDU..

TIM

A Christmas tree!

Tim shakes a little snow off his branches, leaving behind the look of ornaments made out of the remaining snow.

Back in the tree, the woodpecker keeps pounding, a gaping hole already formed, when a GROAN ROARS from above.

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)

Peckham! Would you quit that?!

PECKHAM (the woodpecker) stops.

PECKHAM

Sorry, Doug. I'm trying to cut back, but once I start it's hard to-

DEEP VOICE (O.S)

It's oak-kay. The squirrels can always use an extra hollow!

Peckham flies off, revealing he was in the branches of

DOUG TIMBERS, a huge pine tree, towering above- it looks like he goes on forever, disappearing into the sun's bright spot.

TIM (TO US)
That's my dad, Doug.

DOUG
Son, who are you talking to?

Tim quickly shakes those snow ornaments off.

TIM
Oh, uhh- no one, pops.
(winks at us)

ABOVE THE TREE LINE

Doug has kind sunken eyes; the window to a soul that's weathered the storms of life.

DOUG
Drink your breakfast, son.

Tim uses his roots to soak up some of a nearby puddle.

TIM
I'm not even thirsty.

DOUG
How do you expect to hit your growth spurt if you're not fueling your roots?

TIM
(fine)
Pine...

DOUG
Just look at your brother...
Fraser gets it.

Reveal FRASER TIMBERS, flexing his branches, Tim's taller more developed brother.

FRASER
Slurps up, Tiny Tim.

TIM (TO US)
Fraser's such a pain in my stump...

A porky voice cuts in--

STUMP(O.S.)
You say something, bud?

Reveal STUMP, a short and squatty tree.

TIM
Oh- not you, Stump.

STUMP
Oak-kay...

TIM (TO US)
That's my best bud.

Stump tries to locate who Tim's talking to... No luck.

STUMP
I think you grew last night!

TIM
Ya think so?!
(to us)
For us Timbers, "Height" runs in
our family tree... But even as tall
as my dad is, we actually get it
from my mom's side.

Reveal DOROTHY TIMBERS, the taller tree next to Doug.

TIM (V.O.)
Dad's a bit self conscious about
it. He says it's just the way she
styles her fronds.

DOUG
It's just the way you style your
fronds, dear.

Doug stretches out his trunk to appear taller than his wife.
She's still taller.

DOROTHY
Of course, sweetheart.

She kisses her husband on the cheek. Tim watches his mom
smile and laugh.

TIM (V.O.)
Mom always says "it's not about the
height of your trunk that matters.
It's the width of your roots."
She's really wise and balsam.

Tim looks to his father.

TIM (V.O.)
And Dad may bark at me sometimes,
but I know he means well.

Tim looks up admiring both his parents.

TIM
I'm lucky my parents rock!

DOROTHY (O.S.)
Timothy Timbers. You did not just
use the "R" word.

TIM
But it was a compliment!

DOUG (O.S.)
Listen to your mother or that'll be
another week.

TIM
I'm still grounded. The other day,
Me and Stump were just swaying
around, but we almost knocked over
Old Man Wickery.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK: Tim jokingly pushes Stump who bumps into
OLD MAN WICKERY (a frail old tree) nearly toppling him over.

OLD MAN WICKERY
You crazy wicker-sappers!

BACK TO PRESENT DAY. Tim and Stump smirk at each other and
perform a secret handshake with their branches.

DOUG (O.S.)
Boys. Respect your elders.

TIM / STUMP
Yes sir. / Yes, Mr Timbers.

TIM
(to us)
My folks look out for the forest.
And since Mom and Dad are the
tallest, all the creatures look up
to them, literally, they're kinda
like everyone's second parents.

We start to descend down Mr and Mrs Timbers, passing by the
CRITTERS that call their branches home.

TIM

And my mom is big on branching out
to others.

Peckham the woodpecker flies by a SQUIRREL DAD and SON
carrying acorns up Doug's limbs.

PECKHAM THE WOODPECKER

Reggie, empty hollow 12 o'clock!

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

You heard the bird. Scurry up, son.

LITTLE SQUIRREL

But Daaaad.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Take it up with your mother, *she*
wanted the hollow with a view.

The little squirrel takes a breather, watching Peckham fly
around freely. He SIGHS, back to climbing.

DOROTHY TIMBERS

Mornin' Squirrels.

DOUG TIMBERS

Gearing up for this weather?

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Nuts secured!

BENNY the beaver, waddles past on his way to the lake.

DOUG

Benny. Up already?

BENNY THE BEAVER

Early beaver gets the cedar, Doug!

DOUG

Hunker down!

DOROTHY

Let us know if you need any extra
branches for the dam.

BENNY THE BEAVER

You two are so selfless.

DOROTHY

We all gotta "stick" together!

"BAHAHA" The adults all laugh hysterically at the cheese.

TIM (V.O.)
Everyone loves them. Well, mostly
everyone.

Flying past is an animal we haven't met yet, a bitter bird...
BAXTER the pigeon, holding twigs in his beak

DOUG (O.S.)
Baxter, did you ask permission
before you took those?

Baxter lands on Tim and mumbles back with a full mouth.

BAXTER BIRD
Free forest.

DOUG (O.S.)
What was that?

BAXTER
Free forest.

DOUG (O.S.)
I'm way up here, Baxter. Gonna have
to be a little louder than that!

BAXTER
FREE FOREST!
(drops all the twigs)
--son of a finch.

Baxter flies off, frustrated.

Doug chuckles. Dorothy elbows him in the side.

DOUG
What? He's incapable of following
the rules.

DOROTHY
Your rules?

DOUG
Everyone likes the rules. Without
them, this forest becomes a jungle.
Jungles are wild. Wild is chaos.
Chaos is.. not good.

TIM (V.O.)
Baxter just moved here from the
concrete jungle, Dad says. And he
sorta nested in my branches without
asking. I don't mind, but my dad
has his ways.

We push in on Tim's branches as Baxter builds his nest.

TIM (V.O.)
I think Baxter's balsam. He's the
one who told me about Christmas.

We're in the thick of it, needles and branches, we push into
a dark hollow of Tim's trunk...

FADE TO:

OVER BLACK

Snow flurries descend in a cold misty night.

A WING FLAPS, disrupting their free fall, stirring them up
higher into the clouds, swirling wildly.

That wing belonged to Baxter. We lock onto him as he soars
through the sky, expertly flying like a Top Gun pilot.

He looks down, observing the city lights below. We're in--

EXT. NEW YORK CITY AIRSPACE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The buildings and streets are covered in holiday lights.

Baxter watches the bee hive of activity below as WORKERS set
up THE ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE.

Baxter closes his wings and dives! WOOSH! Nearly hitting
another bird flying much more casually; His wife, BRITTANY.

BRITTANY
Watch it you Dodo!

BAXTER
Could a Dodo do this?

Baxter plummets through a fire escape, dodging the metal
rafters.

He rolls past apartment as TWO CHILDREN rush to see the tree
moments before it's lit.

Baxter glides low, avoiding... HONKING TRAFFIC, STREET
VENDORS, SIDE WALK PEDESTRIANS, ICE SKATERS out on the rink.

He swirls around the base of the tree, following the wired
path of unlit bulbs. Round and round, higher with each pass.

Right as Baxter reaches the top of the tree, the *CRESCENDO* of an inspiring holiday song blaring...

THE TREE'S LIGHTS BURST ON. APPLAUSE ERUPTS. THE MOST AMAZING SPECTACLE OF HOLIDAY CHEER! But Baxter had the best view.

His wife looks down at his antics... with a grin--

BRITTANY
(show off)
Such a peacock.

Baxter flies calmly next to her, admiring the lights behind.

BAXTER
It gets bigger and brighter every year. Wow. I'm gonna miss this.

BRITTANY
Me too, but change is good.

Brittany indicates her belly, she's expecting.

Baxter looks back, taking one last look as the city lights fade away behind him. He looks ahead. Ready for what's next.

BAXTER
Set a course, my love.

The two love birds soar off into the darkness.

Behind them, the star atop the Rockefeller Christmas begins to SHINE...

MATCH CUT TO:

LIGHT PIERCES OVER A RURAL MOUNTAINTOP

The flare of the rising sun reveals a beautiful countryside. Snowcap mountains. Rolling valleys. Winding rivers. And...

THE FOREST. Green as far as the eye can see. *Unseen bells softly JINGLE.*

Suddenly the entire forest is covered in Christmas lights, including Tim. He's glowing, literally.

TIM
Christmas sounds incredible,
doesn't it?
(a deep dreamy SIGH)

NERDY TREE (O.S.)
 Not to be a splinter, but the
 statith-*sticks* of being picked are
 low.

Poof! The lights are gone, Tim's day dream over.

TIM
 I know, Rootie...

Reveal ROOTIE, a nerdy skinny tree with a slight lisp.

ROOTIE
 Just tryin' to be realith-*stick*.

We widen out to see the vast forest. A million other trees.

TIM
 I don't care. Math is for geome-
 trees, not Christmas trees!

ROOTIE
 What's so great about being a
 Christmas tree, anyways?

TIM
 Well, when you're a Christmas tree.
 Nobody cares how *right* you are...
 (points to Rootie's brain)
 It's about how bright you are!

Tim tosses a pine cone into a puddle, causing the sunlight to
 reflect off the water-- the caustic rays shine on Tim.

STUMP
 (with wide eyes)
 Ooooo-Aaaaa. What else?

TIM
 Well.. You get to hang cool
 decorations on your branches.

STUMP
 Like pine cones and spiderwebs?!

TIM
 Even better... ornaments.

STUMP
 What's that?

TIM
 They're sorta like pinecones, but
 they're colorful like berries.

Just then the little squirrel scurries up, curious.

LITTLE SQUIRREL
Can you eat ornaments?

TIM
Uhh no.

The little squirrel scurries back up the tree.

TIM (CONT'D)
They're made out of glass and
sometimes plastic.

STUMP
Plas-stick?

TIM
It's like "sticks", but with plas?
(off everyone's confusion)

ROOTIE
Why wood anyone want to do that?

Tim thinks.. and really means this.

TIM
When you're a Christmas tree,
everyone pays attention to you. You
get looked up to, not down on.

Rootie can't argue with that; having experienced his fair
share of bullying. He smiles.

STUMP
How do you get picked?

TIM
Christmas spirit, my friend. You
just gotta be-leaf.

Imaginary lights and ornaments form out of thin air on Tim's
branches. The friends all shut their eyes and dream...

STUMP, ROOTIE & TIM
I be-leaf... I be-leaf.. I be-leaf.

An imaginary star begins to take shape on top of Tim when...

FRASER (O.S.)
I can't be-leaf how dumb y'all are.

Poof! That star disappears. Day dream ruined, again.

TIM (TO US)
I wish I was an only sapling.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK: BABY TIM sprouts up from the soil.
Bulging-twinkling-eyes adorable, basking in the warming sun.

TIM (V.O.)
It's been hard growing up in
Fraser's shadow.
(beat)
Literally.

WOOSH. Baby Tim is engulfed by the dark looming shadow of BIG
BABY FRASER. Baby Tim frowns in darkness.

-- TODDLER TIM struggles to pick up a football shaped rock.

TODDLER FRASER grabs the rock and WOOSH, catapults it.

-- Fraser squints and WOOSH-- grows a thick frond mustache.

Tim winces hard and... poof. Barely a pine needle.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY.

Tim frowns, turning red with anger.

FRASER
Lookin' a lil red, Tiny Tim.

Dorothy leans down to comb Tim's fronds, comforting him.

DOROTHY
Sticks and stones... Don't let
Fraser get to you. He's just trying
to chop you down to make himself
feel taller.

TIM
He's right, who am I kidding? I'm
too small to be a Christmas tree.

DOROTHY
You can be anything you want in
this life. Christmas tree or not,
I'll always love you, sweetheart.

Dorothy shakes the snow off her branches back onto Tim, and
brushes the snow to form ornaments and garland.

TIM
Thanks, Mom.

A beat for wholesome mother son love.

DOUG
Well, almost anything.

ACHOO! Doug sneezes, sending a gust of wind down on Tim, blowing off his makeshift snow decorations...

DOUG (CONT'D)
Ope, pollen.

Tim sulks.

Dorothy smacks Doug, *fix it*.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Don't let Baxter fill your head with fairy tales. Being a Christmas tree is just a hobby, a seasonal job. You belong here with your mother and I growing tall and strong to protect our woods.

TIM
But Dad I'm just one tree, there's so many taller ones.

DOUG
Son, listen to me-

TIM
Fraser can do it. He's just like you.

DOUG
Tim.

TIM
I'm not going to make a difference.

DOUG
Timothy! That's enough.

RUMBLE as clouds darken in the distance.

DOUG (CONT'D)
We work together. All of us. From every sapling to every pine. Without us... Remember what you learned in elemen-tree school?

ROOTIE
I got this, Mr Timbers.
(clears his throat)
(MORE)

ROOTIE (CONT'D)

Not only do our branches provide
shelter for all the creatures of
the forest...

We fly up high above the tree line... *Pencil sketches draw on screen explaining the following like a classroom lesson:*

ROOTIE (V.O.)

Trees do this balsam thing called
Photosynthesis where we use
sunlight to turn water and carbon
dioxide into food, releasing oxygen
into the air for the world.

The drawing is a great educational visual aid.

DOUG

Thank you, Rootie.

ROOTIE

Anytime. And did ya know? We can
also-

DOUG

We're good for now. Thanks.

Tim looks to his mom for backup.

She SIGHS, maybe not fully on board with Doug's delivery, but supports her husband's tough love.

Tim lowers his head, responsibility weighing on him.

TIM

(softly, to himself)
So it's my job to make oxygen-- air
for breathing.
(a numb realization)
So that everybody else in the world
can... *live*.

We pull out seeing the whole world. It's overwhelming... then

WE FREE FALL! A blur of sky, earth and trees all around--
landing back on

Tim. Standing there stunned. Motionless. He's struck a nerve
deep in his roots and for the first time in his life...

He's questioning everything.

As Tim contemplates life-- Baxter swoops in, collecting some
of Tim's dead pine needles off the ground.

BAXTER
Ya mind if I borrow these,
Timbuktu?

TIM
You don't have to ask.

BAXTER
Not according to the law of the
land, so.

TIM
Ah, don't let him ruffle your
feathers.

Baxter enters Tim's branches where he adds the twigs to his
NEST. Where THREE EGGS lie unhatched.

BAXTER
He's the least of my worries.

BACK OUTSIDE

TIM
Why do you call me Timbuktu?

BAXTER
Just a nickname. You don't like it?

TIM
It's not that- just- what is it?

BAXTER
Oh, it's a place.

TIM
Where?

BAXTER
Africa. Me and the Missus did a
summer there when she was world
touring with *The Eagles*.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK PHOTO: YOUNG BRITTANY is perched on the
guitar stand next to JOE WALSH as they sing on stage.

Baxter's head is in the clouds reminiscing--

BAXTER (CONT'D)
The good ol' days.

TIM
Balsam. I wish I could go.

BAXTER
Keep like your folks, you'll be
tall enough to see it from here.

TIM
Hmm. I shoulda known Mrs Brittany
was a singer.

BAXTER
Model too! She was on billboards
all over New York City.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK:

A human model on a billboard for a perfume advertisement.

We SMASH ZOOM into a LADY BIRD perched on top of that
billboard. It's Young Brittany.

Young Baxter's heart is beating out of his chest.

BAXTER (V.O.)
She was unlike any other bird in
the world.

Revealed on the power line are hundreds of OTHER BIRDS that
look identical to Brittany... but we won't spoil this moment.

SPLAT! A BILLBOARD INSTALLER rolls white paint on the ad.

BILLBOARD INSTALLER
Shew! Shew! Off!

Annoyed, Brittany takes flight.

SPLAT bird poop lands on the worker's hat.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY.

BAXTER
From that moment. She had me
wrapped around her feathers.

BRITTANY (O.S.)
Wrapped around whose feathers?

Brittany flies up to her nest.

BAXTER
Oh nothing tweet-heart, just
chirpin' about your world tour.

TIM
I should have known you were
famous! Can you sing something?

BRITTANY
That was a long time ago. The
acoustics here aren't very good-
I'm not even warmed up-

Brittany erupts into a *HARMONIC RUN*.

Tim claps his branches.

TIM
Balsam! I can't sing..
But I can whistle!

Tim WHISTLES! It's loud. Long. Ear piercing.

SOMEWHERE - Mr Deer looks up from grazing. / Benny drops his
wood and covers his ears. / Reggie drops his acorns, trips.

ABOVE THE TREE LINE - Birds fly out of the trees.

Doug smirks. Proud.

DOUG
I taught him that.

BACK WITH TIM. He finishes his WHISTLE...

On the birds, *thank goodness that's over.*

...Tim INHALES to go again..

UNSEEN FOREST ANIMALS shout: "No!- We're good!- that's okay!"

BAXTER
Wow that was-

BRITTANY
You can really- carry a tune!

TIM
We need to have a concert!

BRITTANY
I don't know.
(re: the eggs)
We're going to have our feathers
full. Perhaps in the spring.

TIM
Yes m'am. I bet Benny could build
you a stage by then-

BRITTANY
"M'am". So polite. Your folks
clearly raised you right.

Baxter rolls his eyes on account of the fact he doesn't get
along with Doug. He changes the subject.

BAXTER
Speaking of Benny, we were talking
down at the dam. He thinks we
should prepare for the worst.

BRITTANY
It has been extra breezy lately.

TIM
I may be small, but I'm sturdy. You
have nothing to worry about.

STUMP
What are we worrying about?

TIM
We're not! It's just gonna--

FRASER
-be howling winds and three and a
half feet of snowfall tonight.
You twigs don't stand a chance.

Stump and Rootie shudder at the thought.

TIM
Don't listen to him. We'll lock our
branches and get through this just
like we do every year. Oak-kay?

The trees share a look.

STUMP & ROOTIE
Oak-kaaay.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHES OF-- FREEZING HOWLING WINDS. DARKNESS. MAYHEM.

TIM
Hang on!

THUNDER ROARS. LIGHTNING STRIKES.
WOOD CRACKS! SNAPS! DEBRIS SWIRLS ALL AROUND FEROCIOUSLY.

STUMP
(teeth clattering)
I think I'm losing my bark!

ROOTIE
I think I'm bent upside down!

FRASER
(faux confidence)
I think this is fun!

TIM
I think this is the worst of it!
Stand tall! Stand together!

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. FOREST - THE NEXT MORNING

Tim's eyes blink open, sore and dazed.

TIM
What happened?

He surveys the aftermath. It's still. Quiet. Silent. He feels something heavy leaned on him, he pushes it off.

STUMP
Ouch?!

TIM
Sorry Stump, I didn't know that was you. You oak-kay?

STUMP
Bent, but not broken. You?

TIM
I think I'm pine... Baxter?!
Brittany?!

BAXTER
Sore wings, but we'll fly.

TIM
Fraser?! Rootie?!

Fraser uses his strength to shove stray branches off himself.

FRASER
Worst log pile ever, but I'm good.

ROOTIE
Me too. And I'm not even upset I
was brought up last.

Tim breathes a SIGH of relief.

TIM
Oh thank Mother Nature.

They all look out to the forest... covered in snow. Littered
with debris. They went through hell.

Tim shouts up to his father.

TIM (CONT'D)
Dad, that wind was wild! Wasn't it?

A pregnant pause.

TIM (CONT'D)
Dad?

THE BIRD'S NEST INSIDE TIM'S BRANCHES

Brittany nudges Baxter to go check. Baxter flies out.

BAXTER
He's probably got snow lodged in
his ears again. I'll get him.

Baxter flies up to Doug.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Up and at 'em big fella, kids
calling for ya.

Baxter reaches Doug's face, landing on a nearby branch.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Silent treatment? Look, I'm sorry
about the twigs, but the kid--

Just then Baxter realizes.

Doug's eyes are open... Frozen still. Looking down. Unmoving.

Baxter's eyes follow Doug's gaze to the forest floor where
mound of snow covers the shape of...

A tree.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Oh no.

Baxter dives down. Lands on Tim's branch. Enters his nest and whispers into Brittany's ear. She tears up.

BRITTANY
You have to tell Tim.

TIM
Tell me what?

Baxter slowly walks out onto Tim's branch, right in front of his face. Baxter takes a deep breath.

TIM (CONT'D)
What is it? Is it my dad? He okay?

Baxter nods his head, *yes, he's okay.*

Baxter's speaks, but everything goes SILENT...

We read his lips.

"It's your mom."

Tim's ears begin to ring. He eyes the mound of snow next to him, only a few meters away, where his mother once stood.

He breaks down. Baxter lowers his head. All the other trees realize what has just happened.

Dorothy has fallen.

...

WE PUSH INTO the MOUND OF SNOW until there's only WHITE.

The WHITE FLICKERS. Glows YELLOWISH-GREEN.

It's the tail of a FIREFLY.

We pull back to reveal THOUSANDS of them drifting through the night, their glow washing the forest in soft, living light.

High above, on a branch, BRITTANY perches alone.

Nervous. Grieving. She steels herself.

A breath.

She SINGS – a beautiful original song in memory of DOROTHY.

As she sings, the forest listens.

Reggie the squirrel scurries to Dorothy's stump and places a single NUT at its base.

Benny the beaver waddles up, then carves a small heart into the wood with his teeth.

Baxter flies down and leaves a bouquet of flowers.

STUMP and ROOTIE stand close. Even FRASER, usually too proud to show anything, can't hide it.

Creatures across the forest "predator and prey alike" gathered in silence.

Above them, the fireflies rise together... forming a glowing shape in the sky.

A tree.

As the SONG FADES OUT... the shape dissolves as the fireflies disperse into the night.

EXT. WOODS, ABOVE THE TREE LINE - NIGHT

Doug, stoic, looks out to the full moon, just above the lake and mountains. He hears SNIFFLES below.

FOREST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

While the rest of the forest sleeps peacefully...

Tim can't, sobbing quietly to himself.

DOUG

Tim?

TIM

Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you.

DOUG

I can't sleep either.

TIM

I just don't get it. How could this happen? Mom was the strongest. Even stronger than you-- why did it have to be her-- sorry. I didn't mean it like that.

DOUG

No. You're right, son.

She was.

She is the strongest.

(MORE)

DOUG (CONT'D)

(beat)

Can you see the moon tonight?

Tim strains, looking through the canopy of branches.

TIM

Kinda.

DOUG

You will someday. It's beautiful.
Its glow... This is the first night
I can truly see it
(a chuckle)
Your mother was so tall, she
blocked my view.

Tim looks at the space where Dorothy used to be. The empty patch of sky looks cold.

DOUG (CONT'D)

It wasn't until tonight that I
realized something...

TIM

What is it, Dad?

DOUG

It's easy to stand tall when the
sun is out, Tim.
But strength? Real strength is
tested in the uncertainty of dusk.
Your mother took the west. She
stood between us and the coming
night, catching the sun's last rays
on her needles, not for glory, but
so that we could sleep peacefully.

Tim let that soak in.

TIM

So you can see the sunset now?

DOUG

Yes, my son.

TIM

Can't you just look away?

DOUG

I suppose. But when it matters
most, we must face our fears. And
be brave, not just for ourselves,
but for those we love.

Beat.

TIM

So mom wasn't scared last night in the storm?

DOUG

Trees don't shake because they're scared, son. We shake to let the wind pass through. But your mother didn't let the wind pass. She held it. She caught the storm in her branches and refused to let it go. She protected us, and those who couldn't protect themselves. She was our shield.

Tim's proud of his mom.

TIM

I want to be like that. A shield.

Tim looks up to the sky, feeling better.

DOUG

Get some rest.

Tim shuts his eyes. We push through his branches to Baxter-- wide awake.

Baxter looks to his sleeping wife... their eggs. The looming weight of parenthood settles in. He closes his eyes.

EXT. WOODS - THE NEXT DAY

A brighter day with a fresh layer of snow.

All the animals scurry about cleaning up the forest together.

The squirrels and birds remove debris out of the trees while the beavers and deer clean up the forest floor.

STUMP

I'll get your back if you get mine.

Stump brushes snow off Tim's branches. Tim returns the favor. Nobody helps Rootie.

ROOTIE

What am I chopped lumber?

Fraser rears back and slaps the snow off Rootie.

ROOTIE (CONT'D)

Ouch?!

FRASER

You're welcome.

Fraser shakes the snow off his own branches.

WOOSH! AN AVALANCHE OF SNOW COMES CRASHING DOWN ON ALL OF THEM. Their eyes blink open through the snow.

DOUG (O.S.)

Trunks up! --Sorry kids.

Doug laughs a jolly one. The kids laugh too. Tim's glad his dad is in better spirits.

A tunnel is dug through the snow, Baxter pops out.

BAXTER

I hate shoveling snow.

TIM

Sorry, Baxter.

BAXTER

You can't control the weather, kid.
We were gonna spend the holidays
with Brit's flock in Florida, but
with the eggs, we're grounded.

(quietly)

I'm not all that choked up about.
In-laws.. total bird brains.

Brittany pops out of the tunnel, she heard that.

BRITTANY

I need a bird bath.

Brittany flies off.

BAXTER

Kid, enjoy your freedom while you
still can.

(smells himself)

Woah, all this community service. I
could use a little freshening up
myself. Ya mind keeping an eye on
the eggs, Timbuktú?

Tim looks in at the eggs.

TIM

Not going anywhere.

BAXTER
Eggs-cellent.

Baxter takes off after Brittany.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Tweet-heart, wait up!

SKY

Baxter catches up to his wife on their way to the lake.

They don't see it, but in the distance an incoming TRUCK
crests the hill on a winding dirt road.

EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - SAME TIME

Tim watches the birds fly off.

TIM
Ever wonder what it'd be like to
fly?

STUMP
I had a dream I was flying!

TIM
Really?! What happened?

We imagine **STUMP'S DREAM.**

STUMP (V.O.)
I was way up high over the forest.
Feeling the wind between my fronds.

TIM (V.O.)
Ooooooh, that's brisk. Then what?

STUMP (V.O.)
Well, you were there and Fraser--
and I think-- Rootie.

Stump soars with the moon behind him- his friends glide in,
flanking him in the night sky. Tim, Fraser and Rootie.

STUMP (V.O.)
Wait, no. Rootie wasn't there.

Dream Rootie flies away against his will.

DREAM ROOTIE
Ahhh, come on! Leaf me out of
everything.

The three remaining trees fly in a "V formation", looking down at the landscape. It's breathtaking.

DREAM TIM

Balsam.

STUMP (V.O.)

Yeah. But then...

WOOSH! The trees free fall, plummeting to Earth uncontrollably, flailing their branches!

"Aaaaaaah!" The ground getting closer. They brace for impact.

SMASH CUT TO:

END OF STUMP'S DREAM.

EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - DAY

STUMP

..I woke up.

ROOTIE

We wouldn't be very aerodynamic.

FRASER

Sounds like a nightmare.

TIM

Okay maybe not flying, but ever wonder what it'd be like to travel, see the world?

The trees all imagine... *Hmmmm Oh yeah, that'd be nice, then-*

STUMP

Nope.

FRASER

Nah.

ROOTIE

Never crossed my mind.

Tim sulks.

STUMP

You don't like standing out with us?

TIM

No it's not that, y'all are balsam.

STUMP
Then what is it?

A beat.

STUMP (CONT'D)
Listen bud, they're just dreams,
they're not meant to be real.

That didn't help like Stump thought it would.

STUMP (CONT'D)
Besides, look around you. We're in
the woods! We're exactly where
we're supposed to be. We're
literally made of wood. The woods
are named after us!

TIM
Maybe you're right.

EXT. STREAM NEAR THE LAKE - DAY

In the stream, Brittany and Baxter bathe beneath makeshift
shower heads constructed of wood.

BRITTANY
The beavers have really outdone
themselves with this thing.

BAXTER
Yeah, forget a bird bath. Hey
whatcha thinkin' for lunch? Seeds?

BRITTANY
We always do seeds.

BAXTER
Worms?

BRITTANY
Maybe berries?

BAXTER
Let's think on it while we air dry?

BRITTANY
Race you to the mountaintop. Winner
picks.

Brittany smirks and takes off, Baxter flies after his wife.

BAXTER
You didn't say go!

Baxter looks down and sees Benny the beaver working on the dam. He shouts to him--

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Benny! Love the new shower!

BENNY THE BEAVER
Wait until you see the jacuzzi
we're working on!

Benny laughs as he watches Baxter fly off.

VROOM! Benny turns around, drops all the wood he was holding and scurries behind some logs.

A truck tire putters past the lake.

EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - DAY

Stump scans the forest.

STUMP
I spy with my little eye
something... Green.

TIM
A tree.

STUMP
You're good at this.. Your turn.

TIM
Rootie can take my turn.

ROOTIE
Finally! Okay, okay...

Rootie looks around. Stump clocks that Tim's a bit off.

ROOTIE (CONT'D)
I spy with my little eye...
something triangular.

STUMP
A tree?

ROOTIE
(dang-it)
Rocks.

Tim SIGHS. Bored.

STUMP
You oak-kay, Tim? Ya look sadder
than a weeping willow.

ROOTIE
We could play something else?

STUMP
No, Tim loves this game! C'mon!

TIM
Sorry, I'm just not feeling up for
it today.

Stump decides not to pry.

STUMP
Go again, Rootie.

ROOTIE
Oak-kay! I spy...

Rootie scans through the dense foliage--

DOOSH! He hears the slam of a truck door from somewhere.

ROOTIE (CONT'D)
...something...

Rootie notices movement up ahead, but can't tell what it is
behind the trees... Then he sees--

ROOTIE (CONT'D)
HUMAN!

A LUMBERJACK headed their way!

Stump, Fraser and Tim crane their trunks to try to find him.

STUMP
It's a hiker?!

FRASER
It's a hunter.

ROOTIE
(Phew)
It's going away.

The lumberjack is leaving.

Tim looks off toward the dirt road where he clocks the lumberjack's red truck. A company vehicle with a logo.

Tim squints, focusing his eyes on...

"Big Jack's Christmas Trees"

Tim GASPS, steels himself! This is his opportunity!

Tim decides to act. He inhales deeply and.. WHISTLES!!

The lumberjack alerts up. Turns in Tim's direction.

The trees give Tim a look, *what're you doing?!*

TIM
Act natural!

All the trees straighten up. They sway a bit awkwardly.

The lumberjack lumbers up. Plops his chainsaw on his shoulder and scans the trees.

Stump sucks in his fronds. Stands as tall as he can... Still short and plump.

The lumberjack measures Stump, shakes his head. *Next.*

Moves to Rootie. Who's nervously shaking. His needles shed to the floor.

The lumberjack flicks Rootie's frail branches, *BOING! Too thin.* Moves on. Rootie exhales, relieved.

It's down to Fraser and Tim. Tim stands calm, cool and collected. Fraser puffs his chest out, confident.

Honestly both good looking options, but Fraser is noticeably taller and stronger.

The lumberjack takes a beat to decide...

Picks Fraser.

Tim deflates. Absolutely gutted.

Fraser looks to Tim with a cocky smirk.

Tim lowers his head, disappointed. He whispers--

TIM (CONT'D)
Congrats, Fraser.

FRASER
Better luck next year, lil bro.

Lumberjack yanks the pull cord. His chainsaw REVS to life.

Right before the lumberjack begins to saw... he pauses.

Looks up again and sees how tall and thick Fraser is... And how faaaaaaaaaaar away the truck is...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The lumberjack lifts Tim into the bed of his truck.

EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - SAME TIME

Stump, Rootie and Fraser watch as Tim is placed in the truck.

FRASER
Who would wanna be a stupid
Christmas tree anyways?... Not me.

Rootie and Stump shout--

ROOTIE / STUMP
Rooting for you! / Break a limb!

Stump watches, crying tears of joy. He SNORTS... Back to water works.

Rootie hears some more crying, but it's not from Stump...

ROOTIE
Fraser... are you sapping too?!
(off Fraser's look)
You're totally sapping right now.

FRASER
Am not!

STUMP
It's okay, bud. Let it out.

FRASER
I'm fine. I just-- got some saw
dust in my eye is all.

Rootie and Stump share a look.

EXT. DIRT ROAD, BED OF TRUCK - SAME TIME

The truck clicks into gear. Tim looks back to his friends and waves goodbye. They wave back.

VROOM! The truck slowly pulls away.

EXT. BED OF TRUCK (DRIVING) - CONTINUOUS

Tim watches the forest pass him by. For the first time in his life... he's moving. He takes in the sights.

But then he remembers. Looks high above the tree line to the tallest tree. Tim shouts--

TIM
I love you, Dad!

ABOVE THE TREE LINE, Doug watches his son drive away over the rolling hills. He waves.

DOUG
Love you too, son!
(to himself)
I'll miss you.

A tear forms.

Reggie the Squirrel climbs up. Doug steels himself.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL
Congrats big guy, your boy got
picked! That's huge for our neck of
the woods.

DOUG
Yeah, oh-- thanks Reggie. Who'da
thought? My Tim...

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL
Well look down here, c'mon we're
all celebrating!

DOUG
I'll catch up with you in a bit.

Doug watches as the truck disappears over the hill.

BEGIN "ROAD TRIP" MONTAGE

Tim rides in the truck bed, feeling the wind in his fronds.

RURAL ROAD. Tim looks out at some picturesque scenery.

HIGHWAY. A TRUCK with a DOG in the bed speeds up next to Tim.

TIM
Hello Mr Wolf!

DOG
What's a "wolf"? I'm a dog, dawg.

The dog opens its mouth, tongue flapping in the wind. Not a care in the world. Tim opens his mouth and does the same.

A MINIVAN full of KIDS point at Tim, excited for Christmas. Tim is already feeling more important.

DAY TURNS TO NIGHT as they drive down the highway.

Tim looks up observing the night sky. The stars twinkle. Another star shoots across the skyline toward the...

FULL MOON. Unobstructed. Tim can see it in its entirety for the first time. He's amazed.

The lumberjack changes the radio station to *CHRISTMAS MUSIC*. "*Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town*" plays.

They pass by a BILLBOARD with Santa waving. Tim waves back.

TIM
What did Baxter call him..?

RADIO
...Better watch out I'm telling ya
why. Santa Claus is coming to town!

TIM
Santa Claus!
(sings along)
Santa Claus is comin' to town!

They speed towards a city of lights in the distance.

NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

The truck drives through the urban landscape. Tim's eyes light up with wonder as they pass...

CENTRAL PARK, each tree wrapped in lights.

TIME SQUARE. Digital billboards shine holiday ads.

Cars HONK as they slow to standstill traffic near

THE ROCKEFELLER CENTER

Tim looks up... his jaw drops.

TIM (CONT'D)
You're... You're... You're...

THE ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE, definitely not voiced by
Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE
(confident laugh)
Hey there little tree. What's your
name?

TIM
Me? You wanna know *my* name?

ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE
Don't make it weird, kid.

TIM
Sorry, huge fan. I'm Tim-- Timothy
Timbers, Mr Rockefeller!

ROCKEFELLER CHRISTMAS TREE
Nice to meetcha, Tim. Call me Rock!

TIM
Yes sir, Mr Rock!
(to himself)
I used to get in trouble for saying
that.

The traffic light turns green, Tim rides away.

ROCK
Hey, kid.

Tim looks back. The Rock tosses one of his shiny RED
ORNAMENTS, landing on Tim's branch.

ROCK (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas!

Tim can't believe it. His smile reflects in the ornament.

The ornament's eyes burst open. Tim screams!

RED ORNAMENT
Nice to meet you too.

TIM
I'm sorry, I didn't know--

RED ORNAMENT
Ornaments could talk?

TIM
No!
(off the ornament's look)
Yeah.

RED ORNAMENT
You trees think Christmas is all
about you. Well let me tell ya,
y'all ain't nothing without us
decorations. Alright?!

TIM
Sorry. I'm pretty new to all this.

RED ORNAMENT
That's my bad. I get a little
anxious around the holidays. Let's
start fresh since it looks like I'm
gonna be hangin witchu this season.

TIM
That'd be balsam.

RED ORNAMENT
Names Mint. Orny Mint.

TIM
Okay, Mr Mint. Well-

RED ORNAMENT
Call me Orny.

TIM
Okay Orny... what now? Meet Santa?
The elves? Feed the rain-deer? Deer
where I'm from don't really like
the rain. What are their names?
There's a bunch, right? Conner? I know one's
a really good dancer. And what about-

The truck disappears into the lights of the city. Tim
hounding Orny with questions.

OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY - NIGHT

The glorious lights and festivities fade away in the truck's
rearview mirror... as they enter the underbelly of the city.

A RAT scurries past the truck's headlights into the shadows as the truck pulls into a **DINGY ABANDONED LOT**.

CUT TO:

Tim is stood up in an aisle with a few OTHER CHRISTMAS TREES.

Tim looks around the desolate lot and sees a sign bordered by broken Christmas bulbs: "Big Jack's Christmas Tree Farm"

TIM

What is this place?

Orny looks around, dumbfounded. He shouts to a DROOPY TREE.

ORNY

Ayo! Droopy... Yeah you. How long you been here?

Droopy looks up, barely.

DROOPY TREE

... three or four.

ORNY

Three or four what?

DROOPY TREE

Maybe five.

ORNY

Five WHAT?! Hours? Days? Weeks?!

The Droopy tree ominously droops lower. Ignoring Orny.

ORNY (CONT'D)

Excuse me! Un-droop please! I'm talkin' to you!

(it's no use)

YO! Lumberjack, call Rock! He'll tell ya! *This can't be happening.*

TIM

It'll be oak-kay!

ORNY

I did not work my way up to the top, just to be sent all the way back down to the gutter!

TIM

Gutter? I thought this is a good thing? I got picked... Didn't I?

ORNY

Sure. Ya got "picked". But that's just the first round. You still gotta impress the real judges!

TIM

"Judges?" Who are the judges?

Just then a WOMAN waltzes down the aisle. The remaining inventory of trees sharpen up. Tim and Orny follow suit.

She eyes Tim, but he leans out of the way for the Droopy tree.

ORNY

(clenched teeth)

Kid, what are you doing?!

TIM

He's been here longer. Only fair.

The WOMAN checks out the droopy tree. The lumberjack approaches with a tray of snicker doodles--

LUMBERJACK

We're having a sale, buy one tree get one snickerdoodle-- Jill?!

He drops his tray of snicker doodles.

JILL, the woman, perks up, they know each other.

JILL

Jack? From Small Town High?! What are you.. I haven't seen you since--

LUMBERJACK

Prom. Then you moved to the big city to become a big city writer. This is my Christmas tree farm.

They lock eyes lovingly for a really long time.

Tim and Orny share a look... *this is weird.*

ORNY

Wrap it up, Hallmark. I gotta get out of here.

Jill points to the droopy tree. Jack hoists droopy up.

TIM

Congratulations!

DROOPY TREE
 (deadpan)
 Yay.

Droopy is taken to checkout.

Tim is happy for him. Orny is pissed.

TIM
 No worries, we'll get the next one.

Orny tries to contain his rage... TINK! His shiny exterior cracks slightly. He erupts.

ORNY
 Kid, you're gonna have to sharpen
 your pine needles if we're gonna
 make it out of here. Christmas is
 in two weeks!

TIM
 Sorry.

ORNY
 Straighten your trunk, have some
 self respect.

The lights for the Christmas tree farm go out, leaving Tim and Orny in the dark.

The city sounds scary at night as distant SIRENS WAIL and STRAY DOGS BARK... Tim hears SOBBING. It's Orny.

TIM
 Orny? You okay?

ORNY
 I'm just used to sleeping with
 night lights on my tree.

The magic is fading. Tim looks up above a brownstone at the moon. He SIGHS. Homesick.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS, ABOVE THE TREE LINE - NIGHT

The full moon.

We hear more CRYING below the tree line. We follow it down.

Landing at the empty space where Tim once stood. Brittany and Baxter cry in the flurrying snow.

STUMP
We're sorry about your eggs.

ROOTIE
Real sorry. Right, Fraser?

FRASER
Yeah. Sorry... that Tim is an irresponsible twig-wit.

Baxter and Brittany continue to cry.

BAXTER
You didn't see *anything*?

ROOTIE
He was human.

STUMP
Drove a truck.

ROOTIE
Had a chainsaw.

BAXTER
What color?!

STUMP
Uhh-- like a shiny silver color.

BRITTANY
Not the saw, the truck!?

STUMP
Uhh my branches crack under pressure. Rootie?!!

ROOTIE
C'mon brain, think...
Red!

Brittany takes flight-- Baxter follows her.

EXT. BIG JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - MORNING

Orny yanks on Tim's branch. He bursts awake!

TIM
I overslept?! Is Christmas over?!

ORNY
No. We got new competition.

Tim's eyes widen at

A restocked Christmas tree farm. Hundreds of new trees.
Tim GULPS.

TIM
Fraser?!

Tim's new neighbor: A TALL JOCK TREE turns around, it's not Fraser, but looks like him. MORE JOCK TREES turn to Tim.

ALL THE JOCK TREES
WWhhaatt wwaass tthhaatt
lliittllee mmaann ??

TIM
Thought you were someone else.

Tim sullens, realizing the stiff competition.

ORNY
Trunk up, kid. These trees can
smell fear a forest away.

Tim tries to perk up.

ORNY (CONT'D)
Now look, we're not in your little
woods anymore. At this level you're
not gonna out height anyone so ya
need a gimmick. Something that says
"I'm Tim, pick me. Got anything?"

TIM
Umm...Oh! I have this bark-mark in
the shape of an arrow on my--
(off Orny's SIGH)
Wait, I can whistle!

Orny's intrigued. He nods, *prove it*.

Tim licks his lips. Takes a deep breath and... BLOWS A
RASPBERRY! Like a sad balloon deflating.

Orny looks confused.

Tim, embarrassed. Tries again.. and BLOWS ANOTHER RASPBERRY!

ORNY
Take it easy, kid.

Tim INHALES like he's summoning his soul and RASPBERRYYYYYY!
He nearly passes out. Tim takes ragged breaths.

TIM
I'm dried out. I just need to wet
my whistle.

Tim looks down at a gross black mud puddle. Shudders, ew.

**MONTAGE OF "TIM NOT GETTING PICKED" INTERCUT WITH
"BIRDS SEARCHING FOR THEIR EGGS"**

- Tim tries to whistle. A COUPLE walks right past Tim.
- The birds fly over the highway.
- A CUSTOMER walks down the aisle. Tim raises up trying to make himself taller, loses his balance and tumbles over, domino effect, knocking down all the trees in his row.
- The birds ask some perched birds on the Santa Claus billboard if they have seen anything. They point at the city.
- A TIME LAPSE of the Christmas tree farm being cleared out of trees. Only a few stragglers remain.
- Brittany talks to BIRDS on a power line... under a highway overpass... Near a newspaper stand... *no luck*.
- Baxter flies past an empty egg carton by a dumpster.

END OF MONTAGE.

EXT. BIG JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY

Tim is losing hope.

ORNY
What's got you all bent out of
shape?

TIM
This is harder than I thought it
would be.

ORNY
Well. If we're gonna stand out, we
need to branch out.

Orny eyes a STRAY DOG drinking from the gross puddle.

Next to a RAT snacking on a snickerdoodle on the ground.

EXT. NYC AIRSPACE - DAY

Brittany and Baxter fly above the busy street, eyes peeled.

Unbeknownst to them, a LARGE SILHOUETTE soars above them...
The looming figure disappears into the flare of the sun...

Baxter sees some CITY BIRDS perched on a

BROWNSTONE ROOF

Baxter and Brittany land.

BAXTER
Either of you seen a tree?

The city birds share look.

CITY BIRD #1
Check the park?

The city birds cackle.

BRITTANY
This tree was in a red truck.

CITY BIRD #2
Haven't seen any driving trees
either.

BAXTER
No the tree wasn't--

BRITTANY
Let me tell you two dodos
something!

Baxter pulls his wife to the side.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
C'mon, babe.

Then.

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)
His name "Tim"?

A glimmer of hope. They turn to that voice.

The Rockefeller Christmas Tree.

EXT. BIG JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY

Orny has the dog and the rat huddled up.

RAT
But what's in it for us?

Orny smirks.

ORNY
You boys ever heard of The Rock?

The dog and rat look to each other, intrigued.

DOG
Yeah. They get stuck in between my
paws when I run in the road.

RAT
No you idiot. He's talking about
that famous tree down on 48th.
(off the dog's nod)
We're listening.

The dog and rat smirk devilishly... Tim is concerned.

ORNY
I got powerful pals. So if youse
help us out, I can make it worth
your while.

RAT
How do we know you're legit?

Orny spins around, revealing he has a sticker "Property of
Rockefeller Center". The Rat and Dog buy in.

RAT (CONT'D)
Nice ink. Deal.

ORNY
So here's what we're gonna do--

TIM
Hey Orny, can I talk to you for a
second-- in private?

ORNY
Excuse me, need a word with my
business associate.

The dog and rat back off, respect.

ORNY (CONT'D)
What? I was about to seal the deal.

TIM
Uh what deal?

ORNY
I'm gettin' you picked.

TIM
How exactly? Cuz I'm getting a bad
feelin in my trunk about these two.
They seem shady.

ORNY
Them?

The dog GROWLS at a PASSERBY while the Rat slicks back his
hair with a rusted screw.

ORNY (CONT'D)
(off Tim's look)
That's just how critters are in the
big city. You country folk are so
sensitive.
(off Tim's look)
There's nothing to worry about.
They're just gonna scare- I mean
funnel customers towards you. Bada
bing, bada boom! We're chillin
indoors.

TIM
I appreciate the plan, but I'd
rather get picked on my own merit.
I've made it this far.

Orny holds his temper with a deep breath.

TIM (CONT'D)
You okay? You're looking a little
more red than usual.

ORNY
(with clenched teeth)
Just jolly.
(to the rat and dog)
Sorry boys, deals off. Gonna test
our luck the old fashioned way.

The rat and the dog ease toward Tim...

RAT
Mm. Sorta just wasted our time, Mr
Christmas tree.

TIM
Well I'm technically not a
Christmas tree yet. But once--

Orny yanks on Tim's branch to *shut up*.

ORNY

Fellas, we can work this out. I'll talk to Rock and get you some--

RAT

I don't think you can get much anything. In fact, I bet Rock dumped you off with this bush cuz he was tired of your dead weight.

ORNY

No! This is more of a mentor--mentree situation.

The rat and dog lurk closer.

ORNY (CONT'D)

C'mon, it's the holidays, let's just relax, alright?

RAT

Ya know what tree branches and ornaments have in common?

DOG

Uhh-- they create a festive and joyful atmosphere?

RAT

What? No...
They break easy.

The Rat and dog leap at Tim when--

KEEER! The screech of a HAWK swoops down for the rat!

At the last second-- Tim shields the rat with his branches.

The HAWK soars up high into the sky, circling the area.

The rat clings to Tim's branch for dear life.
Hyperventilating.

RAT (CONT'D)

Well don't just sit there wagging your tail, do something!

The dog springs into action and BARKS at the hawk. Forcing him out of sight.

The rat climbs down from Tim's branches. Shellshocked.
A changed rat.

RAT (CONT'D)
 I--I-I saw Mother Nature... and she
 looked disappointed in me.
 (beat)
 Whatever you want, we'll do it!

Tim and Orny share a look.

EXT. BIG JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - MOMENTS LATER

The DAWSON FAMILY walk in. A DAD(40s), TEENAGE DAUGHTER and YOUNG SON. No mom.

YOUNG SON
 Look! A puppy!

The boy runs out of sight.

Just then the dog walks up to the teenage daughter. He gives her puppy-dog-eyes, but her face is buried in her phone.

The dad pets the dog.

DAD
 Good boy.

YOUNG SON (O.S.)
 Dad, can we keep him, pleaaase?!

The dad looks up to see his son holding another "puppy"...

DAD
 RJ, put that down!!

The sister realizes something is off.

TEENAGE DAUGHTER
 That's a rat. *Idiot.*

The boy looks down. It's in fact the rat, putting on his best puppy performance.

RJ
 Are you sure?

The Rat's eyes are bulged, they twinkle. He pretends to RUFF.

Tim and Orny look to each other, *not bad.*

RJ (CONT'D)
 He's cute. Please, Dad?

RJ hugs him tighter. The Rat can't breathe.

The teenage daughter could puke. The dad looks on cross-eyed.

DAD
Sorry, son. Princess would try to
eat him.

The rat shimmies his way out of the boy's grip and scurries
off toward Tim.

RJ
Come back!

RJ chases after the rat, his KNITTED BEANIE CAP falls off as
he checks under Tim.

The rat is gone, disappointed, RJ looks up and sees
Tim and Orny. RJ's mesmerized.

RJ (CONT'D)
Woah, look at this one!

DAD
Perfect size for the apartment.
(re: Orny)
And it's already got a jumpstart on
decorating. Like it, Cindy?

CINDY (DAUGHTER)
Whatever.

The dad motions to the lumberjack.

DAD
We'll take it.

Tim's eyes light up, it's really happening!

The rat and dog fist bump each other. Success.

Orny whispers to Tim--

ORNY
I remember now, kid. You got--
(off Tim's look)
Star quality.

Tim smiles.

WOOSH! Tim is sent through a TABLE TOP BALER. He's
constricted in netting. SNIP of scissors.

TIM
Little tight.

The family pulls out of Big Jack's Christmas tree farm and onto the road. Tim tied down to the top, he shouts back.

TIM (CONT'D)
Thanks you guys!

DOG & RAT
Merry Christmas, Tim!

SKY

Baxter and Brittany fly above.. *Did they just say "Tim"?!*

Baxter hovers in place, looking around. He shouts--

BAXTER
Tim!? TIM!?

BRITTANY
There!

Tim is driven away. The birds give chase.

BAXTER
Where's traffic when ya need it?!

EXT. ROOF OF CAR (DRIVING)

Tim faintly hears something, but it just sounds like distant chirps. He's stuck in the netting so he can't look around.

EXT. NYC AIRSPACE

Baxter and Brittany fly as fast as they can.

BAXTER & BRITTANY
Tim!

Despite their best effort, the car is too fast, driving over the BROOKLYN BRIDGE.

BAXTER
Wait. *Wait.*

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

The family's car pulls into an affluent apartment complex.

PRE-LAP DING of the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The dad struggles to cram Tim and Orny into the elevator.
Orny looks sick.

TIM
You okay, Orny?

ORNY
I get claustrophobic.
(off Tim's look)
*And no, that has nothing to do with
Santa Claus.*

RJ rushes to press the button for their floor, but Cindy is quicker. Purposely instigating.

RJ
Hey! I wanted to press the button!
Dad, she always gets to-

The door closes on him whining. They start to ascend, Orny could puke.

DING. The doors open, revealing an OLD MAN. Tim's branches pop out. The kids argue. The Dad tries to hold Tim up. Chaos.

DAD
Ope, going up? We can squeeze.

The old man just stares. The door closes automatically.

DAD (CONT'D)
(sorry)
Merry Christmas!

ELDERLY MAN (O.S.)
Bah humbug.

31ST FLOOR ELEVATOR BAY

DING! The door opens. Tim spills half out, his trunk stuck.

Cindy, buried in her phone, steps over him and walks off. RJ chases after.

The elevator doors begin to close on Tim.

ORNY
Watch out, Tim!

Tim squints his eyes shut, bracing for-

BUMP. The doors gently nudge him. They try again. BUMP.

Tim opens one eye. Relief.

BRIAN grabs Tim and strains.

BRIAN
Kids? ...Hello?

Nothing. The kids are gone. The elevator ALARM BLARES.

A door down the hall opens. A WOMAN(40s) steps out.

WOMAN
Need some help, Brian?

BRIAN
I got it. Thanks.

The ALARM BLASTS. Brian smiles. He does not, "got it".

INT. DAWSON FAMILY APARTMENT - DAY

Brian and the woman carry Tim into the apartment. It's big with a nice city view.

Tim and Orny look around, nodding, *we could get used to this.*

CINDY
What is *she* doing here?

BRIAN
Mrs Blackwell, was kind enough to help.

Cindy retreats to her phone.

WOMAN
Oh, it's actually Ms Felton now.
Harold and I divorced. But please,
just call me Beth.

BRIAN
Oh, I didn't know.

Brian takes a long pause, staring intensely at Beth.

BETH (WOMAN)
It's new. I'm not choked up about
it... Where do you want this?

BRIAN
Right. Sorry, over here.

Brian and Beth scoot Tim into the corner of the room by the window. They set him down. Orny looks out to the city.

ORN
(sweet view)
Jingle. Bells.

TIM
*Woah. I don't even think Dad's been
this high up before.*

BRIAN
Thanks so much, Beth. Would you
like a drink? Glass of water? Wine?

Beth makes her way to the door.

BETH
Oh I'm fine, thank you.

BRIAN
Well if you need anything, some
help moving things out. I owe ya.
Will you be moving?

Brian is telegraphing, but she doesn't mind.

BETH
Harold kept secrets. I kept the
apartment. Seeya around, Merry
Christmas.

Beth, embarrassed, quickly leaves.

Brian stares at the door. The kids stare at their father.

RJ
She's pretty.

Cindy rolls her eyes and heads for her room.

BRIAN
We're gonna decorate?

Cindy SLAMS her door! The quake knocks over a framed photo.
Tim and Orny shake too.

ORN
Woah, aftershock.

Brian picks the photo up and sets it back up on the mantle.

Tim clocks the family photo of Brian, Cindy, RJ and A
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. Clearly their mom.

In the big window, the city day turns to night.

MONTAGE of "DECORATING"

A needle is set on a record player, Christmas MUZAK plays.

Brian sets down boxes of ornaments and rolled up lights.

Tim watches on in wonder.

RJ sprints into the living room. Cindy lags behind.

Brian lassos Tim with STRING LIGHTS.

RJ eagerly places a CANDY CANE on Tim's branch.

Brian sets up a GINGERBREAD HOUSE in the kitchen.

A NUTCRACKER on the mantle.

A TRAIN SET around Tim's base. Tim watches it circle him.

Brian looks in a box and sees MISTLETOE, he closes the box,
not this year.

Brian hands Cindy a BLUE ORNAMENT, encourages her to put it on the tree, she's reluctant, but puts it on Tim right next to Orny. Orny sizes the blue ornament up.

TIME-LAPSE as Tim gets decorated. Tim loving every second.

Everyone's having fun, even Cindy, but she does remind herself to frown every once in a while.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

BRIAN

And the pièce de résistance.

Brian carefully pulls out THE STAR from its box.

Orny's eyes nearly pop out. Starstruck.

Tim takes a deep breath. This will officially make him a Christmas Tree.

Brian looks to RJ--

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Little help, bud?

Brian hoists RJ up to place the star on top of Tim.

Cindy plugs in the lights and... FLASH! Tim lights up, glimmering in the room.

The family steps back and admires their tree together.

ORNY

You clean up nice, kid.

Tim catches his reflection in the window. A quiet, perfect moment.

TIM

I did it.

He tears up. Clocking the stocking over the fireplace that reads: "DAD"

ORNY

What's wrong, Tim?

TIM

I'm oak-kay. I just, I thought it would feel a little different.

EXT. TALL BUILDING - NYC - NIGHT

Wind howls as Baxter and Brittany perch high above the city, dwarfed by the endless lights below.

Baxter scans the horizon. There's no end in sight.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Tim wakes up groggy, catching the tail end of the Dawson's morning routine.

Brian in a work suit while RJ and Cindy tote backpacks.

BRIAN

Let's roll, kiddos.

SLAM. Tim's branches shake, the decorations rattle.

ORNY

First day as a big city Christmas tree. Feel any different?

TIM

A little-- heavier.

The BLUE ORNAMENT springs to life.

BLUE ORNAMENT
Calling us fat?

TIM
What? No, I--

BLUE ORNAMENT
If anyone's weighing us down it's
the candy canes.

A CANDY CANE speaks up.

CANDY CANE
It's impolite to gossip, and in
front of our new guest.

TIM
Guest?

The STRING LIGHTS eagerly flicker on.

LIGHT
Did somebody say light?

CANDY CANE
"Impolite".
(to Tim)
Not the brightest bunch I'm afraid.

THE STRING LIGHTS starts to shine red with anger!

LIGHTS
We'll have you know...

They dim out.

LIGHTS (CONT'D)
Lost it.

CANDY CANE
Dimwits.

All the decorations start bickering.

A gentle glow settles over them.

The STAR.

STAR
Alright, everyone-- I know we're
all just a little on edge from
being cooped up in those boxes.
(MORE)

STAR (CONT'D)

But this is no way to start the
holidays, y'all.

(to Tim)

Sorry about them.

Orny springs at the chance to talk to the star.

ORNY

Oh that's alright.

STAR

Oh baby, I was talking to our green
friend-- *Tim* was it?

TIM

Yes, m'am. I'm Timothy Timbers.
It's nice to meet everyone.

STAR

Well it's nice to meet you too
Timothy Timbers. I'm Star. And
you've met Cane, Blue and the
Lights.

ORNY

Orny Mint. Probably recognize me.
Rockefeller Tree. Past few years.

There's a collective, "No, Nope, never seen him before".

STAR

Despite appearances, we are a
family.
And we'd like to welcome you both.

CANDY CANE

Season's greetings.

BLUE ORNAMENT

Happy Holidays.

LIGHTS

Deck. The. Halls.

TIM

Nice to meet everyone, but--
You said "guest"?

The decorations fall quiet.

EXT. NYC AIRSPACE - MORNING

Brittany and Baxter fly through the city, back on the hunt.

BAXTER
I feel like vultures just flying in
circles.

Brittany takes off to

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Where ya going?

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK - DAY

Brittany sees the rat and the dog walking together.

RAT
I miss that Tim, kid. These new
trees are too stuck up, like they
got a big ol' stick shoved-

HONK! A TAXI drives by censoring that dialogue.

DOG
Yeah, Tim and that apple were cool.

RAT
And it felt kinda... "good" to help
them, ya know?

DOG
Yeah it felt tingly in a nice way.

Just then Brittany and Baxter fly in.

The rat screams and hides under the dog who growls.

RAT
Don't eat me, please! I have a
family.

DOG
You don't have a family.

RAT
They don't know that!

BAXTER
Eat you? We're like the same size?

BRITTANY
You two know Tim, right?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Tim is beginning to look a little frail, his branches droop, and his needles are starting to fall out.

We're in the moment we last saw Tim. He asks again--

TIM

Why did you say "guest"? I thought
this was my new home.

Blue and Cane look to each other, at a loss for words.

BLUE ORNAMENT

Well I'm not gonna tell him.

CANDY CANE

Surely it's not my place.

TIM

Tell me what?

Orny tucks his chin, he has to be the one.

ORNY

Listen, kid. Being a Christmas
tree, as wonderful as it is... it
comes with a price.

TIM

A price? What price?

Orny tries to find the words. Star steps up.

STAR

Listen baby. Despite the sweet
nature of the holidays, we don't
sugar coat things around here.

(beat)

Every Christmas, millions of trees
are... relocated to new homes all
over the world, just like this one.
To spread holiday cheer and remind
us all of the sacrifices we make
for the ones we hold closest. Each
year, I have been placed atop a new
evergreen, such as yourself, to
watch over this family. And at the
conclusion of each year, once the
tree has served its paramount
purpose it...

Even star can't put it all together.

A SLOW CLAP echoes from somewhere.

A RASPY VOICE (O.S.)
Way to not sugar coat it.

All the decorations GASP and look to...

PRINCESS THE CAT. Mischievous and dangerously unpredictable.

STAR
I thought I saw you lurking down
there, Princess. You're looking
"fluffier" this season.

PRINCESS THE CAT
Can't complain about the prison
food.

Princess jumps up on the mantle and tip toes around
decorations.

CANDY CANE
(through a nervous smile)
Still light on your feet as ever
Your Highness.

They're all scared of her.

PRINCESS THE CAT
Tell ya the truth, I'm surprised
they decorated at all this year.

Tim leans in and listens.

STAR
Best not dwell on the past. There's
always a brighter tomorrow. I like
to say.

PRINCESS THE CAT
Interesting perspective, coming
from the star that spends the other
eleven months locked away in a dark
musty box in the crawl space.

Princess jumps down near the base of Tim, she trots to the
lights plugged into the wall.

STAR
It's not about the number of days
in the light, it's how you--

Princess yanks the cord out. Star and the lights power down.

PRINCESS THE CAT
What was that? I think you blew a
fuse... terrible luck.

Orny speaks up.

ORNY
Hey what'd ya do that for?!

Blue nudges Orny, *don't*.

PRINCESS THE CAT
Who said that?

All the ornaments go silent. Princess jumps up on the
windowsill, inspecting the ornaments.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)
Was it you?

Princess calls out a SMALL GREEN ORNAMENT. He shakes his
head, *no*.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)
But you know who it was.

He shrugs, *no*.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)
Then you're no use to me.

Princess swats the green ornament off the tree.

Everyone GASPS! The ornament falls to the ground in dramatic
fashion. Like Mufasa to the stampede of wildebeests.

We wait for a crash, but none comes.

GREEN ORNAMENT (O.S.)
Shatterproof. I'm okay!

Princess interrogates an ORANGE ORNAMENT next.

PRINCESS THE CAT
Orange, huh? More of a "*Fall*" color
wouldn't ya say?

She rears back to knock off Orange when-

TIM
Leave them alone!

PRINCESS THE CAT
Oh why hello there Timothy.
It's so nice to finally meet this
year's victim-- I mean victor.

TIM
What do you mean?

PRINCESS THE CAT
Well you won, didn't you? You were
chosen. Picked out of all the other
pretty pines to serve the divine
purpose of being strung up in the
corner of this very apartment.
Congratulations are in order. Don't
ya think?

TIM
Thanks?

Princess jumps down and prances to her water bowl.

PRINCESS THE CAT
Sorry. All this chitchat has me
parched.

She laps up her water.

Tim watches each sip intensely. Realizing... he's so thirsty.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)
Would you like some, friend?

Tim nods desperately, yes.

Princess picks up her bowl and walks it over to Tim.
She slowly drips some into his stand...

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)
Little advice... get out of here.
Before it's too late.

Tim soaks up every last ounce of water he can.

PRINCESS THE CAT (CONT'D)
*Good, drink up. And remember, they
only need ya, till they don't.*

EXT. BIG JACK'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY

Brittany and Baxter chat with the rat and the dog.

RAT

This is where they kept him.

The rat sees little RJ's **knitted beanie hat** laying in the snow. He picks it up.

RAT (CONT'D)

Look, a clue.

The dog sniffs the cap. He jolts to alert position, pointing in the direction the family went.

BAXTER

Can you can track 'em?!

DOG

What's in it for--

The rat elbows the dog.

DOG (CONT'D)

Sorry, forgot. We're good now.

RAT

Follow us.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Tim stands in the apartment, he's looking even more frail. The cat is nowhere to be found.

Tim clocks a smaller CHRISTMAS TREE over in the kitchen.

TIM

Hey! Excuse me. Mr Tree?

The kitchen tree looks to Tim, his eyes are extra wide and his smile is very stiff, like he has something to hide.

KITCHEN TREE

Hello there friend. Happy Holidays.

TIM

Merry Christmas. Hey, how are you so green? Got any extra water?

KITCHEN TREE

Sorry friend. I do not require its nectar.

TIM

Oh, okay.. just figured I'd ask.

Without losing a smile, the kitchen tree creepily turns away.

ORNY

Just me or his trunk a lil crooked?

CANDY CANE

Artificial tree.

BLUE ORNAMENT

I hung out with him last year...
nothin' beats the real thing.

CREAK! The front door opens, it's Brian and the kids.

BRIAN

(to Tim)

What happened to you?

Brian plugs the cord back in. Star and lights burst back on.

Brian sniffs the air.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Ahh, smell that, kids?

RJ and Cindy look around, *not really*.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Your mother always loved the scent
of fresh pine needles.

Brian caresses Tim's fronds. Noticing--

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Huh, looking a little dull? Here--

Brian waters Tim.

RJ

Is the tree sick?

BRIAN

No, bud. Trees just get tired once
they're inside. But he'll make it
to Christmas. Don't you worry.

Brian plops a chocolate out of the ADVENT CALENDAR. Eats it.

Tim clocks the calendar-- a few more days until Christmas.

EXT. NYC STREET - DAY

The dog drags his nose to the pavement as the rat rides on his back, gripping the dog's collar like a jockey.

The birds fly, following behind. Skeptical.

The dog sniffs around a... bus stop bench... hot dog stand...

Into oncoming traffic... cars brake, swerve and HONK!
Baxter and Brittany look away.

The rat and dog somehow reach the other side of the street safely.

The birds shake their heads.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brian and RJ construct GINGERBREAD HOUSES.

BRIAN
C'mon Cindy! Make a gingerbread
house, we need new neighbors!

The doorbell RINGS! Brian answers, it's Beth.

CINDY
We really do.

Brian gives Cindy a look, *be nice*.

BRIAN
Hey Beth!

BETH
I made too many.

Beth hands Brian a platter of cookies.

BRIAN
Wow, that's so kind. What do we say
kids?

RJ
Thank you!

Cindy stays silent.

BRIAN
Come in, we're finishing up
construction on Gingerbread Lane.

BETH

Oh fun! That's okay. I was just heading out. Unless... How are your singing voices?

She hands Brian and RJ some extra sheet music.

Cindy rolls her eyes.

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The great rat detective (now wearing a monocle) rides his dog... followed by the birds into

CENTRAL PARK

The dog sniffs a bench... A trash can... A REGULAR TREE...

BAXTER

Barkin' up the wrong tree.

RAT

You're sure?

The rat looks the tree up and down. Clearly not Tim.

REGULAR TREE

Sorry.

The rat clicks his tongue and pulls on the dog's collar like the reigns of a horse. The dog continues on searching.

Birds are getting impatient.

Suddenly, the dog's nose gets a hit! He gallops toward the scent. Nearly bucking the rat off.

RAT

Woah!

Baxter and Brittany fly after them.

EXT. NYC AIRSPACE - NIGHT

Flurries float past us. We're soaring above NYC. City lights shine below. It's mesmerizing.

Just then Baxter flies up next to us, flanked by Brittany.

The birds turns to us and speak eerily-

BAXTER & BRITTANY
We've been looking everywhere for
you.

Reveal Tim is flying through the sky with the birds.

*This is now clearly **TIM'S DREAM.***

BAXTER
Little advice, kid. Never put all
your eggs in one basket...

Baxter continues to speak, but his audio is melting--
becoming CHIRPS.

TIM
Baxter?

CHIRP. CHIRP.

CHIRPITY-CHIRP-CHIRP-CHIRP-CHIRP-CHIRPITY-CHIRP-CHIRP-CHIRP!

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tim GASPS awake in a cold sweat. He's even more frail than
when we last saw him.

TIM
Just a dream.

ORNY
You alright, Tim?

TIM
I thought I heard "chirping"?
I'm losing my mind.

CHIRP!

ORNY
Like that?

TIM
Yeah... WAIT, WHAT?!

CHIRP! CHIRP! CHIRP!

TIM'S JAW DROPS TO THE FLOOR-- he totally forgot about...

BAXTER & BRITTANY'S EGGS?! Well, not eggs anymore...

ORNY
Stowaways?!

IN THE NEST, THREE BABY BIRDS hatch. It's adorable.

They stretch-- and yawn awake, making baby TWEETS.

Orny watches, even his cold heart melts.

The birds finally open their big blue eyes... And the very first thing they see is... Orny.

Those tweets start to sound more like "mama"

ORNY (CONT'D)

Huh? Me?! Nonono I'm not your mama!

A baby bird waddles out of the nest...

ORNY (CONT'D)

Stop! Heel! Stay! Bad bird.

Tottering on the thin branch toward Orny.

ORNY (CONT'D)

Kiiid, we got a problem!--

No! Get back in the nest! Or you're grounded!

The baby bird takes a final step, but there's no branch below its foot... like *Wile E. Coyote* stepping off a cliff.

TWEEEEEEEEEEEEET! The bird falls!

Tim, Star, Orny, Blue, Candy Cane and the lights all GASP!

STAR

Catch 'em!

The decorations work together to create a series of slides and platforms, breaking the baby bird's fall.

In Rube Goldberg machine like fashion, each action a wild reaction... *seriously, animators go crazy with this...* the baby bird somehow lands on the CHOO THE TRAIN.

CHOO THE TRAIN

All aboard!

CHOOO CHOOO! The train speeds round and round with the bird.

STAR

Nice catch, Choo, now slow down!

CHOO THE TRAIN

No can do m'am. It's the Holidays!
Tight schedule.

The train circles in a loop, going nowhere, fast.

Blue and Orny share a skeptical look.

Just then, the second baby birds step to the edge of Tim's branch and jumps! Flapping its tiny wings. They fall.

ORNY

Incoming!

The bird slides down a candy cane and is flung up onto the **MANTLE**, unharmed.

Tim and the decorations SIGH relief.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

The rat shows a COCKROACH his crude drawing of a Christmas tree in his notepad. Flips the page to a red circle.

Baxter and Brittany lag behind.

BRITTANY

We need another tactic.

BAXTER

But they're our only lead.

Brittany SIGHS.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'm sure Uncle Tim's taking good care of them.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The third baby bird leaps from Tim's branch.

TIM

I.... gotcha!

Tim catches him, but his branch spring boards the bird back up into the sky.

TIM (CONT'D)

Wait! Come back!

Princess the cat eyes the bird floating in mid air. The cat licks her chops and pounces at the bird! Mouth wide open...

BOOM! In super hero like fashion, THE NUTCRACKER knocks princess out of the way and intercepts the baby bird.

THE NUTCRACKER
Package secured.

STAR
Nice grab, Sarge!

SARGE (THE NUTCRACKER)
All in a day's work, m'am.

Orny is not so impressed, mocking-

ORNY
ALL iN a dAy's WoRk.

Just then, up on the mantle, the second bird is teetering toward the edge... Everyone GASPS! "*Nonononononono!*"

The bird steps back to safety. *Phew.*

Danger again! "*Nononononono!*"

Safe again. *Phew.* And danger again!!! "*NONONONONO!*"

The nutcracker runs to get under the mantle when

BOOM! He's hit by the train!

CHOO THE TRAIN
Sorry, Sarge. Places to be.

Sarge fumbles the baby bird he was holding...

The bird on the train is flung out of the caboose...

Both birds skid across the floor, right toward the...

FIRE PLACE!? "*NONONONONONONONO!! I'm gonna be sick!*"

They skiiiiiiiiid then miraculously slow to a stop right before the flames, unharmed. Everyone exhales.

The bird up on the mantle is flirting with the edge, it turns toward the old family photo and sees its own reflection, spooking it off ledge!!

EVERYONE
NOOOOOOOOOO!

But lands in the STOCKING.

STOCKING
No more circus acts, little one.

While everyone is distracted by this, Princess has taken this moment to stalk low toward the two baby birds helpless on the floor. She pounces at them...

But they're swiped up by THE GINGERBREAD MAN. He runs leaving behind crumbs with each bound.

THE GINGERBREAD MAN
Run, run, as fast as you can. Ya
can't catch me- I'm the gingerbread
man! Ha Ha!

Princess gives chase.

PRINCESS THE CAT
I'll ginger snap your legs!

STAR
Run Gingy!

Back inside the stocking, the bird starts to fuss around.

STOCKING
Ouch! Stop it! It's biting me!
You're so on the naughty list!

The bird pecks a hole in the stocking and falls out.

Princess lays on her back under the stocking mouth and teeth wide open ready to eat the bird and...

GULP.

She ate him.

She really ate him. Feathers and all.

GASPS as if the air was sucked right out of the room...

BOOM! Orny lands on the cat's stomach, sending the bird out of the cat's mouth back into the sky! Tim catches the bird.

Princess tucks her tail and runs off. Orny rolls around on the floor.

ORNY
Somebody order *takeout*?

Star is smitten by Orny's bravery.

STAR
Wow, nice shot, Orny.

ORNY

All in a day's work, m'am.

Orny rolls around on the floor, proud. Then

ORNY (CONT'D)

Could somebody give me a lift?

CUT TO:

The birds are back safe in their nest. Fast asleep. SNORING.

Tim and all the decorations are wiped out, breathing heavy.

EXT. NYC ALLEY - NIGHT

The DOG hops out of a dumpster, clutching an old pizza box.

It flops open— a few gross slices left.

RAT

All this detective work really
builds an appetite.

Baxter's stomach GROWLS. Brittany doesn't react.

RAT (CONT'D)

You'll be no use to those chicks on
an empty stomach.

All the convincing Baxter needs. He pecks off a few maggots.

As the boys dig in, Brittany tilts her head.

MUSIC.

She lifts off, following the sound.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

Brittany perches on a windowsill above. CAROLERS sing below.

She hesitates... then softly joins in. Her voice weaves
through the carol— quiet, aching.

Baxter, the RAT, and the DOG have emerged from the alley,
listening as the song comes to an end.

APPLAUSE.

For the first time in a while-- still.

RAT
 Bravo! (WHISTLES) Sono fiero di te!
 (sees something)
 Wait a New York minute. Is that?!

The DOG'S nose twitches. He locks onto the carolers. It's Brian, Beth and the kids.

RAT (CONT'D)
 That's them, the tree-nappers!

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Brian, Beth and the kids enter their building. The birds, rat and dog trail behind.

RAT
 We'll let youse take it from here.

BAXTER & BRITTANY
 Thank you guys! Thanks, fellas.

RAT
 Don't mention it! Happy Holidays.

The rat and the dog head out.

Baxter and Brittany fly up and around the building peering into every window, searching for Tim.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

All the decorations are asleep. Including Tim, his once-rich green now dulled, his breaths slow and shallow.

TAP TAP!

Tim stirs, looks to the window. Through squinty eyes--

TIM
 Baxter?
 Sarge, ya mind?

Sarge salutes. Opens the window for the birds.

Brittany races to her nest! She embraces her sleeping chicks.

BAXTER
 Timbuktu!

TIM
 How'd you find me?

BAXTER

You're a pretty popular pine.

They share a smile.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Holy ghost look at you!? Ya did it,
you're a Christmas tree! Really
spruce up the place!

TIM

Thanks. I'm so sorry about your
eggs-- well-- chicks now. I just--

BAXTER

Thanks for babysitting.

(wink)

Weren't too much trouble were they?

All the decorations MURMUR...

ORNY

No trouble at all.

TIM

I want you to meet my new--

Then the door bursts open, it's the family and Beth still
singing a Christmas carol.

CINDY

Dad! You're like way off key.

BRIAN

Fa la la la la la la la la!

RJ and Cindy plug their ears laughing. Beth laughs.

BETH

On that note, I think I'll have to
call it a night.

But hanging on the door is..

MISTLETOE. A suave character. He winks at us. A *sultry
Spanish chord is strummed from nowhere.*

LIGHT

Didn't think he'd show up.

CANDY CANE

How's my breath?!

LIGHT

Fresh.

The decorations all swoon over Mistletoe. Besides Star who rolls her eyes.

BLUE ORNAMENT

(to Orny)

They used to holi-date.

Orny nods, *good to know.*

Back to the humans:

BETH

What's this?

BRIAN

I didn't- did you do this, RJ?

RJ

(yes)

No.

Beth looks at Brian, he tries to find a way out of this, but before the moment passes-- Beth pecks him on the cheek.

The adults blush. Mistletoe bounces and rolls his eyebrows.

BETH

And to all a goodnight.

Beth leaves. Brian shuts the door behind her. He sheepishly turns around and...

Everyone is staring at him.

RJ smiles. Cindy is mad. Flanking them is...

Baxter and all the decorations smiling, but the decorations quickly turn away to avoid detection.

But Baxter is caught up in the moment staring. He realizes he's not supposed to be in the apartment the same time that Brian realizes--

BRIAN

HOW DID YOU--?! OUT! OUT! OUT!

Brian grabs a broom and chases Baxter around the apartment; Swinging, missing, knocking over decorations.

The kids SCREAM!

Baxter dodges the onslaught of attacks, but is forced to escape out the window. Brian slams the window shut. Locks it.

Brian takes a deep breath.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Well that's enough excitement for one evening.

Brian and the kids head to their rooms.

TAP! On the glass. Baxter is stuck out in the cold.

Sarge tries to open the window, but it won't budge.

SARGE

Nuts... locked.

BAXTER (OUTSIDE)

Alright, everybody stand back.

Baxter creates some distance between himself and the window... then takes off, flying full speed...

BOOM! Not even a scratch. He SKIIIIIDS down the pane. Everyone winces. Oooooooooouch.

Mistletoe takes this pause to flirt with Star.

MISTLETOE

Feliz Navidad.

Star rolls her eyes, but still likes him.

Orny clocks this, jealous.

TIM'S BRANCHES, THE NEST

Brittany holds her babies.

BRITTANY

Tim, I'm so happy you got your wish, but I moved my family out of the city for a reason.

TIM

Between us, I'm starting to think this Christmas tree thing isn't all I thought it would be. I can barely feel my limbs. My lower trunk is on fire. And I'm so thirsty.

BRITTANY

You are looking pretty brown.

Brittany thinks, an idea forms.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)
Come back with us!

TIM
What?

BRITTANY
Back to the woods. I'm serious!

TIM
It's impossible.

BOOM! Baxter slams the window again. SKIIIIIIIDS back down.

BRITTANY
We have an act for not giving up
around here.

Tim considers this, but he's not his typical chipper self.

Brittany flies over to the window to have a conversation with Baxter through the glass. We don't hear what she's saying.

While the birds chat, Mistletoe whistles to Star. Orny listens in.

MISTLETOE
Tú eres la estrella...

ORNY
(to Cane)
What's he sayin?! What's he sayin!?

MISTLETOE
...que guía mi corazón.

A single tear falls from Cane's eye, so smitten.

CANDY CANE
*"You are the star that guides my
heart." (quivers)*

Star blushes, coyly looks away.

ORNY
(scoffs)
Actions speak louder than words.

At the WINDOW, the birds finish talking. Baxter nods, determined. He takes off for the night sky.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

The sun peers over the mountains, the start of a new day. A drumroll score plays, like a military scene.

Baxter marches back and forth in front of:
Stump, Fraser, Rootie, Benny the Beaver, Reggie the Squirrel
and his son, and other forest animals.

Baxter speaks with conviction, doing his best drill sergeant.

BAXTER

Listen up. Tim's in trouble and he
needs our help. This mission
requires nothing short of Christmas
miracle, but I assure you this team
is capable of just that.

Baxter has a crude map laid out in the dirt and snow.
Berries, stones and leaves represent the important landmarks.
He draws with a stick, explaining the plan to the animals.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Reggie set a perimeter around the
cabin-- here.

Reggie the Squirrel nods, *got it*.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Benny, you and your squad will
secure the truck.

The beavers slap their tails on the ground, THUD, got it.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Army ants, you're with --
(looks around)
Army Ants? Where are the ants? Did
no one tell 'em about the briefing?

The animals all look around, *haven't seen em?* From somewhere
low out of frame, basically invisible:

ALL THE ARMY ANTS

What are our marching orders?

BAXTER

Infiltrate. Secure the keys.

ALL THE ARMY ANTS

Bird, yes bird.

BAXTER
Fraser, you're the tallest, you'll
provide overwatch.

Fraser nods.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Any questions?

STUMP
Uh- Baxter what should we do?

Stump, Rootie and the little squirrel smile eagerly.

BAXTER
Uhh-- You three can...
Encourage the rest of the team.

ROOTIE
Like cheerleaders?

STUMP (*CHANTING*)
STICK! TOGETHER! STICK-STICK!
TOGETHER!

Stump and Rootie, salute with their branches.

BAXTER
Let's bring our bud back home.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Brian and RJ are by the door ready to leave.

BRIAN
Let's go! Where's your sister?

INT. CINDY'S ROOM - DAY

The room is dark, but Cindy's phone shines under the sheets.

BRIAN
Sweetie, you're not up yet? Last
day before break!

CINDY
I'm sick.
(coughs)
Probably from caroling in the cold.

Brian checks her temperature.

BRIAN
You are a little warm. Okay, get
some rest, you need anything?

CINDY
I'm okay.

Brian nods and closes the door.

CINDY (CONT'D)
Dad..

BRIAN
Yeah?

CINDY
Some hot cocoa would be nice.

BRIAN
With marshmallows? Coming right up.

CINDY
And Dad. One more thing.
(off Brian's look)
Do you know where the old video
tapes are?

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cindy, home alone, inserts a VHS tape labeled "X-MAS 2009"
into a VCR player.

Cindy turns off the lights and cozies up on the couch with
her hot cocoa.

**ON THE TV: Shaky home video footage plays of Cindy as a young
child held by her MOM. They smile and laugh.**

MOM
You wanna do it?

YOUNG CINDY
Yeah!

Brian films, he hands young Cindy the star tree topper.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Careful, hold it tight.

Her mother raises Cindy up to put the star on the tree.

The lights on the tree burst on.

Cindy watches from the couch, a smile forms.

Tim watches the TV too.

ON THE TV: Young Cindy sits on her mom's lap. She's handed a present.

MOTHER

Go ahead. Open it, Cindy!

Cindy rips open her gift and its... a kitten. The kitten MEOWS and licks Cindy's face.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

She likes you, what do you want to name her?

CINDY

Princess.

MOTHER

Welcome home, Princess!

Cindy wipes away a tear. Princess jumps up on the couch and watches too. Even her frigid heart is warmed for the moment. Cindy grabs Princess and holds her close.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(heard from the TV)

Merry Christmas, sweetheart.

CINDY

(to herself)

Merry Christmas, mom.

Cindy turns off the home movie and takes princess into her room to rest.

Tim lets that moment soak in, he misses his mom too.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Baxter is camouflaged in the branches, peering down at

I./E. RANGER NED'S CABIN

Ranger Ned's truck sits outside, a flare glimmers off it.

Baxter gives a thumbs up to Reggie the squirrel, who scampers toward the cabin like a SWAT operative. He peers inside—

Ranger Ned, oblivious, makes himself a sandwich.

Reggie signals.

Benny and the beavers advance on the truck. They stack atop one another, pop the door. Unlocked. They climb in.

Benny shrugs. No keys.

Baxter nods— then signals.

Army ants march beneath the cabin door.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The ants scale the counter, dodging condiments. They swarm the keys. Out the window they go—

Baxter swoops in, snatches the keys midair, and tosses them to Benny.

Reggie dashes into the

TRUCK

Reggie hops to the floor, observing the gas and brake pedals.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL
You sure you know how to drive?

Benny grips the wheel.

BENNY THE BEAVER
Leave it to beaver.

He turns the key. The truck REVS.

INT. CABIN - SAME TIME

Ranger Ned freezes. Looks out the window, locking eyes with—

BENNY-- He waves at Ned.

Ned bolts for the door-- stops short.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Mr Deer blocks the exit, pointed antlers low. *Not this way.*

Baxter swoops down to the truck.

BAXTER
Follow me!

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Reggie floors it. The truck lurches— BACKWARDS!

WHAM! A tire lodges in a muddy ditch.

BENNY THE BEAVER
We're stuck!

The tire spins, flinging mud on Baxter.

EXT. WOODS, FOREST FLOOR - SAME TIME

Rootie, Stump, Fraser, and the little squirrel wait.

STUMP
This is so boring I'm actually
board. Get it? Like wood.

The little squirrel laughs.

ROOTIE
There's gotta be something more we
can do.

STUMP
Yeah. Wish I was taller. Great
lookout work, Fraser.
(CHANTING)
LOOKOUT, FRASER! LOOKOUT!

Fraser doesn't look away from the cabin.

FRASER
Would you be quiet? Trying to
focus.

STUMP
(whisper chants)
LOOKOUT, FRASER! LOOKOUT!

A beat.

FRASER
This is serious. I know I've been a
terrible older sapling to Tim.
(beat)
Maybe this time I can actually look
out for him.

A tear forms. Fraser hides it.

ROOTIE
Don't chop yourself down.

STUMP
Yeah. If anything, you being so
awful made him tougher.

ROOTIE
What Stump means is- Tim's strong
because he had someone sturdy to
look up to.

Fraser smiles. Then- Baxter's SHOUTS echo in the distance.

EXT. CABIN - SAME TIME

Ned slams the door in Mr Deer's face, opting for another way.
Mr Deer rushes to the stuck tire to help lift.

BAXTER
One, two, three-!

They strain, almost setting it free when-

Ranger Ned rounds the corner, loading a TRANQ DART into a
crossbow.

He takes aim at Mr Deer-

WITH THE TREES

Fraser strains, trying to uproot himself.

FRASER
ARGH! These roots! They're gonna
get caught!

The LITTLE SQUIRREL scampers up Fraser's trunk, wearing an
acorn-shell helmet.

LITTLE SQUIRREL
Send me.

FRASER
What?!

LITTLE SQUIRREL
No time. I can do it.

Stump and Rootie bend Fraser back- maximum tension.

The squirrel gives a thumbs up.

FRASER
Good luck, little squirrel.

LITTLE SQUIRREL
Flying squirrel.

WOOSH! He's FLUNG through the forest.

Trees blur past. Wind rips at his face. He barely dodges trunks— nearly clips OLD MAN WICKERY.

OLD MAN WICKERY
You rotten vermin!

The squirrel spreads his limbs and—
POOF! Skin stretches. He GLIDES in locked on—

NED

Who trains his crossbow on Mr Deer when—
WHAM! The flying squirrel slams into Ned's chest.
The bow jerks, CA-THUNK inadvertently firing straight up.
The little squirrel scrambles inside Ned's shirt, scurrying around, tickling him furiously.
Ned flails.

During the chaos—

BAXTER
One—two—THREE!

The animals heave.

INT. TRUCK

REGGIE hits the gas. VROOM!
The truck breaks free!

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The animals CHEER—
THUD. Ranger Ned collapses.
The tranquilizer dart sticks out of his back.

The little squirrel pops free out of Ned's sleeve.

Silence.

LITTLE SQUIRREL

What?

The animals erupt— lifting him up chanting: "FLYING SQUIRREL!
FLYING SQUIRREL!"

WITH THE TREES

FRASER

He did it!

Rootie and Stump cheer—

STUMP & ROOTIE

LOOKOUT, FRASER! LOOKOUT!

Their chant turns into a warning!

STUMP & ROOTIE (CONT'D)

LOOK OUT, FRASER! LOOK OUT!

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The truck barrels toward them. Baxter flying along side the runaway truck.

BAXTER

LOOK OUT!

BENNY swerves.

The truck goes up on two tires--

Missing Fraser by inches—

SLAMS back down.

The trees exhales.

FRASER

Almost pruned us.

BY THE LAKE

BEAVERS relax in the new HOT TUB.

A LOUNGING BEAVER lifts a cucumber off its eye—

Sees the incoming truck! He jumps out of the way.

BOOM! The jacuzzi EXPLODES!

CUCUMBER BEAVER (O.S.)
Not the jets?!

IN THE TRUCK

Cucumbers, splinters and mud land on the windshield, it looks like a frowning face. The wind blows it off.

Still out of control.

BAXTER
Dam!

BENNY THE BEAVER
It's okay I can fix it!

BAXTER
Nowatchout!!!

In the rearview mirror-- The Beaver's dam is getting closer!

BENNY THE BEAVER
Reggie!!! BRAKE!!!

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL
Phew, I was getting tired of
holding down this lever.

BENNY THE BEAVER
No! THE BRAKE!

Reggie looks at the gas pedal and brake. Unsure which to choose.

Benny closes his eyes. Baxter can't watch.

ON THE DAM

WORKER BEAVERS drop their wood and jump in the water.

TRUCK

Just in the nick of time--

They brake, skidding to a halt. The bumper's tailgate centimeters from touching the dam.

...

Everyone exhales.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The living room is quiet, Princess and Cindy unseen, both still napping in Cindy's room.

Tim is the frailest we've seen him yet. He rests.

The nutcracker fills Tim's water basin. Tim wakes up.

TIM
Oh-- Thanks, Sarge.

Sarge salutes.

Just then Sarge is picked up by one of the baby birds and flown around the room low to the floor.

BRITTANY
Not too high, Dee Dee!

Tim perks up.

TIM
"Dee Dee". That's what my dad called--

BRITTANY
Your mother, I always loved the name Dorothy.

Tim smiles.

TIM
(re: flying)
She's getting the hang of it, huh?

BRITTANY
While you were napping she jumped right out of the nest. Fearless just like your mother.

In the background, a race has formed. The Christmas lights cycle colors, red, yellow, green: GO! The birds take off!

GINGY
Can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!

ALL
We know!

Sarge and his bird give chase, flying around racing.

Then we hear a concerned voice--

ORNY (O.S.)

No-no! I'm okay. I'm perfectly fine watching. Thank you.

The third baby bird grabs Orny and jumps with him off Tim's branch, flying Orny around with the others.

ORNY (CONT'D)

This is ornamendangerment!

Tim, Brittany and the other decorations laugh.

THE STAR

And with the inside move, Gingy takes the lead!

ORNY

Okay fine. Giddy up, kid! Go go go!

BLUE ORNAMENT

Dibs on next!

CANDY CANE

I might also care to participate.

Everyone is laughing watching the race.

THE STAR

And with one lap to go, Gingy out in front, followed by Sarge, pursued by Orny, it's gonna be a photo finish, folks!

Tim melts into the moment. Laughter fades to a warm echo-- then his smile softens.

Looking up to the Advent calendar. Only a few more days until Christmas. He can't help but hear Princess's voice in his ear--

PRINCESS THE CAT (V.O.)

They only need ya, till they don't.

Tim snaps out of it.

BRITTANY

And by the tip of a beak, the winner is... Uncle Orny!

Everyone CHEERS! Tim puts on a smile.

The baby bird returns Orny to his branch and picks up Blue for the next race.

 ORNY
 See that, kid? Decoration
 domination!

Orny realizes Tim seems off.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Brittany has the birds down for a nap.

TAP TAP TAP! On the window. It's Baxter.

 BRITTANY
 But what about the mission?

 BAXTER (BEHIND GLASS)
 We're in it!

EXT. APARTMENT, STREET - CONTINUOUS

Baxter flies down to the truck, it's hopped the curb, parked crookedly on the sidewalk...

COMMUTERS walk around it with disdain.

A COP on a bike rides up, readying to write a ticket until--

The truck's emergency lights burst on.

The cop looks inside the frosted window to find Benny the beaver at the wheel, donning Ned's park ranger hat, concealing his face.

Benny stays with the truck while Reggie the squirrel and the other beavers stream into the apartment complex.

INT. APARTMENT, LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Reggie the squirrel scales the wall and uses his fluffy tail to cover a surveillance camera.

The rest of the beavers and squirrels move in, scurrying low beneath the front desk where a RECEPTIONIST sits aloof.

Baxter flies in low, undetected, to the elevator bank. He presses the "up" button.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Just then the door unlocks from the inside by no one.

Smash zoom in to reveal army ants picked it.

DOOSH! The door flings open. The animals breach the room.

BAXTER

Go go go!

Reggie scurries up to Tim.

TIM

Reggie? What are y'all doing here?

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Classified.

Joking, we're bustin' you outa here! Benny's outside with the truck!

TIM

Truck?

Tim looks out the window and sees Ranger Ned's truck.

TIM (CONT'D)

Balsam.

Reggie climbs Tim and prepares to take down the decorations.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Pardon me. Hello everyone, if you're staying say "Aye".

BLUE ORNAMENT

Ayyyy...am not sure.

You mean staying here or staying on with Tim?

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Here.

All the decorations look to each other, unsure. They bicker.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL (CONT'D)

Going? Staying? Going? Going?
Staying?

Reggie removes some of the decorations with lightning speed.

He scurries to the top and tries to remove the Star, but she stops him.

STAR
Now hold on a Chris-minute.

ORNY
Kid. You're leaving?

All the decorations look to Tim.

Tim doesn't know what to do.

TIM
I- I don't-

BRITTANY
Tim's coming home with us. Where he belongs! Just look at him. Tim, you've completely lost your color.

BAXTER
She's right, this isn't you, bud.

STAR
Well if this is what you want, Tim. We'll support whatever decision you make. Right, y'all?

All the decorations agree.

Tim is completely torn, but he is sick and the cavalry is already here so--

Tim nods his head to Baxter and Brittany.

BRITTANY
Let's go home.

The baby birds all jump out of the nest-- now able to fly alongside their mother.

Reggie climbs up to Orny.

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL
Last call.

ORNY
I'm with Tim. Wherever he goes.

Tim looks to Orny awestruck.

Benny's team of Beavers surround Tim.

BEAVER #1
Timber!

Tim falls, but is caught by the beavers. They head out of the apartment.

HALLWAY

The beavers carry Tim to the elevator bank.

BAXTER

Everyone can't wait to see you!

REGGIE THE SQUIRREL

Your dad's gonna go nuts!

The animals all laugh!

Tim looks back to the apartment door-- then all the decorations peer out from behind the door to wave goodbye.

Sarge, Gingy, Blue, Cane, the lights and Star.

Tim and Orny grin and wave with his branch *goodbye*.

Mistletoe tries to give a sullen Star a hug and kiss to comfort her, but she nudges him away, so not in the mood.

Baxter hits the button for the elevator. DING.

INT. APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Cindy's bedroom door CREAKS opens. She rubs her tired eyes.

CINDY

Dad?

After no response she looks around the apartment and realizes... The tree is gone!

Her eyes burst open! She turns to the door-- wide open! And all the decorations scattered on the floor.

She rushes to the door and looks down the hallway to find a trail of Tim's dead pine needles leading to the elevator.

She watches with fear as Tim is forced into the elevator.

Tim sees the disappointment in Cindy's eyes as he's pulled into the elevator.

HALLWAY, ELEVATOR BANK

Cindy rushes to the elevator, but the door shuts on her. She bangs on the metal.

CINDY

Hey! What are you doing?! Help!

She calls her dad. Straight to voicemail.

Down the hallway Beth opens her door to a crying Cindy.

BETH

Cindy?! What's wrong?

CINDY

Someone stole our Christmas tree!

ELEVATOR

Tim and all the animals are piled into the elevator going down. Tim looks depressed.

BAXTER

You're like a bump on a log, pal.
Ya okay? You're going home!

TIM

Did you see the look on their
faces? No matter what choice I
make. I'm letting someone down.

BAXTER

Listen, kid. Christmas comes and
goes. This is your life we're
talkin about. You gotta do what's
best for you. And you're gonna get
to see your family and pals! It'll
be just like the good ol' days.

Tim sees *flashes* of "the good ol' days". A lot of...

Standing around in WINTER.

Standing around in SPRING.

Standing around in SUMMER.

Standing around in FALL.

WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER, FALL...

Imagining himself growing older, but stuck in the same place.

DING! He snaps out of it, the elevator door opens. Caught!

Waiting is the elderly man from earlier. Unfazed by the zoo
he's witnessing. He lets the elevator door close.

ELDERLY MAN

Time to move.

STAIRWELL. Cindy and Beth sprint down the stairs to the--

LOBBY. Cindy rushes up to the receptionist.

CINDY
Someone stole my Christmas tree!

RECEPTIONIST
Ya just missed 'em!

On the security monitor, Tim and the animals descend in the elevator-- unnoticed.

CINDY
Which way did they go?

RECEPTIONIST
That way! He was green and furry!

CINDY
Thank you!!
(realizing)
The Grinch, really?

The receptionist bursts out laughing. Beth steps in.

BETH
Did you see anything or not?

Cindy appreciates Beth standing up for her.

INT. ELEVATOR - SAME TIME

Orny watches the elevator descend floor after floor.

ORNY
Tim, you should be proud. You gave
it a good run.
We gave it a good run.
(beat)
Ya know, I'm really glad Rock sent
me to hang with you. As far as I'm
concerned, best Christmas ever.

Tim gets *flashes* of...

The Rockefeller Christmas Tree, NYC Christmas lights, meeting Orny, Meeting the rat and dog, the family decorating...

RJ's laugh as he puts the star on him.

Cindy's smile as she puts the star on the tree with her mom.

Cindy's disappointment in the hall.

Tim's eyes widen, he has new found life in his branches.

TIM
It's not Christmas yet.

INT. LOBBY

Cindy and Beth are still in a debate with the receptionist.

BETH
Can't you check the security
footage or something?

RECEPTIONIST
M'am, if you and your daughter want
to file a police report, then I can
pull up the footage. But if not--

BETH / CINDY
She's not. / We're not.

DING! The elevator is at the lobby.

Cindy and Beth turn to see who it is.

The door opens revealing... The elderly man. He hobbles off.

INT. HALLWAY, DAWSON FAMILY APARTMENT DOOR - DAY

Cindy and Beth trudge down the hall.

BETH
Want me to wait with you until your
dad gets home?

CINDY
He texted me, he's almost here.

Cindy opens the apartment door. She pauses.

CINDY (CONT'D)
Beth. Thanks for sticking up for me
back there.

Beth nods, goes to enter her own apartment when--

CINDY (CONT'D)
NO WAY! Look!

Cindy's jaw hits the floor. She rushes in, Beth follows.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Tim is back, standing proud, like he never left, redecorated.

CINDY

Maybe I was dreaming.

Cindy just stares at Tim, enamored, we can see that Christmas magic spark in her eye like she's a little kid again.

Behind them, all the animals scurry out the apartment.
Undetected.

Beth notices something missing...

BETH

Oh no.

She picks the star up off the floor, and hands it to Cindy.

Cindy smiles, stands on her tip toes and places the star on Tim. His lights burst back on!

Cindy and Beth admire the Christmas tree together.

Just then Brian and RJ enter.

BRIAN

Sorry, Cindy. I was in a meeting
and RJ's practice ran late, what's--

CINDY

Everything's fine, Dad.

Brian finally catches his breath and realizes--

BRIAN

Beth?

CINDY

Oh- I invited her over-- for
dinner. I hope that's okay.

Cindy smiles to Beth, who grins back unopposed to the ruse.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The Dawson family and Beth pass plates around and eat dinner, laughing and enjoying each other's company.

Tim and the decorations watch on.

STAR

So what made you change your mind?

Tim steals Star's line from earlier.

TIM

It's not about the number of days
in the light, it's how you spend
them. Right?

Star shines brighter, she's glad her message hit home.

From out of the shadows-- Princess emerges.

STAR

We can see you, Princess.

PRINCESS

I know. I'm dieting after the
holidays.

Princess walks her water bowl over to Tim and pours the
entire tray in. Tim is immediately rehydrated.

PRINCESS (CONT'D)

Truce spruce?

Tim looks to all his decorations.

TIM

It's a family decision.

There's murmurs from all the decorations, but the overall
consensus is--

TIM (CONT'D)

Truce.

Princess grins and trots away to her family in the kitchen.
She leaps in Cindy's lap.

ORNY

Not to spoil the moment, but how
you know that water ain't poison?

TIM

(laughing)
Orny?!

ORNY

I'm just saying. Maybe keep her a
limb's length away.

(beat)

(MORE)

ORNY (CONT'D)

She does one good deed and y'all
actin' like she's been a career
nice lister.

Everyone laughs. The jovial feeling fades to...

"25" on the Advent calendar. Brian opens the door and takes
the last candy.

INT. APARTMENT - CHRISTMAS MORNING

Orny nudges Tim awake.

ORNY

Kid, it's happening! You're not
gonna wanna miss this!

Tim wakes up, he's cheerful, yet aged a lifetime in the
manner of a few weeks.

He watches the family open presents. He turns to us.

TIM (V.O.)

Oh, you're still here? Merry
Christmas. We did it. We made it to
December 25th. Orny says now I'm
officially a *real* Christmas tree.

Orny smiles as he watches the kids open their gifts.

TIM (V.O.)

It's funny I don't feel too
different. At least not in the ways
I expected I would.

(beat)

If I'm being honest, and I'm not
proud of this, but in the beginning
I figured becoming a Christmas tree
would kinda be all about me... the
bright lights and adornments, the
attention and praise, all eyes on
me, the centerpiece to the most
magical time of year.

(beat)

I couldn't have been more wrong.

Tim watches RJ open his present: a super hero action figure.

Tim sees all the other decorations: Orny, Blue, Cane, the
lights, Sarge, Gingy, Stocking, Choo and Star.

TIM (V.O.)

It takes all of us. And without my family, I'd be nothing. They might hang on my branches, but they're the ones that lift me up.

The SMOKE DETECTOR goes off! Brian burnt the breakfast casserole. He tosses the food in the trash and hurries to open the window.

A calm cool breeze rushes in, Tim feels it in his fronds, sending shivers down his trunk. Reminding him of home.

BRIAN

Who wants to go get breakfast?

CINDY

Let's ask Beth if she's hungry!

Everyone agrees, rushing out the door.

Once the coast is clear, Baxter flies in through the open window.

BAXTER

Merry Christmas, Timbuktú.

TIM

Baxter! Merry Christmas. Can't stay away from the city can ya?

BAXTER

Can take the bird out of the city.
But ya can take the city out of the bird.

(then)

Here. The kids made this for ya.

Baxter hangs a homemade ornament constructed of twigs and berries on Tim. It's their old nest.

TIM

It's perfect. Thanks for coming all this way.

BAXTER

You kidding? Course I had to come see Uncle Tim. Everyone misses you and is real proud of you. But I do gotta jet, I can't leave Brit alone with the chicks for too long, they're already a shoo-in for the naughty list.

TIM

Goodbye Baxter, have a safe flight.
Please give everyone my best.

BAXTER

Course kid. Oh and by the way,
guess who we moved in with?

TIM

Hmmm... Stump?... Rootie...? Fraser?!

BAXTER

Think taller.

TIM

Dad?!

Baxter gives Tim a wink as he flies off.

Tim watches him go. He summons every last bit of energy left
in his trunk... and WHISTLES.

It's weak, but it carries. Clear and true.

EXT. WOODS - SUNSET

The echo of that WHISTLE fades into the wind...

Doug perks up. He heard it. He smiles.

As gentle snow falls, Baxter returns to the woods to join a
Christmas celebration. Down low at the--

FOREST FLOOR

Benny and Reggie help decorate Stump, Rootie and Fraser with
ornaments made from wood and acorns.

ROOTIE

STUMP

We look...

Tree-mendous!

FRASER

I look tree-mendous... Buuut you
guys do trim up nice.

DOUG (O.S.)

I'm okay, really!

The baby birds, a bit more grown, flutter around Doug,
festooning him with berry tinsel and ornaments. He resists.

DEE DEE
Oh c'mon Grandpa Doug, pleeeeeease?

BAXTER
(teasing)
Yeah, c'mon grandpa.

Doug succumbs to the pressure.

DOUG
Just a couple more.

The birds CHIRP excitement, adding more and more decor.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Don't over do it!

Doug begins to like it, he even laughs, a jolly one sounding a lot like HO HO HO.

The sun falls behind the mountains and the day becomes night.

We widen to see Doug as a fully formed Christmas tree.

Those lightning bugs fly in illuminating him like string lights, adding the final touch.

Brittany sings a heartfelt *CHRISTMAS SONG* as we match cut from Doug to...

Tim in the **APARTMENT**. Christmas is winding down.

ORNY
Kid, look. You did it.

Tim clocks- Brian, Beth and the kids asleep on the couch.

TIM
We did it, partner.

Tim is losing steam, but hanging on.

ORNY
(quietly)
Get some rest. You deserve it.

TIM
Merry--
Christmas.

Tim shuts his eyes.

Orny sheds a tear as his friend retires from duty.

ORNY
Merry Christmas, kid.

The room falls silent. Still... Until--

Star atop Tim begins to pulse. Not a battery pulse. Something ancient. Magical.

STAR
 You did well, Timothy. You gave
 them your season. Now, it's time
 for yours.

Star glows brighter and brighter until she's blinded us.

CUT TO WHITE:

Close on WHITE SNOW - SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

Only we're not in New York City anymore. We lift up from the snow to find

Tim standing proud, but he's not brown. Not brittle. He's vibrant. He's green and a hundred feet tall.

TIM
 Uh... Hello?

A DEEP GODLY VOICE speaks from nowhere.

DEEP VOICE (O.C.)
 Timothy Timbers, I presume?

TIM
 Uh-- yes..? Who said that? Is that
 you, Mr Rockefeller?

The deep voice laughs HO HO HO! *We know who this guy is.*

SANTA'S VOICE (O.C.)
 Call me, Nick. I wanted to thank
 you for your exemplary service to
 the Dawson family this Christmas.

TIM
 Yeah, they're balsam! They actually
 taught me a lot about myself.

SANTA'S VOICE (O.C.)
 What did you learn?

TIM
 Oh well. Ornaments are heavy. And
 I'm a lot stronger than I ever
 realized.

SANTA'S VOICE (O.C.)
That sounds balsam.

TIM
Nick. Where am I?

The aurora borealis dances behind Tim.

SANTA'S VOICE (O.C.)
You're in a special place where all
creation's best and brightest trees
continue to grow evergreen. And--
(beat)
Well- I apologize Tim, but I need
to get back to the workshop, lots
to prep for next year! I'll just
let a familiar face fill in the
rest.

And with that the fog dissipates revealing... Dorothy.

TIM
Mom?!

DOROTHY
Welcome home, sweetheart.

They lean in for a mother son hug.

WE WIDEN to an aerial shot of where we are...

The FOREST surrounding Santa's Village at the NORTH POLE.

TIM (V.O.)
See? Told ya.
You just gotta be-leaf.

THE END

CREDITS ROLL with CHRISTMAS CARD PHOTOS from our FRIENDS:

- The beavers relaxing in their new rebuilt hot tub.
- Reggie and Penelope Squirrel with their kids in a hollow.
- Lumberjack and his hallmark girlfriend in front of Droopy.
- Star kisses Orny on the cheek. Mistletoe is jealous.
- Princess surrounded by all the decorations, Sarge and Gingy.
- The Rat and Dog in front of The Rockefeller Christmas Tree.
- The random city birds got coal.
- Stump and Rootie grew and are as tall as Fraser.
- Baxter, Brittany and the birds pose next to Grandpa Doug.
- Ranger Ned outside his Cabin lit with Christmas lights.
- The Dawson Family and Beth posed in front of Tim.