

The Christmas Caper

by
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CHARACTERS

LOUIE (M), *Shady character*

FRED (M), *Bank worker*

ELENE (F), *Georgian separatist*

Her ASSOCIATE (M)

CANDACE (F), *FRED's girlfriend*

Total Roles: 5 (2 female, 3 male)

SETTING

A city street on Christmas Eve. The present day.

SYNOPSIS

Christmas Eve. Fred Anderson plans to propose to his girlfriend, but with the stores closed, he has no choice but to buy a ring from Louie under the table. The problem? Georgian separatists want the ring too—or at least the missile defense plans Louie hid inside. To keep the ring and make his date, Fred must stop the plans from falling into the hands of terrorists, leaving him with 33 minutes to propose.

And save the world.

(Christmas Eve. LOUIE enters carrying a small box containing a diamond ring. He hides an unseen object in it and shoves the box into his pocket. FRED enters, browsing invisible shop windows, while ELENE and her ASSOCIATE enter opposite. She's the brains, he's the brawn. LOUIE avoids them.)

Merry Christmas.

FRED

Yeah.

LOUIE

I'm going to propose tonight.

FRED

Christmas Eve, nice touch.

LOUIE

Fred, Fred Anderson, Fourth National Bank.

FRED

Uh-huh.

LOUIE

Are you married? It's just that I've never done this before.

FRED

(By this point ELENE and her ASSOCIATE have left.)

Hey, have you seen...?

LOUIE

Do I just ask? Or...? Anyway, I just need the ring.

FRED

Good luck with that. All the stores are about to—

LOUIE

I asked her to meet me in the park. In thirty-three minutes. How do I look?

FRED

Fine, kid.

LOUIE

Good. Thanks. Merry Christmas.

FRED

(He tries an invisible shop door. It won't open.)

No, no, no, you can't be closed, I have to buy a ring!

I tried to tell you.

LOUIE

I've already called Candace.

FRED

Tough break. When did you say you're meeting her?

LOUIE

In thirty minutes.

FRED

It's your lucky day, kid.
(He shows FRED the ring.)

Interested?

FRED

Wow. But I don't think I have enough...
(He pulls out his cash and LOUIE takes it.)

LOUIE

Sold to the man of action.
(He gives him the ring.)

Thirty minutes, huh?

FRED

Twenty-nine.

LOUIE

Perfect.

FRED

Wow.
(Looking at the ring)

(LOUIE crosses away and runs into ELENE and her ASSOCIATE.)

ELENE

Louie, how nice.

LOUIE

I don't have it, Elene.

ELENE

But that is a pity.
(She gestures to her ASSOCIATE who grabs LOUIE and drags him off.)

LOUIE

I don't have it!

(ELENE waits and FRED sees her.)

FRED

Fred, Fred Anderson. Merry Christmas.

ELENE

Elene.

FRED

I'm going to propose.

ELENE

My most sincere congratulations.

FRED

(Showing her the ring)

I just bought it. From some guy in a bad suit.

ELENE

That is most interesting. May I?

(FRED hands her the ring.)

Magnificent. Louie has most excellent taste.

(She points her gun at FRED.)

I am afraid I must relieve you of this luminescent item.

FRED

But I'm proposing. Tonight.

ELENE

Believe me, that so rarely turns out as you intend.

FRED

I don't think you understand, I need that ring.

(He runs into her ASSOCIATE, who has just entered.)

ELENE

My fondest wishes to you this holiday season.

(She and her ASSOCIATE exit. LOUIE staggers on.)

LOUIE

Hey, it's Fred, right? Don't you have to be somewhere? In twenty-four minutes?

FRED

Not without a ring.

What happened to it?
 LOUIE
 This woman, Elene, she stole it.
 FRED
 Elene Nadaraia, she's a Georgian separatist.
 LOUIE
 There are separatists in Georgia?
 FRED
 The country Georgia. All you had to do was hang on to that ring for what, thirty minutes?
 LOUIE
 Twenty-two.
 FRED
 It's not going to take her long to pass it off. You've put me in a real pickle, you know that?
 LOUIE
 I couldn't stop her.
 FRED
 I hid a microchip inside the ring. It's got plans for a new line of missiles, that's what Elene's after. I had to ditch the ring while I shook her off.
 LOUIE
 What do I tell Candace?
 FRED
 Look, you want the ring, I want the chip.
 LOUIE
 I work at a bank. I process loan applications.
 FRED
 Which makes us both crooks. You want that girl of yours to say yes, right?
 (No answer. LOUIE starts to leave.)
 FRED
 She said I was boring. I wanted to show her that... What do you need me to do?
 LOUIE
 I've got an idea where to find them. It's getting the ring off her that's tricky.
 (We hear bell ringers in the background.)

I've got an idea.

FRED

Yeah?

LOUIE

(FRED and LOUIE exit, while ELENE and her ASSOCIATE enter opposite.)

ELENE

(On the phone)

Yes. It is in our hands. You know where I may be found.

(She hangs up. Slight pause.)

So, will you be visiting your family for the holidays?

(Her ASSOCIATE shrugs.)

Yes, I always find such gatherings quite tedious.

(Behind them FRED and LOUIE enter wearing Santa hats and beards. FRED rings a bell and LOUIE has a bucket for donations. No response from ELENE or her ASSOCIATE, and so FRED rings more vigorously. Her ASSOCIATE takes out some coins.)

But you will only encourage them.

(Her ASSOCIATE crosses to put the coins in the bucket and LOUIE pulls out a gun.)

LOUIE

Easy there.

(He takes her ASSOCIATE's gun and hands it to FRED.)

Go on, kid.

FRED

Me?

LOUIE

Yeah you, smart guy.

(FRED searches ELENE's pockets.)

FRED

Sorry, this is my first time...

ELENE

The left pocket.

FRED

Sorry.

(He finds the ring.)

Got it.

ELENE

They murdered my sister. My parents, they came next.

LOUIE

Let's go, kid.

ELENE

What would you do, Mr. Anderson, to protect those whom you love?

FRED

Anything.

ELENE

And to avenge them?

LOUIE

Come on!

(LOUIE pulls FRED away. ELENE takes out her gun. She shoots at FRED, but LOUIE pushes him aside and takes the bullet in the shoulder. FRED points his gun back at ELENE, who raises her hands, and FRED helps LOUIE offstage. They exit.)

ELENE

After them.

(Her ASSOCIATE exits and she follows. FRED and LOUIE re-enter. They approach a bench.)

LOUIE

There, that's my car. Just give me the chip. You've still got fifteen minutes.

(FRED puts the gun in his pocket and mimes opening the driver's door. He sits on the bench. LOUIE mimes opening the passenger door.)

What are you doing, kid?

FRED

You can't drive.

LOUIE

You don't even want that stupid ring.

FRED

I love Candace.

LOUIE

(Sitting on the bench)

Here's your money. Just take it.

(FRED mimes putting on his seatbelt.)

Really?

FRED

I always wear my seatbelt.
(He waits.)

LOUIE

For the love of Pete...
(He mimes putting on his seatbelt. FRED mimes starting the car and pulling out into the street, meticulously observing every rule of the road.)

This is a getaway?
(FRED suddenly slows down and they lurch forward.)

You're stopping?

FRED

There's a pedestrian.
(We hear shots.)

LOUIE

Go!
(FRED hits the gas and engages in a high-speed chase.)
Thanks, kid, I owe you one. You didn't have to...

FRED

Candace is right. I've never done anything. I've never—

LOUIE

Santa Claus!
(FRED swerves to avoid him.)
There, take a right.

FRED

That's a tree farm.
(LOUIE grabs the wheel with his good arm and turns it right.)
Hey!

LOUIE

We'll lose them in here.

FRED

I'm driving.
(He pulls the wheel back while looking at LOUIE.)

LOUIE

Watch the trees!
(He pulls the wheel back and they struggle for it, lurching back and forth.)

FRED

Give it to me!

LOUIE

(Looking forward)
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

FRED

What?

LOUIE

There!

(FRED tries to swerve but they "crash" and fall onto the stage. If desired, parts of a manger scene may even fly on from offstage. LOUIE is out cold. FRED recovers and hides the ring in LOUIE's pocket. ELENE and her ASSOCIATE enter.)

FRED

(Making a sudden move to pull out his gun)
Ha!
(The gun is gone.)
Oh... Must have...

(Her ASSOCIATE searches FRED, taking the gun from his other pocket.
No ring.)

ELENE

What is it you have done with it?
(Nothing)
This is not your line of work, Fred Anderson. You are meeting this woman in...?

FRED

Seven minutes.

ELENE

Give to me the chip, take for yourself the ring, go live your happily ever after.

FRED

I can't.

ELENE

As you desire. I do not envy you the selection of pains you have before you.
(She motions to her ASSOCIATE.)

FRED

Candace said I bore her. Can you believe that?

ELENE

It is quite difficult.

FRED

I like the bank. Sure, I don't drive a fancy car, or go skydiving, or whatever it is exciting people do. I make a good living, do my own laundry, and I cook dinner three times a week.

ELENE

Is this pedantic little story of yours at an end?

FRED

See, that's what I'm saying. I'm not pedantic, I'm not boring, I'm steady.

(To her ASSOCIATE)

I'm steady, right?

(Her ASSOCIATE shrugs.)

I'm sorry, Miss Nadaraia, if I let you have the missile plans a lot of people will get hurt.

ELENE

You have chosen a most inopportune time to be noble.

FRED

Yeah. Just do me one favor, tell Candace I did something.

(ELENE motions to her ASSOCIATE again.)

Wait. It's inside the machine, in there. Just crawl through.

ELENE

I will admit, I am disappointed. I had so looked forward to the entertainment.

(She exits.)

FRED

So... you're from Georgia. The country. Nice weather?

(Her ASSOCIATE shrugs. We hear the sound of a machine running, followed by a scream from ELENE. LOUIE comes to and covers her ASSOCIATE with his gun.)

LOUIE

You're a lousy driver, kid, you know that? And you mowed down a Nativity scene. That's at least fifty Hail Marys. Where's Elene?

(The machine dies down and ELENE hops back on wrapped in plastic wrap or some kind of netting, such as Christmas trees are wrapped in.)

Nice work, kid. Look, I'm going to need that...

(He finds the ring in his pocket.)

FRED

So what are you going to do with it?

LOUIE

Relax.

(He takes out a badge and shows it to FRED.)

Agent Louis Greer. Tell you what...

LOUIE (Cont.)

(He takes a tiny, invisible chip from the box, pockets it, and gives the ring to FRED.)

Still have three minutes.

FRED

Candace.

LOUIE

You've got guts, kid. Here's my card. Call me if the bank ever gets boring.

(He pushes ELENE and her ASSOCIATE ahead of him and they all exit.)

FRED

Candace, will you... I mean, you'd make me very happy if... Boring?

(CANDANCE enters.)

CANDACE

Fred. I didn't see you in the park, so... Look, I need to tell you something.

FRED

So do I. You're wonderful, Candace, you really are.

CANDACE

So are you, but...

FRED

But I don't think we're right for each other.

CANDACE

No, no we're not.

(Slight pause)

FRED

Merry Christmas, Candace.

CANDACE

Merry Christmas, Fred.

(She exits. Pause as FRED takes out the ring and looks at it. He then puts it away and dials his phone.)

FRED

Hi, Agent Greer? It's Fred. Fred Anderson.

(Blackout.)