

SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH SANTA

Written by James Walsh

EXT. BRITISH SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Accompanied by a kid's choir singing <CHRISTMAS CAROLS> we move through FALLING SNOW towards a suburban cul-de-sac.

RIDLEY (O.S.)

Dear Mr Santa Claus. For Christmas this year I would like a dog, please. One that I can take care of.

At street level we can see Christmas trees in windows.

RIDLEY (O.S.) (cont'd)

One that likes playing in the garden, going for walks and catching sticks.

We cut to a house. Through the living room window we can see RIDLEY'S DAD (40) looking at the sofa, confused.

RIDLEY (O.S.) (cont'd)

To get ready, I've already got some dog food from the shops and made a nice cosy bed under the stairs.

RIDLEY'S DAD

Where are all the cushions?

INSIDE THE HOUSE

We find RIDLEY - 8 years old with long hair she never styles and big eyes full of ideas - sitting in the cosy cupboard under the stairs, surrounded by sofa cushions and photos of puppies on the wall and scribbling. She repeatedly blows the bangs out of her face...but they keep falling back down.

RIDLEY (O.S.)

Yours Sincerely, Ridley Macaskill.

Ridley finishes writing, folds the letter and smiles.

AT THE FIREPLACE

The letter goes on the fire. It burns and Ridley watches MAGICAL RED EMBERS float up the chimney.

IN THE SKY OUTSIDE

We see the RED EMBERS drift out of the chimney into the sky. They stop flying for a moment, swooping this way and that, as if looking for the right way to go, then one of the embers "gestures" to the others and they fly off together.

We hear <JINGLING BELLS> and a faint "Ho Ho Ho!", then the night sky fades up into daylight. The snow has stopped falling, but sits in thick piles on the ground. On Ridley's roof we can see some boot-prints in the snow, leading towards the chimney in a wibbly-wobbly line.

Then we cut to outside Ridley's house, looking through the living room window. Ridley is digging around under the tree for presents. Mum and Dad are setting the table behind her.

RIDLEY
This is the one!

INT. RIDLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Ridley reads the label on a BIG SQUARE GIFT.

RIDLEY
To Ridley. Hope you like your new friend. Love Santa.

Ridley tears the wrapping off the gift as her parents watch excitedly. Then she lifts the lid and looks inside...

...and her face drops.

RIDLEY (cont'd)
Huh? I don't understand.

We see inside the box. Instead of a dog there's a LOG.

We cut back to Ridley, who scratches her head.

RIDLEY (cont'd)
Maybe I wrote the wrong thing down?

MONTAGE

Ridley treats her log like a dog:

- She draws a happy (slightly wonky) face on it with pen.
- She puts it in its bed under the stairs.
- She puts a bowl of food down for it.

- She tries to play "chase" with it in the garden.
- She throws a stick for it to catch. But it doesn't move.
- She puts a collar on it and clips on a lead...

RIDLEY
Let's take you for a walk.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The park is covered in snow. Ridley drags Log along, then she looks back to see it buried in the snow, with a long flat <TRAIL> behind it. She <SIGHS>, disappointed.

JULIAN (O.S.)
Hi Ridley.

Ridley looks up to find her friend JULIAN stood next to her.

JULIAN
What's that?

Ridley brushes the snow off Log.

RIDLEY
It's my present from Santa.

JULIAN
(confused)
You asked for a log for Christmas?

RIDLEY
Actually I asked for a dog. There must have been a mix up.

JULIAN
You think that's bad, I asked Santa for glow-in-the-dark stickers, but he brought me these instead...

Julian lifts up his jumper to reveal the top of a pair of fluorescent, GLOW-IN-THE-DARK KNICKERS.

RIDLEY
If we both got the wrong present, maybe other people did to...?

RIDLEY AND JULIAN KNOCKING ON DOORS

Accompanied by different <DOORBELLS> we see a number of doors opening one after the other, revealing different kids behind them: HEIDI (8), MO (8) and FELIX (6).

EXT. PARK - DAY

Ridley's standing in the snow. Log is sitting at her feet, sitting obediently on the lead, smiling its big smile.

RIDLEY

We're all here today because we got the wrong presents. I asked for a dog, but I got...this.

We cut to Log on the ground, wearing its collar.

RIDLEY (cont'd)

Julian wanted glow-in-the-dark stickers...but he got glow-in-the-dark knickers.

We cut to Julian re-arranging his pants through his jeans.

RIDLEY (cont'd)

Mo asked for a new train set, but he got a newt training set instead.

We cut to Mo holding a terrarium with some newts in it along with some circus-type equipment.

RIDLEY (cont'd)

Felix wanted a woolly hat, but he got a woolly bat.

We cut to Felix holding a knitted woollen baseball bat.

RIDLEY (cont'd)

And instead of a new football kit, Heidi got a football kilt!

We cut to Heidi wearing a kilt decorated in football-pattern. She lifts up the sporran, confused.

HEIDI

What's this bit for?

RIDLEY

You guys...I think something's wrong with Santa.

Everyone <GASPS>.

RIDLEY (cont'd)
 (triumphant)
 But if we hurry up we can get to the
 North Pole before Christmas is over
 and find out what went wrong!

Heidi, Mo and Felix <CHEER>. Julian shuffles uncomfortably.

JULIAN
 Can I change out of these pants
 first? They're all scratchy.

INT. RIDLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ridley's Mum and Dad are on the sofa, watching the TV.

RIDLEY (O.S.)
 Mum, Dad, I'm going to the North
 Pole! I'll be back soon!

MUM
 Okay darling.

DAD
 Take a snack!

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

In a busy train station concourse, PASSENGERS are coming and going. Ridley (with Log), Julian, Heidi, Mo and Felix are looking at lots of trains lined up at platforms.

HEIDI
 Which one goes to the North Pole?

We cut to the trains, panning across from normal train...to normal train...to normal train...to a train PAINTED BRIGHT RED WITH BAUBLES, TINSEL AND FAIRY LIGHTS.

JULIAN
 Maybe that one?

We jump cut to an ELF on the platform, BLOWING his whistle. The train pulls away with a <TOOOOT> and we see Ridley, Log, Julian, Heidi, Mo and Felix pressed against the window.

EXT. THE COAST - DAY

<TOOOOOT> - the train emerges from a tunnel in the cliffs, follows some tracks along a sandy beach, then climbs onto onto a bridge across the sea that carries on to the horizon.

EXT. NORTH POLE TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train pulls into the North Pole - a bustling town made of lots of gingerbread houses and giant Christmas trees.

Ridley, Julian, Heidi, Mo and Felix are stood outside the station, happily watching the ELF COMMUTERS come and go. Ridley is looking down at a BROCHURE as Julian and Heidi watch a trio of PENGUINS waddle by with briefcases.

Mo sees a HAPPY ELF approaching a drinks stall.

ELF
Double snow-spresso please.

The server piles snow in a cup and pours water over it.

Felix waves at a SNOWMAN standing nearby.

FELIX
Merry Christmas!

SNOWMAN
And to you!

The Snowman doffs its hat at Felix, and when the hat lifts off we see a BABY ELF hiding underneath. Felix <LAUGHS>.

We cut to Ridley reading her brochure. We see over shoulder that she's looking at a MAP of the town.

RIDLEY
(pointing)
Santa's house is this way...

EXT. NORTH POLE - DAY

The kids walk through the town. We see them go past some shops, then through the park (where elves are doing circuit training), then over a wooden bridge (leaving the town behind) and past a sign that says "WARNING: Goblins".

JULIAN
(reading the brochure)
It says here Arctic Goblins are experts in disguise and like to steal anything shiny that they see.

Julian carries on as the camera stops on the sign. We see a pair of eyes blink - the sign is a Goblin in disguise!

ARCTIC GOBLIN
<mischievous laugh> Goblin!

EXT. SANTA'S HOUSE - LATER

The gang arrive at Santa's House, which is a cosy thatched cottage. His sleigh is parked outside.

RIDLEY
This is it! Santa's house!

JULIAN / MO / FELIX / HEIDI
Wow!

INT. SANTA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The kids explore Santa's house, looking for Santa. We see them all poking their heads around the front door.

FELIX
Santa?

In the LIVING ROOM Ridley and Julian notice candle-holders on the fireplace. Instead of candles there's...HOT DOGS?

JULIAN
(calling)
Santa?

In the KITCHEN Heidi and Mo find HEDGEHOGS in the sink.

MO
(calling)
Santa?

In the HALL Felix opens the cupboard under the stairs to reveal REINDEERS stuffed inside. They <FLUMP> out onto the floor in front of all the other kids, and <WHINNY> with exhaustion. The children look at each other, baffled.

Then they hear a jolly voice somewhere off camera...

SANTA (O.S.)
I know red's my colour but I do think
I'd look jolly good in sky blue.

The children follow the voice, and we cut to:

EXT. SANTA'S GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

The children find Santa dressed in RED PYJAMAS and a RED DRESSING GOWN talking to a LITTLE POINTY GREEN SHRUB.

SANTA
You're a good listener.

HEIDI
 (aside to Mo)
 What's he doing?

RIDLEY
 Santa?

Santa looks up in the kids' direction.

SANTA
 What's that? Who's there?

We cut to a wide to see Santa just a few feet away from the kids, looking around for them (when he should be able to see them easily). We go close on his little eyes as they squint.

Santa's POV shows us that the children are just faint blurs.

SANTA (O.S.)
 Who put these packages here?

The kids are understandably confused.

JULIAN
 We're not packages.

HEIDI
 We're people.

FELIX
 (proudly)
 My name is Felix Thomas Rupert
 Marigold Percival Perez.

SANTA
 (confused)
 Really?

RIDLEY
 (worried)
 Santa? Why are you talking to a bush?

Santa squints at the bush.

SANTA
 Am I? I thought it was an elf!

As Santa feels the bush, we see an ELF standing nearby shaking its head in disappointment.

SANTA (cont'd)
 Ever since I lost my glasses I've
 been getting things mixed up.

CUTAWAY - SANTA GETTING THINGS MIXED UP

Some quick shots of Santa getting things mixed up:

- Picking up hot dogs instead of candles.
- Using hedgehogs to scrub the dishes.
- Leading the reindeers into the cupboard.

SANTA

In your stables. There you go!

IN THE KITCHEN

Julian and Felix help the hedgehogs out of the sink - they put them down on the floor and the hedgehogs wander off. Ridley, Mo and Heidi talk to Santa.

MO

That explains it!

SANTA

Explains what?

RIDLEY

There was a mix up with our presents.

HEIDI

I don't normally wear skirts.

MO

And I'm not sure you can train newts.

RIDLEY

It's not that we aren't grateful. We just wanted to make sure you were okay.

SANTA

Oh dear, I must have misread your letters! And I bet there's millions of other children with the wrong gifts too! There's still time to fix it, but I'll need to find my glasses.

MO

We can help if you'd like!

JULIAN

Let's split up and search the house!

The children nod enthusiastically.

SANTA
 Oh, splendid! Thank goodness you
 came. Would anyone like a biscuit?

Santa holds out a plate with some BADGES on it.

MONTAGE - THE KIDS SEARCH THE HOUSE

- Heidi looks in the gift-wrapping room, looking inside all of the tubes inside the rolls of paper.

- Mo is in the workshop. He lets his newts out on the desk.

MO
 (ordering)
 Newts, check the area.

The newts work together to check inside a toolbox pot, then they work together to check under a jack-in-the-box.

MO (cont'd)
 Huh...maybe you can train them?

- Julian opens Santa's wardrobe. All the clothes are red. He scans it briefly, then he closes the door and walks away. the camera lingers on a LAMP and we see a pair of eyes <BLINK> - it's an Arctic Goblin in disguise! The goblin reaches out and steals a SHINY BELT from atop a cabinet.

ARCTIC GOBLIN
 Goblin!

- Felix shoves his hand down the side of the cushions of Santa's sofa. His eyes light up, then he pulls out...a SET OF KEYS. He presses a button and we cut to:

OUTSIDE - the sleigh alarm <BEEPS> on and off, on and off.

Back inside, Felix shrugs and puts the keys back.

INT. SANTA'S HOUSE - LANDING

- At the top of the stairs, Ridley pulls the attic ladder down. She looks down at Log on the ground (still with his collar and lead on, and wearing the same wonky grin).

RIDLEY
 Stay.

We go close on Log, staying obediently.

Ridley climbs up the ladder.

IN THE LOFT - Ridley pokes her head up into the attic to find REINDEERS playing computer games with headsets on. RUDOLPH'S bright red nose is lighting the room.

ON THE LANDING - Log is still sitting patiently...but now he's got a hedgehog crawling over his back. The hedgehog falls off cutely, and its momentum sends Log rolling the other way. The other hedgehog jumps out of the way as Log rolls along the landing and then...down the stairs.

<THUNK, THUNK, THUNK> - Log bumps down the steps.

IN THE LOFT - Ridley looks under the gaming reindeers' feet for the glasses. They hardly notice her.

RIDLEY
(disappointed)
Nope. Not here.

BACK TO LOG - he rolls down the stairs at speed, then along the hall. He bumps up a step into the kitchen, ricochets off some pots and pans, flies into the living room, bounces off the sofa, and flies out the window. We hear a <THUNK> O.S.

IN THE ATTIC - Ridley climbs down the ladder. At the same time, Rudolph's nose <FLICKERS> and goes off. The Reindeers <GROAN>, then Rudolph screws in a new nose bulb and it flickers on. The Reindeers <CHEER> and go back to the game.

ON THE LANDING - Ridley sees that Log is missing.

RIDLEY
Log? Log?!

EXT. SANTA'S GARDEN - LATER

Mo, Felix, Heidi, and Julian are talking to Santa.

JULIAN
We've looked everywhere.

HEIDI
We couldn't find your glasses.

FELIX
(apologetic)
Sorry Santa.

SANTA
That's okay, I'm sure I can get some new ones. But not in time to get all the right presents to the good boys and girls. I feel so guilty.

MO
 (looking around)
 Where's Ridley?

They look up as we hear Ridley's voice off screen?

RIDLEY (O.S.)
 (calling)
 Log! Log!

EXT. SANTA'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Ridley is searching for Log near to Santa's sleigh. Behind the sleigh we can see an open window.

RIDLEY
 Log? Where are you?

When she doesn't get a response, Ridley <SIGHS>. Julian, Mo, Heidi, Felix and Santa arrive.

HEIDI
 What's wrong?

RIDLEY
 It's Log. He's gone missing.
 (disappointed)
 It might sound silly but I quite liked having him around.

Ridley looks down glumly. She sees something in the snow - a flat <TRAIL> (like the one Log left earlier). Ridley's eyes widen and she follows the trail to see a PILE OF SNOW next to Santa's sleigh. She brushes the snow away to reveal Log!

RIDLEY (cont'd)
 There you are!
 (seeing something else)
 And look what you found!

Ridley grabs a bit of metal poking out of the snow and pulls out a PAIR OF SMALL ROUND GLASSES.

SANTA
 My spectacles!

Santa reaches for his glasses... But then we see a PAIR OF EYES in the snow, and the Arctic Goblin jumps out from nowhere, grabbing the glasses and running off at top speed!!

FELIX
 Arctic Goblin!

The goblin scampers off, <CHUCKLING>. The kids are in shock.

HEIDI

What are we going to do?!

Mo takes his newts out and holds them in his palm.

MO

I've got an idea...

We jump cut to Mo loading the newts into Julian's colourful pants, which are now hanging off the end of Felix's bat, which Ridley, Heidi and Felix are holding upright. Mo and Julian pull the pants back, stretching the elastic.

MO (cont'd)

Ready! Aim! Fire!

<BOING> they let the elastic go and the pants and newts go soaring through the sky. The kids and Santa watch in hope.

We cut to a SLO-MO of the newts flying through the air.

Then we cut to the goblin running away with the glasses.

Back to Mo as he bides his time, then...

MO (cont'd)

Now!

IN THE AIR, the newts drop down from each side of the pants, turning them into a sleek parachute. They glide down, leaning to steer the parachute and swooping round just in time to <SNATCH> the glasses from the goblin's hands.

ARCTIC GOBLIN

Ach!

The newts glide back to the children and drop gently into Mo's hands. Mo, with a big grin, hands the glasses to Santa.

MO

Here you go.

FELIX

Woohoo!!! Super newts!

As the kids <CHUCKLE> we cut to the Arctic Goblin who slopes off into the woods glumly, shoulders slumped (defeated).

We cut to Santa as he puts his glasses on and blinks.

SANTA
That's better, I can see perfectly
now! Thank you everyone.

We cut to all the kids smiling. Then to Log (also smiling).

SANTA (cont'd)
Now, I'd better go and find all the
letters I've been sent and start
correcting my mistakes! And you had
all better get home to your parents.

RIDLEY
Don't you need our help?

SANTA
I can handle it. I've had thousands
of years of experience you know.

EXT. NORTH POLE STATION - DAY

The train pulls out of the North Pole station with Ridley, Heidi, Mo, Felix, Julian and Log aboard. Santa waves goodbye from the platform, surrounded by elves and reindeers.

SANTA
I'll see you very soon!

EXT. THE COAST - DUSK

The train goes along the infinite bridge towards the beach and the cliff tunnel. We cut to the train window to see the kids looking up as Santa's sleigh flies past <JINGLING>.

SANTA
Told you I'd see you soon. Ho ho ho!

The kids <APPLAUD> as the sleigh does a LOOP THE LOOP.

EXT. SUBURBAN TOWN - NIGHT

Santa's sleigh glides above the houses in Ridley's town. We cut to a close up to see Santa dropping presents from the side of the sleigh, aiming for houses below. We follow the last present as it drops quickly towards the ground. It looks like it's going to miss the house, but then, suddenly, it gets "caught" by magical red embers and hovers in the air. Then the embers carry it gently, like a floating leaf, in through an open upstairs window. We pull back to see lots of "drifting" presents being carried by red embers into different bedroom windows...

Then we jump around the houses, looking through the windows:

- through Felix's window we see him trying on a new woolly hat.

- through Heidi's window we see her pulling on a football shirt.

- through Mo's window we see him building a train set with the help of his newts.

- through Julian's window we see him surrounded by glowing stars and planets in his dark room.

INT. RIDLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ridley is sitting in front of a box. She glances down at Log, who looks back at her with its wonky smile.

RIDLEY
Okay. Here goes...

Ridley opens the lid of the box an inch.

A little black nose pokes out, sniffing curiously. Ridley's eyes go wide. Then she opens the lid fully to reveal an ADORABLE PUPPY - big eyes, waggy tail, fluffy to the max. It barks and jumps out at her. Ridley falls back, giggling.

RIDLEY (cont'd)
(laughing)
You're perfect!

The puppy licks Ridley's face, then it looks at Log.

Log looks back with its wonky grin. Puppy tilts its head.

RIDLEY (cont'd)
Puppy...meet Log.

Puppy <YELPS> and starts licking Log. Ridley <GIGGLES>.

RIDLEY (cont'd)
Come on, let's go and play!

EXT. RIDLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Through the window we see Ridley playing with Puppy and Log in her front room, in front of a roaring fire and the twinkling lights of their Christmas tree. Ridley <LAUGHS>, having the time of her life. The snow falls outside.

It's the perfect Christmas.

INT. RIDLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ridley and Puppy are both fast asleep on the sofa, lit by the crackling fire. Ridley's Mum stands over them, looking down at her daughter adoringly.

MUM
(adoringly)
Look at them...
(then, stroking
Ridley's hair)
Merry Christmas Ridley.

We cut to the fire as it <CRACKLES>.

MUM (cont'd)
Put another log on the fire, won't
you? I don't want her getting cold.

Dad opens the fire and reaches for a log (O.S.). He chucks it on, and then we cut to Mum's eyes widening in panic.

MUM (cont'd)
Martin, no!

Dad looks down to see he's put Log on the fire!

DAD
Oh God!!!!

Dad grabs Log and pulls him out of the fire, blowing frantically on the small embers. When they're all gone he breathes a sigh of relief. Then he tucks Log up on the sofa under a blanket alongside Ridley and Puppy.

We cut to Log, snuggled up, smiling his wonky smile.

The End.