

INT. WORKSHOP - NIGHTTIME

A pair of calloused hands tinkers with an object. NICODEMUS, a 70-year-old, portly man, sits at a large table. His large belly knocks off a few tools from his table as he works. A single desk light illuminates him. Around his workshop sit numerous crafted toys and furniture.

Nicodemus unscrews a panel on the toy. He replaces some wheels to form a toy car on its back. He presses a button on its side. The car flips back on its wheels and zooms off the table crashing into the nearby wall.

His belly laugh fills the large room. He looks down at his hands as he flips them over with a smile.

A loud noise echoes. Nicodemus swings his head around. Silence.

Nicodemus walks in front of his desk. He tip-toes through the workshop taking a hammer off one of the passing tables.

He reaches out into the darkness. A high pitched cry startles him. He looks down and notices...a Furby on its side. It speaks Furbish and blinks its eyes. Nicodemus sighs.

He sets the Furby back on its feet at it speaks more Furbish. It waddles and moves its ears. Nicodemus places the hammer back down on the table, chuckling to himself.

NICODEMUS
Silly little guy.

A dark figure appears behind Nicodemus. A black sack is thrown over Nicodemus's head pulling him into the shadows.

NICODEMUS (CONT'D)
(Muffled)
Ho!

CUT TO BLACK

BEGIN TITLES

'Sugar Rum Cherry' by Duke Ellington fades in

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Rain fills a busy city street. Cars splash water onto the sidewalk. Leather shoes splash through the concrete. A man's trench coat and fedora are dripping with water. A single

thick briefcase is in hand. He carries no umbrella.

INT. CAFE - MORNING

The briefcase stands at the man's feet. A cup of coffee is pushed in front of him. The man fans out a newspaper and we read it over his shoulder. President Clinton's impeachment hearings take up the main story. Credits fade on forming the text of the paper. We focus on a headline that reads: ORBLET PREPARING FOR NEW LINE OF TOYS

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Back on the rainy street the man dodges all of the umbrellas. A man in a Santa suit under an awning is ringing his bell with a hanging donation bucket. He waves at the man with the suitcase who doesn't acknowledge him.

Crossing an intersection the man gets mobbed by oblivious umbrellas. He tries to dodge them. One almost takes off his hat in the process. He pushes them away.

The man approaches a skyscraper. He jumps up the steps to the lobby. People fill in from all directions. The man reaches one of the doors and flings it wide. He doesn't hold it open for the umbrella behind him.

INT. OFFICE ELEVATOR - MORNING

We're packed in a full elevator . A woman listens to her Discman. The man stands in the back. The doors open. The man pushes past the oblivious woman with her headphones on.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - MORNING

A young boy approaches the man in the hallway with a basket full of candy canes. He hands one to the man with a smile. The man keeps walking. He looks down at the candy in his hand and throws it out in the closest garbage.

The man stops in front of a wooden door with an opaque glass window. Lettering is etched onto the glass: SAM PERRY - PRIVATE DETECTIVE. The man walks through the door.

END TITLES

INT. SAM'S PRIVATE DETECTIVE AGENCY - MORNING

SAM, 40, stone faced man, opens the door to an office. He has slicked-back hair under his fedora with bags under his dull blue eyes. The office door opens to a wide room with file

cabinets and a desk on one side.

At the desk is MAISIE, 30-year-old, secretary typing away. She is dressed nicely with her hair in a bun and thin glasses on. She smiles when Sam enters the room.

The room is decorated with Christmas decorations ranging from garland, poinsettias, and Christmas trees.

Sam nods at Maisie.

SAM

What a nasty morning.

MAISIE

Decided to walk to work today?

Sam stamps out some of the rain from his coat and shoes before making his way across the office.

SAM

People don't seem to know how to drive when the weather changes. They don't seem to know how to walk either.

MAISIE

I do wish it was snow though. Would feel a little more festive.

SAM

Hm. Sure.

Sam opens the door to the right of her desk and walks into his office.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - MORNING

This room is cold and drab. There are no decorations at all in here, no cheer. One small poinsettia sits on the corner of Sam's desk. Sam takes out some files and notebooks from his briefcase. He sits at his desk.

MAISIE (O.S.)

Roger invited you to his Christmas party upstairs tonight.

SAM

And what did you tell him?

MAISIE (O.S.)

He said it was an open bar, so I told
(MORE)

MAISIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
him you'd be there.

Sam looks up from his papers. He shrugs his shoulders.

MAISIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And Mr. Hendricks called and wanted an
update on his case.

SAM
I'm going over it right now and will
get back to him today.

Sam ruffles his papers and looks through his notes. He
notices the poinsettia on his desk.

SAM (CONT'D)
Mase. What is this?

Maisie runs into the office. Sam is pointing at the plant.

MAISIE
What is...oh.
(beat)
It's a poinsettia. It's a plant, don't
worry you don't need to water it.

MAISIE
And it's small

SAM
What have I told you?

MAISIE
Well, it's just one.

SAM
Take it out of here.

Maisie walks over to his desk and jerks away the plant.

MAISIE
God forbid you have a little cheer in
here.

Sam doesn't respond.

A man comes bursting through the front door and enters Sam's
office. ROGER, a late 60-year-old, wears a Santa hat, a
festive sweater and light-up flickering necklace.

ROGER
Festive tidings to you all and a Merry
Christmas!

Maisie passes Roger on her way back to her desk.

MAISIE

(Motioning to Sam)

There's more prick than merry in *that*
Christmas cactus

SAM

Mhm.

The door is left open. Roger looks around the office.

SAM (CONT'D)

Roger. What do I owe the honor?

ROGER

There's something different in here

(beat)

Not smoking are we?

SAM

Been trying to give it up every year.
I never make it past Christmas.

Roger frowns at Sam lowering his head. He makes his way over to the bookcase in Sam's office and browses the selections.

ROGER

Right. Well, you're a busy man. I'll
get straight to it. I've got a new
case for you.

Sam looks down at the files in front of him.

SAM

No thanks got plenty of cases at the
moment.

ROGER

Well, I'm afraid it's not really an
offer.

Roger starts to flip through a book reading some pages.

SAM

Oh really? I didn't realize I started
taking orders from you now too.

ROGER

Come, Sam, it's Christmas no need to
be mean-spirited.

SAM
Christmas makes me mean-spirited
enough.

ROGER
Such a shame. Really. Maybe this case
will help.

SAM
I told you I can't

ROGER
Do you remember that
Wrangano case?

Roger snaps the book closed. He makes his way over to Sam's desk.

ROGER (CONT'D)
When I helped you with those Feds?

SAM
Yes.
(beat)
Ah. So you're cashing in your favor?

Sam looks over Roger for a moment.

SAM (CONT'D)
What the hell did you do, sleep with a
man's wife?

ROGER
(laughing)
Oh, heavens no. That would be
something. No, this one involves a
woman and her child.

SAM
We don't take on missing kids.

ROGER
The kids not missing, it's someone
else.

SAM
Okay.
(beat)
What is this your estranged daughter
or something?

ROGER
No, not exactly, just someone I care
about. They need help Sam.

SAM
Right.

ROGER
That is what you still offer here?
Help?

MAISIE (O.S.)
He sure needs a lot of help.

SAM
Mase!

Sam looks back at Roger. He folds his hands on his desk.

SAM (CONT'D)
All right just, who the hell is
missing then?

ROGER
Well, I don't know.

SAM
You don't know?

ROGER
I don't know his real name, but her
young daughter has been corresponding
with the man.

SAM
The missing man?

ROGER
Yes

SAM
Who is...?

ROGER
Well, one could say a lot of kids
write to this man. Especially this
time of year.

SAM
Sweet chestnuts. You've got to be
screwing with me. Santa. You need me
to find Santa?

ROGER
It could just be a man. But yes,
(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)
that's one name for him.

Roger takes a note from his pocket. He places it on Sam's desk.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Here's the woman's address. You can find her daughter there too. They'll tell you everything.

Roger puts the book back on the shelf.

SAM
Roger.

Roger makes his way to the door.

ROGER
Thanks so much, my boy. We'll see you at the party, and a merry Christmas to you.

SAM
Roger!

Roger turns back to Sam at the doorway

ROGER
Oh, and can I count on you to chip in for the Secret Santa Fund?

SAM
We go over this every year. No one wants a gift from me.

MAISIE (O.S.)
Well, that's certainly true

SAM
And I don't need a gift from anyone else.

MAISIE (O.S.)
And that's certainly not true.

SAM
Mase!

ROGER
Well, regardless I'll see you for some
(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)
libations tonight.

He turns around to Maisie and nods to her. We can see Maisie through the frame of the open door.

ROGER (CONT'D)
And Merry Christmas to you.

MAISIE
Merry Christmas Roger.

Roger leaves the office. Sam comes around to his door. He sees Maisie smiling at him and slams his door shut.

Sam sits back down at his desk and puts his hands on his head. After a big sigh he pulls out a bottle of whiskey and a rocks glass from a desk drawer. He pours himself a few fingers. He looks down at the glass as the liquid swirls.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

A glass of eggnog is spiked with some brandy. Nutmeg speckles the top.

MARY
The perfect eggnog, there you are sir.

A younger Sam takes the glass and sips. He looks across at MARY, 30, beautiful bushy brown-haired woman. She has a gorgeous smile and glowing skin. Her eyes are like two tree toppers sparkling in light.

SAM
Well, this is a good way to get festive in deed ma'am, thank you for the libation.

The couple stand in the center of a brightly decorated living room. There's a large Christmas tree decorated like out of a magazine. A collection of nutcrackers and silver bells tops a console table behind a couch. Garland is thrown up everywhere and a fireplace on the side blazes on. The windows reveal a light snowfall outside.

Mary is playing with the bells. She laughs to herself. Sam can't take his eyes off her.

MARY

Of course sir. One needs something to keep warm on these cold nights.

SAM

Yes, but who will keep you warm?

Mary shrugs her shoulders.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well, how can I repay you then?

MARY

I'm sure you'll think of something.

Mary winds up one of the silver bells. Sam puts his drink down and pulls Mary away into a dance. They laugh as they glide like the snowflakes outside. Their lips touch as 'Deck the Halls' plays from the silver bell.