



Christmas Express

by

Andre' Gordon

LOGLINE: A single dad must accept the adventure of delivering Christmas for Santa Claus while fighting not to lose his daughter's trust.

SHORT PITCH: Jeff Patterson, (40s), widower, freshly laid off single dad, has rear-ends Santa on his first day as a Ride Share driver. His mission, if he chooses to accept it, is to avoid detection from his former boss to collect a severance package, honor his commitment to be home for his nine-year-old daughter for Christmas, and deliver Christmas presents to the entire city of Miami, all by sunrise Christmas morning.

MOVIE THEMES: Money can't buy happiness. The gift of time is more valuable than material wealth.

God blesses us with family.

Our identity is not in what we earn but in who created us.

Love is greater than revenge.

ARENA: There is nothing like Christmas in Miami. The traditional adornments of the North Pole backdrop the tropical sounds and smells of the southern peninsula. Santa Claus in a Hawaiian shirt, as opposed to the red and white uniform of days past, are a typical sight. What Miami lacks in snow; they compensate for with lights. This starkly contrasts our other arena, The Claus Compound. Rich in traditional decorations that are not seasonal, but an everyday reality will draw our audiences into life at the North Pole. As Mr. and Mrs. Claus are not short on enchantments, magical shimmers and floating objects swirl around the compound. We will experience The North and South personally, festively, and magically.



MAIN CHARACTER PROFILE:

Jeff Patterson, late 30s, early 40's. His handsome face wears fatigue, grief, and optimism all at once. His charm matches his tenacity. Born in Ocala, Florida, Jeff was raised in a quiet, humble household with a loving mother and father. His "best part of the day," as his parents would ask him each night while tucking him in, was that good night moment. Being with family, the togetherness, the last thing he saw as he closed his eyes was his emotional, warm blanket to get him through the night. Being lower middle class drove Jeff to push for a life of greater means for his future family. The star football player in high school kept his star shining as a business major in college at Florida State University. Quarterbacking his dreams of owning his own business, he created an advertising agency with his longtime friend, Patrick Sachar. His high school sweetheart, Rose, has died of pneumonia. She fell ill after a trip to Alaska, leaving Jeff with a forgiving disdain for the cold. Now, Jeff must balance providing financially for his daughter and providing emotionally for her. Placing his identity in his work causes him to lose his sense of self when he loses his job. Jeff must find the courage to redefine himself, not by where he works. Reduced to rideshare driving, Jeff accidentally rear-ends Santa Claus. Now, he must accept a mission to deliver the rest of Christmas in time while keeping his promise to be there for his daughter on Christmas morning, no matter what. His new job as temporary Santa breaches his severance contract. Camouflaging his adventure may be the only way to provide financial security for his daughter, whom he loves more than anything. We are drawn to Jeff; we cheer for him because he is us. Jeff needs to prove to his daughter that he can provide for her, but his desire to financially secure her future blinds him to what she truly needs emotionally.

SUPPORTING CHARACTER PROFILE

Patrick Thomas (40s), tall, strong, looks like he fell out of a car salesman ad. The sheer volume of his voice drowns out his insecurities. The more he talks, the less chance anyone sees the chinks in his armor. Partner in the ad agency with Jeff but found a way to have one percentage point more ownership. There has always been a quiet resentment of Jeff's success. Everything Patrick has lost, he blames him for. Feeling slighted by an omission in a presentation, Patrick plots to get Jeff laid off. To keep Jeff from earning a severance, he stalks Jeff's every move hoping to catch him in the act of taking on new work within the thirty days he is still with the company. If Patrick can save the company that money, he will finally take his place on the Board of Governors and get the win over



Jeff he has yearned for since high school. Patrick's journey will lead him to discover that when making a list of all the reasons in your life keeping you from where you want to be, there is only one name at the top of that list, your own.

Ruby Patterson (10), precocious, energetic, smart as a whip with saucers for eyes and a smile that could light up the peninsula. A mamma's girl without her mama. After losing her mother at a young age, her dad, Jeff, became her everything. Ruby's love language is quality time, so when her father, Jeff, focuses on work to provide a lavish life for her, she turns to Santa Claus, hoping for her dad to be home more often, especially for Christmas. Ruby daydreams about quality time with her dad. She stares out the window and wishes for her dad's presence. When her dad loses his job, Ruby thinks her prayers are answered. Her journey takes her through the delicate balance of gaining what she wants through another's loss. Her support system, besides her dad, is her neighbor, Jessica.

Santa Claus (1,742) hails from Patara, near Modern day Turkey—Father Christmas, Saint Nicholas, Saint Nick, Kris Kringle, or simply Santa. Santa works tirelessly to deliver Christmas cheer, gifts, and hope to the entire world. This year, he is overworked and tired. With his steadfast dedication to his responsibilities to the world, he has seemingly forgotten his duties to his wife. Problems at home spill over to issues at work when Jeff rear-ends him. Now his sleigh doesn't work, he is injured, and he has forgotten his annual dinner date with Mrs. Claus. Santa will journey through empowering belief in Jeff to help him complete his job of delivering Christmas while keeping him on track to fulfill his obligations to his family. Santa's magic has always given him an heir of invincibility, but sometimes men wear him down. We hold it all together and don't ask for help. Kris will have to find the strength to let go of the rope for a time so that the spirit of Christmas can climb to the forefront of the lives of those who need it most.

Jessica (30s), the beautiful neighbor with the temperament of a saint. She supports the Patterson family as much as any caring neighbor could. After growing up in Kansas City, she longed for the serenity of the beach and the calming effects of the South Florida summer winds. A work-from-home writer with time on her hands, Jessica dreams of finding love again after leaving her abusive ex-husband. Never letting her light dim, her strength and grace find a place to assist others. As Jessica grows closer to Ruby, she must decide to put herself out there again once her feelings for Jeff begin to blossom.



Mrs. Carol Claus (1,737), The patient but hopeful Mrs. Claus knows that her older husband has responsibilities that can overextend him. She is never one to complain and is always looking for solutions. She is the glue that holds the operation together. In her 1700th year of life, she is becoming more aware of her gray hair, broader hips, and fine lines. When Kris forgets their yearly date, she must battle the inner whispers of self-consciousness that begin to pull the threads of the outfit apart. One of a wife's many superpowers is her discerning perspectives and ability to speak life into her husband. We all struggle with self-doubt. This is what makes her so relatable. When the time comes, and the world needs her husband, she must decide which voice to become the loudest, doubtful, or hopeful.

Story Synopsis

Christmas Express ACT breakdown

ACT I

SANTA (1,742) works feverishly to fix his broken sleigh. The pressure of the Christmas deadline looms large as he swishes magical instruments from across the room and puts them to work. Mrs. Claus dolled up, is ready for their annual Christmas date, but for the first time, it seems Santa forgot.

Jeff, '40s, lives his routine of working at the ad agency, splitting his attention between work and his daughter, Ruby, 10, at home. He works (almost too much) to provide a particular lifestyle for his daughter, especially since his wife has passed. Ruby would give it all up for quality time with her dad. One morning things begin to change. Jeff is working at his desk in the living room. Ruby wants to share a picture she drew as a present for him. Jeff, being too busy, lovingly puts her off. He drops her off at school. Ruby makes him pinky promise not to forget to pick her up.

His home away from home, The Ad Agency, calls him in for a meeting with Patrick Thomas, '40s, VP of the company, his partner at the agency, and his childhood friend. Patrick is upset because Jeff sent the project proposal they worked on together for months without Patrick's name attached.

Ruby sits at school alone. Jeff is late or forgot. She decides to work on another picture.



In a meeting with the Board and Jeff, Patrick announces that numbers are low, and barring a miracle, they will have to make cuts. After the meeting, Jeff returns to his office. Patrick enters and tells Jeff that he must "unfortunately" let Jeff go. Is this about the presentation? Patrick offers a silver lining in the severance package; however, if Jeff seeks and takes on a job during his last thirty days, there is no severance. Jeff reminds Patrick that he is alone at home and is responsible for caring for Ruby. Ruby! Jeff forgot her at school. At a loss, Jeff asks Jessica, 30s, his beautiful neighbor with a girl next door appeal, to pick her up.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Claus is in tears. Santa overlooked their date. Santa apologizes. He and his wife have a moment. She shares that both family and Christmas are important but feels left aside.

Ruby is still lonely after school. She bets her friend that her neighbor is coming to pick her up. With the hourglass of hope waning, she shows her friend the picture she drew of her and her dad together. Ruby thinks Santa isn't real because Jeff is more distant than usual. At the North Pole, Santa reacts as if he hears this belief wane. A snow globe labeled Miami loses some light. Ruby waits. She watches as her friend hugs her mom. She misses her mom in heaven. Just then, Jessica pulls up to the school to pick her up.

Jeff comes home. He struggles to share the news he is losing his job. Jessica tells Jeff to worry about Ruby as he may lose much more than his work. Jeff breaks the news that he lost his job. Excitement lifts Ruby to her feet. Her prayers have been answered. The picture she's been coloring shimmers. Jeff explains that now he won't be able to buy the presents she needs. She says she only needs time with him. The picture is revealed. It's a picture of Jeff with Santa.

Jeff begins to text Jessica for comfort as fear takes over. His loneliness and anxiety fight for position. Self-doubt wins as he pushes delete on his text. He misses his wife. He sees a couple out his living room window, hand in hand, walking down the street. He Daydreams. Jeff considers a picture of his late wife on the shelf. Reality washes over him, and he begins to apply for jobs. The following day, Ruby wants Jeff to take her to school. Jeff says he needs a job but thinks he can swing it this morning. He decides to take an "Express" to work while he applies for jobs in the backseat. The thought germinates. Maybe driving could be his temporary ticket out! Once Jeff gets to work,



Patrick asks to see him. Patrick reminds him that if he looks for and takes another job while on payroll no severance.

Back at Santa's Garage, Santa packs up to go. Mrs. Claus comes in and apologizes for being emotional. He says he will leave early to deliver presents so they have more time together. Carol lights up at the prospects of this. Kris promises to make it up to her.

Jeff checks his emails at work. The bill notices are starting to roll in like a snowstorm. He knows the risk of looking for a job. He knows Patrick is on a mission to use him as a scapegoat to save the company money. Jeff looks at his calendar. His firing day is marked with a big X. At this point, Jeff has no choice. He has to get a job and fast.

Act II

Jeff applies to Rocket Pizza, a place a friend, Mark Jacobs, owns. Jeff's pride takes hold of him, and he tries to leave before being seen. A young employee summons Mark, the owner. Jeff tries to escape. His friend arrives and thinks Jeff is there to eat. When he discovers Jeff needs a job, it becomes uncomfortable. Mark finds Jeff's application on the desk, which worsens the situation. Mark catches on and lets him know that he is there for him.

Dejected, with no pride left, Jeff goes to the "DRIVE ME CRAZY, RIDESHARE" offices to apply for rideshare. A massive thumb as its logo welcomes his eye line. A man in a giant thumb dances as he enters the building. His pride hits an all-time low as everyone at the office thinks Jeff is too rich to be there. To make matters worse, Jeff has no clue what any of the slang the kids are talking means. It becomes awkward. People are posing with his car. He feels out of place and out of dignity.

Jeff preps the car for rides and starts to pick up passengers. The first ride is good. He likes it! Then he picks up nightmare customers. A woman with a giant shedding dog, a man with the loudest phone voice known to man, and someone messily eating barbecue wings enter the car at different times. Jeff wants to quit. Finally, he picks up Ruby. He asks if Jessica can hang out with Ruby at night. Jeff needs to drive at night to pick up more money. Jessica and Ruby bond. Ruby asks if Jessica and Jeff are going to get married. Ruby says she knows Jess likes her daddy.



Nighttime is here, and Jeff struggles to stay awake as he drives. The night rideshare pickups increase. It's very late. Jeff's head bobs. He shakes himself awake. Is he dreaming? He thinks he sees a sleigh. His groggy dream turns real-life nightmare as he rear-ends who seems to be... Santa. Santa holds his neck. Jeff feels like a kid. He's geeking out! He can't believe this is Santa. Then it hits him. What has he done?! If his sleigh doesn't work, every kid in the city loses Christmas. Santa asks Jeff to deliver presents. Jeff isn't so sure if it's a good idea. He declines and gets back in his car. Santa is somehow in his car already! Jeff, terrified, jumps out of the vehicle. Santa is in front of him now outside the car! Santa says he could do this all night. Jeff trying to gather himself, appreciates the thought but says he can't do it. He has already messed up Christmas for his daughter and can't be responsible for wrecking it for the other kids. Santa tells Jeff that Ruby needs what he already has. He also says Jeff owes him big time for breaking his sleigh. Realizing he has no other choice; Jeff accepts the call to this new adventure. Santa transfers the powers of the sleigh to Jeff. Santa hands him a magic air freshener to clean up the car's smell. Jeff hangs it over the rearview mirror. Magic ensues. A wreath pops out the front bumper, lights sprout out the vehicle, and the car levitates slightly off the ground. Christmas in Miami rests in Jeff's hands.

Jeff arrives home. Jessica is sleeping. He pulls the blanket up to cover her. She snuggles his hand. He holds his breath. They are touching. Jeff is sweating. He respectfully breaks away and goes to Ruby's room. He tucks in Ruby after taking one last look at Jessica and goes to his room to sleep. The next morning, they all wake up to Jeff making breakfast. Ruby wakes up and feels like they are a family. Jeff announces he has a job as the new part-time Santa. He explains the fender bender and is taking on the Christmas responsibility. Ruby runs to her room and says if he doesn't want to tell her the truth, he could say so. Jessica reminds him that he has a girl who needs her and not to forget about her. Jessica follows Ruby to console her.

Jeff prepares his car for the new gig at the car wash. Something is slightly off. Is he being watched? He looks at the card Santa gave him and dials the number. Jeff is on his way to a hotel to see Santa.

Teenagers are working the front desk. They don't believe Jeff's story that he is there to see Santa. Jeff sees Santa banging on the ice machine out of the corner of his eye. and follows him to his room. Jeff feels he, too, is being followed and is correct; Patrick is



spying on them. The teenagers notice Patrick. Thinking he is a burglar, they set traps for him, ala Home-Along sequences.

Jeff is inside Santa's hotel room. Bright, gleaming snow globes from around the country line every surface except dimming Miami. Santa explains the importance of Christmas and why Miami is dimming. Miami needs saving, and Ruby is at the heart of it all.

Patrick sees Jeff leaving the room and continues to follow him. On the way out, Patrick sees that Jeff has a car full of merchandise, toys, and nick-nacks. Patrick tries to break into the vehicle to gather evidence. The teenage hotel staff thinks Patrick is boosting cars. The teens call the police and take Patrick out of the equation with mace and more homemade booby traps. Patrick limps off like a scalded dog, escaping as the police arrive.

Jeff gets home late. Jessica is awake as Ruby sleeps in her ballerina costume. She was going to perform a recital for Jeff. He carries Ruby to bed. She sleepily tells her daddy it's okay; she's used to it and loves him anyway. Jeff breaks down. He tells Jessica he feels like a failure and stresses the importance of money and security. Jessica reminds her what Ruby needs, which is the man he truly is.

Meanwhile, Patrick calls the Board. He is positive that he is on the verge of a discovery that will save the company hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Act III

The next day, Jeff starts his Christmas deliveries. His red jacket begins to shimmer. He gets to the first house and successfully gains entry after several failures. Waiting for him is a giant, drooling, growling dog. The dog backs Jeff into a corner. Santa's magic bag has dog treats. The scary dog monster becomes his sloppy kisses friend. The second house is in a lower-income neighborhood, poverty-stricken. The family has left cookies, milk, and a note on a card table addressed to Santa. It reminds Jeff of what family truly means. He flashes back to telling his mom and dad that he would be rich one day at bedtime. Emotions flood him. He looks at the family photo on the table, realizing what family truly means. He sets off. Perspective restored. Jeff continues his rides to another Christmas music montage. Panic strikes as the sun begins to set. Time to get back to



Ruby. Jeff calls Santa. He finished the first half of the deliveries and will complete the rest on Christmas Eve.

Jeff opens the door to his home. Patrick sits in his living room, talking with Jessica. He is prying. Ruby enters, talking about what her daddy is doing. Jeff and Jessica fear that Ruby will say too much. Outside, Patrick tells Jeff that he will stop at nothing to save the company money and give Jeff what is coming to him.

Patrick goes back to the hotel to see if he can find more clues. He sees one of the teenage staff talking to... SANTA?! In disbelief, Patrick walks toward him and considers an open hotel door. He enters Santa's room and sees the ice, red lights, and snow globes from different cities. Miami's globe has a sticky note. It says Jeff Patterson. "Gotcha." Ecstatic, Patrick calls the Board. He has something concrete and needs an emergency meeting.

Jeff sits outside, talking to a picture of him and his late wife. He flashes back to a memory. It's a flashback to when they decided to start their family. Ruby comes in and interrupts the flashback. She tells her dad that she thought she would have all the time in the world with Mommy, but they ran out of time. Ruby wants her daddy back and doesn't care about the presents. Jeff defends his actions once again. She runs off. The phone rings. It's Patrick. He has the snow globe as proof that Jeff is working for Santa. The charade is over. Tomorrow there is an emergency meeting with the Board; he will tell them everything. Patrick monologues that he has finally won and that after tomorrow it is over.

It's Christmas Eve. The Board impatiently waits for the meeting to start. Jeff is in his car, ready to accept his fate. He prays, hoping for God's grace. Patrick holds up the snow globe to start the meeting. Jeff has broken their agreement and is working for Santa Claus. The Board laughs uncontrollably. They think it's a joke. Patrick fights back with complete seriousness that Santa is real. The Board is not amused. They inform Patrick that if he pulls a stunt like this again, HE is the one fired. Patrick sets down the snow globe and runs after the Board president in full brown-nose mode. Jeff picks up the snow globe amongst the commotion and quietly leaves with a smile. "Thank you," he says, with his eyes heavenward.

Santa is in the hotel room, continuing work on a project. It's a lovely necklace. He looks at a giant hourglass on the table. He calls his wife, Carol, to tell him that he may miss his



delivery of Christmas for the first time. He apologizes for not being home early as he thought. Jeff arrives at the hotel room. His faith is running out as he is losing Ruby. Santa tells him why faith is important and how God works in the faithful. He then tells Jeff that Patrick needs love too and encourages him to show him that love. Love is a gift. Give and receive the gift. Santa also wants Jeff to tell Jessica how he feels and, most of all, give Ruby what she desires more than anything, his time.

Jeff leaves to do more deliveries. While driving, he considers Santa's advice. Jeff decides to gift Patrick kindness. He texts Patrick that he wants to confess to everything that is happening. They meet at the park from their childhood. Patrick blames all his troubles on Jeff. Jeff talks to him about responsibility but apologizes for their distance. He asks Patrick what he wanted for Christmas growing up but has yet to receive. Jeff asks if he will believe again if he can give Patrick a lost Christmas wish. In Santa's bag with Patrick's name on it is a wish from his youth. Faith and friendship have been restored. Now, Jeff needs help. Patrick agrees to help him deliver the rest of his presents to Miami. Jeff gives him an air freshener to hang from the car. Patrick's car transforms! The shimmer, the lights, the magic. Patrick transforms as well! Is he now wearing an elf outfit?! They agree to split the west and east coast of Florida. The sun peaks over the horizon. Time is running out. He will miss being home by sunrise for Ruby's if he delivers the rest of Christmas. He has to choose between his daughter and saving Christmas. He asks Santa for support. Santa agrees to guide him. They go into hyperdrive. Like lightning bolts, they fly over Miami, dropping presents from the car into chimneys.

The sand in the giant hourglass is running out. Jeff needs this. He can't fail at another thing. As time slips away, Jeff realizes he will miss his mark. He apologizes to Ruby silently. Back at home, Ruby has lost her Christmas spirit. The Miami globe is almost dark. Only Jeff can restore it by getting home to her. In Jeff's headset, Santa reminds him that Ruby just wants her dad for Christmas. Santa instructs him to open the hatch at the bottom of the sleigh and push. The car zooms into a portal adorning the colors of Christmas, speeding against the rising sun. The presents are delivered, but he has to be home before sunrise. The car backdropped by the full majesty of the rising sun hits its peak. The sun has risen, and Jeff is out of time. They arrive, but it's too late. He has missed the start of Christmas morning.



Jessica hugs Ruby on the couch. Jeff bursts in, apologizing. Ruby exclaims again that it's okay. She knows he doesn't want her, and it's why Mommy left because she didn't want her either. Jeff, almost in tears, assures her that isn't true. He sees the hand-drawn pictures on the table. Jeff apologizes. He got so caught up in trying to buy her a life that he was missing her life. God has given him one of his greatest gifts, a family who loves him. Jeff brings in a special guest to prove he really was with Santa. A belly enters, followed by a white beard. Ruby's mouth drops. Santa! He has a Ruby necklace that he has been working on all this time. Santa lets Ruby know Jeff has been helping save Christmas. Ruby is so proud. Santa puts Jeff in charge of ground transportation, seasonal, with yearly benefits. Only one thing left for Jeff to do, he goes to Jessica and takes a risk. Jeff and Jessica kiss.

Santa gets home to Carol. They decide to have Christmas break on the beach this year. Suddenly it is snowing in Miami. The camera pulls back to reveal the city of Miami, covered in snow. Then we see Florida covered in snow. Then Earth. We pull back further, and we see a snow globe. This snow globe is on Santa's shelf. Next to the snow globe are many other worlds shimmering with light. Santa and Mrs. Clause sit in their respective chairs and smile as waves wash up against their toes in the sand.