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Arthur Christmas revolves around the current Santa Claus, his wife, his two sons Arthur and Steve, and their grandfather,

Grand-Santa. Set on Christmas Eve night, the film opens with a set of elves sitting behind their computers in the command center of

Santa's mile-wide[6], ultra-high-tech sleigh titled the S-1. While Santa and the elves deliver presents to children using fancy

advanced equipment and military precision, Santa's oldest son Steve manages the operation at mission control, alongside his

obsequious assistant Peter. However, his clumsy younger brother Arthur, who is assigned to handling childrens' letters in the mail

department, inadvertently disrupts operations when he enters mission control to place some correspondence and a present falls out

of the system as a result.

With the seventieth annual delivery mission under his official command completed, Santa, being far past his prime and whose role in

field operations now is largely symbolic, returns to give a congratulatory speech to the elves. Much to Steve's frustration, who

has long anticipated succeeding his father, Santa announces he intends to continue for the foreseeable future.

During their family Christmas dinner, Arthur's suggestion for the family to play a board game degenerates into a petty quarrel with

Santa and Steve arguing about their right to be Santa while Grand-Santa, who is bored by retirement, resentfully criticizes his

successors' modernization of their calling. Distraught, the various family members leave the dinner table, though Arthur stops

Steve with a small gesture to reassure him that he will be a great Santa Claus. However, Steve rejects Arthur's overture, while at

the same time their father shares his doubts with his wife about his self-identity if he retires.

In its espionage and secret-mission trappings, "Arthur Christmas" occasionally brings back memories of "Cars 2," which are not warm

memories. But only occasionally. There's a wonderful supporting character along for Arthur's magic dust-fueled ride, a "wrapping

operative" with an eyebrow piercing named Bryony (Ashley Jensen). This elf lives to gift-wrap, and the way she takes care of

present-packaging and taping duties under extreme duress and time constraints becomes a lesson in sustaining a one-joke character.

Even when its storyline focuses on sibling rivalry or competing methods of yuletide maintenance, "Arthur Christmas" has the class

not to devolve into constant bickering. Who knows? Perhaps the target audience will pick up a subliminal lesson or two in civility

and kindness while trying to keep up with the onslaught of visual and verbal details.

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