

THE CHRISTMAS TOYSHOP

By Michele L. Vacca

(An original Christmas fantasy)

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By Michele L. Vacca/1979

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CHARACTERS:

MR. NICHOLAS S. CLAUS, alias you-know-who

NIX, an elf

MICHAEL, a young orphan

JENNIFER, Michael's sister

MRS. HILDEGARDE WELLINGTON

WILBUR and

WILHELMINA, Mrs. Wellington's children

MR. ROBERT TOMPKINS, a minor public official in the town

LADY ANNA, a beautiful mysterious spirit who does not speak

ESMERALDA, the Gypsy doll

JACK-IN-THE-BOX, himself

GENERAL LA BOUCHE BOUCLÉ LAFITTE, a toy soldier

GERTRUDE (TRUDI), a Swedish music box doll

VOICES OF ELVES AND TOYS – can be played by the other cast members

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL CAST MEMBERS:

OTHER ELVES AND ASSISTANTS

MANY TOYS AND DOLLS OF ALL TYPES

TOWNSPEOPLE OF ALL AGES

TIME: The day before Christmas Eve of an unspecified year.

PLACE: A small town anywhere some of the people still believe in Santa Claus.

THE CHRISTMAS TOYSHOP PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

NICHOLAS S. CLAUS – alias You-Know-Who, a kind and gentle man, devoted to his chosen life’s work.

NIX – Claus’ Elf-in-Chief and primary assistant. Nix takes himself and his work very seriously.

MICHAEL – a young boy, an orphan, who tries to make the best of a very sad situation.

JENNIFER – Michael’s devoted sister, who also tries to make the best of their very sad state.

MR. ROBERT TOMPKINS – a kind-hearted man who would dearly love to have a toyshop of his very own.

MRS. HILDEGARDE WELLINGTON – a wealthy, snobbish lady who caters to every whim of her “sweet, darling children.”

WILBUR WELLINGTON – her son, and a very spoiled child indeed.

WILHELMINA WELLINGTON – Wilbur’s sister, and if possible, even more spoiled than he.

LADY ANNA – a gentle spirit who never speaks, but simply dances and smiles. See pages 28 and 29 for details.

TRUDI – a good-natured, honestly outspoken but somewhat naive Swedish music box doll.

GENERAL LA BOUCHE BOUCLÉ LAFITTE – a toy soldier, a braggart who is justifiably vain of his handsome appearance.

ESMERALDA – a gypsy doll, beautiful and vibrant, who wants most of all to be someone’s “adored” Christmas present.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX – a shy and timid toy, who fears everyone and everything, including the inside of his box.

EXPANDING THE SIZE OF THE CAST:

This play lends itself easily to cast size expansion. Since the dolls and toys in the shop already have scripted lines, many groups have opted to make many (or all) of these characters “live” instead of using inanimate toys in the shop. Additional elves can be added as workers in the shop and other townspeople, adults and children, can easily be added as well.

DOUBLING:

If a smaller cast is your preference the script is designed so that as few as 9 actors can play all the roles. Suggested doubling: One actress can play MRS. WELLINGTON and ESMERALDA. Another can play WILHELMINA and TRUDI. One actor can play WILBUR and the GENERAL, and MR. TOMPKINS can double as the JACK-IN-THE-BOX. LADY ANNA can play the VOICE OF THE TOY BOX. These particular doubling combinations have been tested in professional performance, but of course other combinations are possible.

SETTING AND PROPERTIES:

Only one major setting is required for the play; a shop interior, and a portion of the street area just outside the shop. During the action of the play, the characters themselves can move most of the props and smaller set pieces on and off the stage. The play requires a number of inanimate (or a combination of inanimate and “live”) toys, such as stuffed animals and dolls, a rocking horse, and a small Jack-in-the-Box.

COSTUMES AND SANTA’S MAKEUP:

Costumes in the style of any era between 1840 and 1930 work well for the realistic characters. The dolls should be as colorfully and creatively costumed as the budget allows. On page 53 Claus suddenly appears in the complete “modern” traditional Santa outfit. Until that time he wears the fur trimmed pants and boots and perhaps suspenders and a plaid work shirt. When the time comes for him to dress as Santa, he adds the coat (which should have a Velcro fastening), then the belt and hat. It will be necessary to arrange for the purchase or rental of a good quality Santa Claus wig and beard.

MUSIC AND CHOREOGRAPHY:

The use of music, live or taped, greatly enhances the production of this play. Choreography ideas can be found on pages 28-29 and 55-56.

THE CHRISTMAS TOYSHOP

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ACT I

(AS THE PLAY BEGINS THE SOUNDS OF DISTANT CHURCH BELLS AND VOICES PRACTICING CHRISTMAS CAROLS DRIFT THROUGH THE AIR. IT IS EARLY EVENING ON DECEMBER TWENTY THIRD OF THIS PARTICULAR YEAR IN THIS PARTICULAR SMALL TOWN. DARKNESS IS ONLY A FEW MOMENTS AWAY, AND AS THE LIGHTS DIM VERY SLOWLY, DISTANT CHILDREN'S VOICES ARE HEARD LAUGHING AND SINGING.

THE SETTING SUGGESTS A SIDE STREET IN THE SMALL TOWN. SEVERAL NEARBY STREET LAMPS ARE ALREADY GLOWING, AND THE FEW SMALL SHOPS THAT ARE BARELY VISIBLE SEEM TO BE ALREADY CLOSED FOR THE DAY. THE MAIN PART OF THE SETTING, THE LARGE CENTRAL SHOP, APPEARS TO BE TOTALLY UNOCCUPIED. THERE ARE NO GOODS DISPLAYED IN THE WINDOWS, AND NO ITEMS ON THE SHELVES. THE DUSTY AND NEGLECTED LOOKING SHOP LOOKS AS THOUGH IT HAS BEEN EMPTY FOR QUITE SOME TIME. THE VOICES OF THE CHILDREN SEEM TO BE COMING CLOSER. VARIOUS TOWNSPEOPLE OF ALL AGES CROSS THE STAGE ON THEIR WAY HOME PERHAPS, OR BENT ON SOME ERRAND OF THEIR OWN.

THEN THE WELLINGTON FAMILY APPEARS. MRS. HILDEGARDE WELLINGTON AND HER TWO CHILDREN, WILBUR AND WILHELMINA ENTER. THEY ARE ON THEIR WAY HOME FROM SHOPPING. MRS. WELLINGTON CARRIES A LARGE NUMBER OF BRIGHTLY WRAPPED

PACKAGES. THE WELLINGTON CHILDREN ARE PAMPERED AND SPOILED AND THEIR MOTHER ALWAYS GRANTS THEIR SLIGHTEST WHIM. WILHELMINA RUNS ON STAGE FIRST, CALLING OUT TAUNTINGLY OVER HER SHOULDER TO HER BROTHER, WILBUR, WHO IS POUTING AND WALKING VERY SLOWLY BEHIND HER.)

WILHELMINA: Come on, Wilbur! Try and catch me!

WILBUR: No, I won't! You run too fast!

WILHELMINA: Oh, come on, Wilbur!

WILBUR: No! Can't make me!

MRS. WELLINGTON: (WHO IS TRYING TO BALANCE HER LARGE NUMBER OF PACKAGES.) Come along, children. There's no time to play now. We have to go home.

WILHELMINA: Let me carry some of the presents, Mama.

WILBUR: Me, too, Mama!

(BOTH CHILDREN GRAB SIMULTANEOUSLY FOR THE PACKAGES, CAUSING THEM ALL TO FALL TO THE GROUND. WILBUR AND WILHELMINA BEGIN TO GRAB FOR THE BOXES, FIGHTING OVER THEM.)

MRS. WELLINGTON: Now, children. Behave yourselves. People are looking at you. (SHE GESTURES TOWARD THE AUDIENCE.)

(THE TWO CHILDREN IMMEDIATELY STOP THEIR ARGUING, AND LOOK AROUND AT THE AUDIENCE. MAMA IS RIGHT. PEOPLE ARE INDEED LOOKING AT THEM. THEY SMILE "SWEETLY" AT THE AUDIENCE, AND THEN BEGIN TO PICK UP THE SCATTERED PRESENTS.)

WILHELMINA: Let's stop at the bakery, Mama. I want some cookies.

WILBUR: No! Let's go to the candy store. I want some candy!

WILHELMINA: I want cookies!

WILBUR: I want candy!

WILHELMINA: Cookies!

WILBUR: Candy!

MRS. WELLINGTON: All right, all right. If you promise to behave

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yourselves, we'll buy some cookies and some candy.

WILBUR: Good!

WILHELMINA: (TO WILBUR AS THEY RETRIEVE THE LAST OF THE PACKAGES.) It worked!

WILBUR: (TO WILHELMINA.) It always does.

(DURING THESE LAST FEW LINES, MICHAEL AND JENNIFER HAVE ENTERED, AND STAND WATCHING THE WELLINGTON FAMILY.

MICHAEL AND JENNIFER ARE BROTHER AND SISTER, AND ALTHOUGH THEY ARE DRESSED IN SHABBY CLOTHES, THEY BOTH APPEAR TO BE VERY NEAT AND CLEAN. THEY ARE VERY LOYAL TO EACH OTHER, SINCE THEY ARE ALL ALONE IN THE WORLD. AS MRS. WELLINGTON TURNS TO GO, MICHAEL NOTICES THAT HER CHILDREN HAVE LEFT ONE OF THEIR PRESENTS BEHIND ON THE GROUND. HE PICKS IT UP AND CALLS AFTER MRS. WELLINGTON.)

MICHAEL: Excuse me, Madam, you dropped this package.

MRS. WELLINGTON: Oh? Well, give it to me, then. (SHE SNATCHES IT FROM HIS OUTSTRETCHED HANDS.)

MICHAEL: Yes, Madam.

MRS. WELLINGTON: Come along, children. (THE WELLINGTONS TURN TO GO.)

MICHAEL: (CALLS OUT.) You're welcome, Madam.

MRS. WELLINGTON: (SHE PUTS HER NOSE INTO THE AIR, TURNS HER BACK ON HIM, AND STARTS OFF DOWN THE STREET.) Hmph!

WILHELMINA: (COPIES HER MOTHER, THEN FOLLOWS HER.) Hmph!

WILBUR: (COPIES HIS SISTER, THEN FOLLOWS HER.) Hmph! (AND THE WELLINGTONS GO OFF DOWN THE STREET.)

JENNIFER: Come on, Michael. Let's go.

MICHAEL: All right, Jenny.

(MR. TOMPKINS ENTERS. HE IS A MINOR PUBLIC OFFICIAL IN THE TOWN. HE IS ALSO A WARM AND FRIENDLY MAN AS WELL AS A GENUINELY KIND ONE.)

TOMPKINS: (AS HE PASSES BY.) Hello, Michael. Hello, Jennifer.
Looks like snow. Better run on home, children.
JENNIFER: Yes, sir. We will.
TOMPKINS: (AS HE GOES.) Merry Christmas!
MICHAEL: The same to you, sir! Well, come on, Jenny.

(AS MICHAEL AND JENNIFER GO OFF DOWN THE STREET, THE STAGE LIGHTS DIM, AND VERY SOFT MUSIC PLAYS.)

LADY ANNA ENTERS, AND DANCES GRACEFULLY AROUND THE EMPTY SHOP. AS SHE CONCLUDES HER DANCING, DISTANT SLEIGH BELLS ARE HEARD. AS THE SOUND OF THE SLEIGH BELLS COMES CLOSER AND CLOSER, AND GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER, THE LIGHTS BLACKOUT COMPLETELY FOR JUST A MOMENT. WHEN THE LIGHTS COME BACK UP, THE SLEIGH BELLS STOP, AND WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF MANY SMALL VOICES CHATTERING AND GIGGLING. LADY ANNA IS GONE, BUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STAGE IN THE DOORWAY OF THE SHOP THERE IS NOW ANOTHER FIGURE. THIS IS NIX, THE ELF. HE LOOKS AT THE SHOP AND SMILES IN GREAT SATISFACTION. THEN HE CALLS OFF STAGE.)

NIX: Sir! Oh, sir! We've found it, sir! This is the place!

(A TALL CLOAKED FIGURE ENTERS. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE MUCH OF HIS FACE OR FIGURE IN THE DIM LIGHT. HIS LONG AND HOODED CAPE COVERS HIM ALMOST COMPLETELY. WE CATCH A GLIMPSE OF A WHITE BEARD, FUR-TOPPED BOOTS, AND RED PANTS AS THE FOLDS OF THE CAPE SWIRL WHEN HE MOVES. THE CAPED FIGURE LOOKS AROUND THE SHOP, THEN TURNS TO NIX AND NODS IN APPROVAL.)

CLAUS: Yes, this place will do. Well, go ahead. Set it all up for
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NIX: this year. And we must hurry. There is no time to spare.
 Yes, sir.

(THE CLOAKED FIGURE HURRIES OFF. NIX THEN WAVES HIS HANDS, AND THE LIGHTS FLICKER. HE WAVES HIS HANDS AGAIN, AND MUSIC PLAYS. THEN NIX BEGINS TO CHANT TO THE MUSIC.)

NIX: (AS HE DARTS HERE AND THERE IN THE SHOP.)
 “Come one and all.
 No time to spare.
 Come heed my call:
 There’s work to share.
 We’ll make the toys
 For far and near –
 For girls and boys –
 It’s that time o’ year!”

(AS HE COMPLETES THE CHARM, THE MUSIC GROWS LOUDER AND LIVELIER. AT HIS SIGNAL A NUMBER OF BRIGHTLY ROBED FIGURES (ELVES) APPEAR, ALL OF THEM CARRYING BAGS OF VARIOUS SIZES, LARGE TOYS, AND SOME OF THE SET PIECES FOR THE SHOP INTERIOR. THEY HURRY INTO THE SHOP, EMPTY THE BAGS, AND SET UP THE FURNITURE. THEY GIGGLE AND CHATTER HAPPILY THROUGHOUT THEIR WORK, OBVIOUSLY ENJOYING THEMSELVES GREATLY. NIX DASHES THROUGH ALL THIS ACTIVITY FROM HERE TO THERE, SUPERVISING ALL OF THE ARRANGEMENTS. WHEN AT LAST THE OTHERS FINISH, THEY LAUGH AND CONGRATULATE EACH OTHER ON A JOB WELL DONE. NIX SENDS THEM ALL OFF STAGE, AND AS THEY GO OFF THE MUSIC FADES OUT. NIX, NOW ALONE, TAKES A FINAL LOOK AROUND THE SHOP. HE IS VERY SATISFIED WITH THE LOOK OF THINGS, AND SO HE AGAIN CALLS OUT.)

NIX: Sir! Oh, Sir! Everything is ready!

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(THE CLOAKED FIGURE NOW RE-ENTERS. HE GLANCES AROUND THE SHOP, AND THEN NODS TO NIX, WHO AWAITS HIS APPROVAL.)

CLAUS: Well done, Nix.

NIX: Thank you, Sir.

CLAUS: Yes, this place will be just fine for this year. (HE TURNS TO GO.)

NIX: Yes, Sir.

CLAUS: (TURNS BACK TO NIX.) There's just one more bag to bring inside.

NIX: I'll fetch it, Sir.

CLAUS: Good. Then we'll rest for a while. We've traveled a long way.

NIX: Yes, Sir. Sleep well, Sir.

CLAUS: (AS HE GOES OFF.) Thank you, Nix.

NIX: (NOW ALONE, LOOKS AROUND THE SHOP AGAIN.) Not bad if I do say so myself. Nix, you are a talented fellow. Brilliant, in fact. A genius. (HE LOOKS OUT THE DOOR AND SEES THE TOY BAG THAT HAS BEEN LEFT OUTSIDE. IT IS VERY LARGE INDEED.) Aha! There's the bag. Oh, my, it's one of the BIG ones. (AS HE TRIES TO LIFT IT.) OOMPH! Too heavy. I'll have to drag it inside. (HE STARTS TO PULL THE BAG ALONG THE GROUND, TRYING TO BE CAREFUL, BUT AFTER A MOMENT THE BAG GAINS MOMENTUM AND STARTS TO ROLL FASTER AND FASTER. THEN IT BUMPS INTO THE DOOR OF THE SHOP AS IT ROLLS BY.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (WHO ARE INSIDE THE BAG.) OUCH! Be careful! Watch out! Watch where you're going! Where are we? Careful! Where are we going? What's happening? OUCH!

NIX: (OPENS THE DRAWSTRING HOLDING THE BAG CLOSED AND YELLS AT THE TOYS INSIDE.) Be quiet! You'll wake the whole town! (HE CLOSES THE BAG.)

VOICES OF TOYS: Look who's talking! He's making more noise than we are! What's going on? Be quiet! Be quiet yourself! Where are we? Watch where you're going!

NIX: (STOPS, OPENS THE BAG AGAIN, STEPS INSIDE

AND YELLS AT THE TOYS.) I said, be quiet!

VOICES OF TOYS: The same to you! OUCH! What's going on? Don't step on me! What's he doing? Watch out! What is he doing in here? Take that! OUCH! Be careful!

NIX: (STEPS OUT OF THE BAG QUICKLY. HE IS SOMEWHAT DISHEVELED, AND ALSO VERY ANGRY. HE ADDRESSES THE TOYS IN THE BAG.) All right. I'll fix you, you toys. You can all spend the whole night in this bag!

VOICES OF TOYS: (LOUD GASP OF SHOCK.)

NIX: That'll teach you. So there! (HE CLOSES THE BAG.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (IN UNISON.) Oh, no, no, no! No, not that! Please? Please let us out! Please? We'll be good.

NIX: Please, let us out. Let us out of the bag. Pleeeeeeeease? Humph! (HE LEAVES THE BAG IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TOYSHOP FLOOR.) There! Good night, toys! (HE TURNS TO GO.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (IN UNISON.) No, no, please! Please let us out! Please? Please let us out of the bag!

NIX: Wellllll . . .

VOICES OF TOYS: Please? Pleeeeeeeease!

NIX: Do you promise to be quiet?

VOICES OF TOYS: (IN UNISON.) Oh, yes, we promise.

NIX: Well, all right, then.

(NIX TURNS THE HEAVY BAG UPSIDE DOWN AND DOZENS OF STUFFED TOYS AND DOLLS SPILL OUT ON TO THE FLOOR.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (THEY ALL LAUGH AND GIGGLE LOUDLY AS THEY SPILL AND TUMBLE OUT OF THE BAG.)

Wheee! Oh, goody! Watch out! Here we go!

Wheeeeeee! What fun!

NIX: Now, remember you all promised to behave.

VOICES OF TOYS: (CONTINUE TO LAUGH AND GIGGLE.)

NIX: So, be quiet!

VOICES OF TOYS: (THEY ARE SILENT.)

NIX: That's more like it. (HE TURNS TO GO.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (AS SOON AS, HIS BACK IS TURNED THEY GIGGLE AND LAUGH.)

NIX: (TURNS BACK, LOOKS DOWN AT THEM ALL ON THE FLOOR.) Do you want to spend the night in the toy

bag?

VOICES OF TOYS: (LOUD GASP.) No, No! Not that! Oh, no! Please, no! We'll be good! We'll be quiet. We promise!

NIX: All right, then. (TURNS AWAY AGAIN.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (IN UNISON THEY EXPRESS SOUNDS OF WHISPERED RELIEF.) Whew! That was close! Shhh!

WHEN NIX IS ALMOST OUT OF THE DOOR, THERE IS A LOUD KNOCK.

NIX: What was that? Did somebody knock?

(THE KNOCK SOUNDS AGAIN.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (IN UNISON.) It's the Toy Box! The Toy Box!

NIX: (CROSSES TO A LARGE TOY BOX.) Did you knock?

TOY BOX: Yes, we knocked! (AND TO PROVE IT – KNOCKS AGAIN.)

NIX: Well?

TOY BOX: Open the door. We have something to say.

NIX: (LIFTS THE LID OF THE BOX.) The door is open. What do you want to say?

TOY BOX: Close the door!

(THE LID SLAMS SHUT AND VOICES OF THE TOYS ON THE FLOOR AND VOICES OF THE TOYS IN THE BOX LAUGH AND GIGGLE.)

NIX: Very funny.

VOICES OF TOYS: (CONTINUE TO LAUGH AND GIGGLE.)

NIX: Now, be quiet!

VOICES OF TOYS: (NOW PRETENDING TO BE DEEPLY OFFENDED.) All right, all right, all right! Oooo! Oh, he's angry! Hey, we get the point. Watch out. You don't have to tell us twice.

(IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS CLAUS RE-ENTERS.)

CLAUS: What's going on out here?

VOICES OF TOYS: (IMMEDIATELY THEY ALL BEGIN BABBLING AND CHATTERING AT ONCE, TRYING TO RELATE ALL THE INCIDENTS THAT TRANSPIRED IN THE

BAG AND SINCE THEN.) Ouch! Ouch! Let us out. Please, Please! No, no! Then he yelled – and we said – and the toy box – open the door – we all laughed – he yelled again – (AND SO ON.)

NIX: (WHO IS TRYING TO EXPLAIN HIS SIDE OF THE STORY AT THE SAME TIME THE TOYS ARE BABBLING.) I brought the bag. They all started laughing and giggling. And I said – be quiet, will you! And they all kept on laughing and – (TURNS TO TOYS.) – Be quiet! And the toy box was laughing, and they all – (TO TOYS.) – Be quiet, will you!

CLAUS: Wait! Stop! (AND SO EVERYONE SUBSIDES. I can't listen to you all at the same time! Now. I know perfectly well what has been going on out here. All of you, (POINTS TO THE SCATTERED TOYS.) and you, too, (KNOCKS ON THE TOY BOX.) have been teasing poor Nix. Again. Isn't that right?

VOICES OF TOYS: (IN UNISON, BUT VERY SUBDUED NOW.) Yes, sir. We were, sir.

CLAUS: I thought so.

VOICES OF TOYS: (CONTRITELY IN UNISON.) Yes, sir.

NIX: Sir, you wouldn't believe it, but they were trying to –

CLAUS: No, no. Don't tell tales on them, Nix. You know how they love to tease you.

VOICES OF TOYS: (LAUGH AND GIGGLE.)

NIX: (GLUMLY.) Yes, sir. I know.

CLAUS: (TO THE TOYS.) Hush, now. Go to sleep. We have a very busy day ahead of us. Remember tomorrow is Christmas Eve!

VOICES OF TOYS: (IN UNISON.) YES, SIR!

CLAUS: Be quiet now. Settle down and behave yourselves.

VOICES OF TOYS: Yes, sir.

(HE GOES OFF TO BED. NIX LINGERS BEHIND FOR A MOMENT.)

NIX: (TO THE TOYS.) You heard what he said. Behave yourselves.

(AND THEN HE GOES OFF, TOO.)

VOICES OF TOYS: (CONTINUE TO BABBLE AND GIGGLE JUST A
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LITTLE LONGER. THEN GROWING MORE TIRED AND SLEEPY, THEY SIGH AND WISH EACH OTHER A GOOD NIGHT.)

VOICE OF KITTY KAT: Good night, Music Box.

VOICE OF MUSIC BOX: Good night, Teddy Bear.

VOICE OF TEDDY BEAR: Good night, Rag Doll.

VOICE OF RAG DOLL: Good night, Rocking Horse.

VOICE OF ROCKING HORSE: Good night, Kitty Kat.

VOICES OF TOYS: Good night. Good night. Good night . . .

VOICE OF TOY BOX: Shhhh!

(A SOFT LULLABY PLAYS, AND THE TOYS ALL FALL ASLEEP MAKING SOUNDS OF GENTLE SIGHS AND SNORES. THE LIGHTS DIM UNTIL THEY ARE ALMOST OUT, AND THEN THEY SLOWLY COME BACK UP FULL. THE NIGHT HAS PASSED, AND IT IS CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING. DISTANT CHURCH BELLS RING. NIX ENTERS, CARRYING A BOX OF TOOLS, ROLLS OF RIBBON, A SMALL STACK OF DOLL CLOTHES, SEVERAL SKEINS OF YARN, AND SO ON. HE PLACES THESE ITEMS ON THE WORKBENCH, YAWNS, STRETCHES, AND GLANCES OUT THE DOOR OF THE SHOP. WHEN HE TURNS BACK TOWARD THE INTERIOR OF THE ROOM, HE LOOKS STERNLY AT THE TOYS ON THE FLOOR.)

– END OF FIRST E-MAIL SEGMENT –

Time passes – in next E-mail segment below – further action takes place after the first segment above; then the reentrance of Michael and Jennifer.

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– START OF SECOND E-MAIL SEGMENT –

(NIX LOOKS OUT THE DOOR OF THE SHOP.)

NIX: Someone's coming.
CLAUS: Good. Now look busy.

(MICHAEL AND JENNIFER APPEAR ON THE STREET NEXT TO THE TOYSHOP. THEY PAUSE AT THE WINDOW.)

MICHAEL: Look!
JENNIFER: It's a toyshop!
MICHAEL: It wasn't here yesterday.
JENNIFER: But it's here today.
MICHAEL: Look at all those toys!
JENNIFER: I see them. They're wonderful, aren't they?
MICHAEL: (READING THE SIGN OVER THE SHOP DOOR.)
"The Christmas Toyshop, Nicholas S. Claus, Proprietor."
JENNIFER: I wonder if he would let us look at the toys.
MICHAEL: I don't know. Should we ask?
JENNIFER: Oh, yes, let's!
MICHAEL: All right. The worst he can say is no.
JENNIFER: That's right. But I hope he says yes!
MICHAEL: Me, too!

(THEY GO INSIDE THE SHOP.)

CLAUS: Good day to you, children. Merry Christmas!
MICHAEL: Thank you, Sir.
JENNIFER: Merry Christmas to you, Sir.
CLAUS: Thank you, my dear. Can I help you?
MICHAEL: Well, Sir, we were wondering – that is – if you don't mind
ah – we wanted to –
JENNIFER: We don't want to bother you or anything –
MICHAEL: Oh, no, we don't!
JENNIFER: But we – we – we –
CLAUS: Yes?
JENNIFER: Would you mind very much if we looked at the toys?
MICHAEL: We'd be very careful.
JENNIFER: We won't break anything.
MICHAEL: We promise.
CLAUS: Of course you may look at the toys.
JENNIFER: Oh, thank you!
MICHAEL: Uh – we – uh – we don't have any money, Sir, so if you
want to change your mind –

CLAUS: Money? What does that have to do with it?
MICHAEL: Well, Sir, it means that we can't buy any of your toys.
CLAUS: So?
JENNIFER: Do you want us to leave, Sir?
CLAUS: Of course not.
JENNIFER: Oh, good!
CLAUS: Toys need children to play with them. Otherwise, they're not toys.
JENNIFER: What are they, then?
CLAUS: Why, they're just useless junk, my dear, sitting on a shelf collecting dust.
JENNIFER: How awful!
CLAUS: Exactly. No self-respecting toy wants to sit on a shelf.
NIX: No, they'd rather laugh and play jokes.
MICHAEL: I beg your pardon?
NIX: Oh, nothing, nothing. The toys over here could use some attention.
MICHAEL: Really? How do you know?
NIX: Oh, I can always tell. They start playing jokes and acting silly.
MICHAEL: (LOOKS AT TOYS WITH SOME FEAR.) They do?
NIX: It happens every Christmas Eve.
MICHAEL: (GULPS.) It does?
NIX: Oh, sure. Don't worry. If they act up, I'll just put them into this toybag. They hate that.
MICHAEL: They do?
NIX: Oh, sure. You see –
CLAUS: Nix!
NIX: Uh, yes, Sir?
CLAUS: You have work to do.
NIX: Oh, yes, Sir.
CLAUS: We'll keep working and – um –

(GESTURES TOWARD THE CHILDREN.)

MICHAEL: Michael.
JENNIFER: And Jennifer.
CLAUS: Oh, yes. (PICKS UP A LIST AND MAKES A FEW NOTATIONS ON IT.) Michael and Jennifer, of course. We'll let Michael and Jennifer look at the toys.
NIX: (TO THEM.) Help yourselves.
MICHAEL: Thank you.

JENNIFER: Yes, thank you.
NIX: (LIFTS LID OF TOY BOX.) Remember now, no funny stuff. (CLOSES THE BOX.)
MICHAEL: What?
NIX: I didn't say anything.
MICHAEL: Weren't you just talking to that box?
NIX: Me? (LAUGHS.) Talk to a box? No.
MICHAEL: (CROSSES TO THE TOY BOX, LOOKS AT IT WARILY, LOOKS AT NIX TENTATIVELY, AND THEN LIFTS THE LID.)
TOY BOX: Close the door! (THE LID SLAMS, AND THERE IS A SOUND OF FAINT GIGGLING.)
MICHAEL: (RUSHES OVER TO CLAUS.) Th – Th – There's someone inside that box!
CLAUS: That box? Oh, it's nothing to worry about. Just some silly toys. (CROSSES TO THE TOY BOX AND OPENS THE LID.) Behave your selves. (CLOSES THE LID AND THEN TURNS TO MICHAEL.) See? Nothing to worry about.
MICHAEL: Y-y-yes, Sir.

(MICHAEL CROSSES SLOWLY BACK TO THE TOY BOX AND STARES AT IT WARILY. CLAUS GOES BACK TO HIS WORKBENCH. HE MAKES A FEW NOTES ON HIS LIST. JENNIFER CROSSES TO HIM.)

JENNIFER: (TO CLAUS.) What are you writing?
CLAUS: (STILL CONCENTRATING ON HIS LONG LIST.) Hm? Oh, this? Just some notes. A list of things to do.
JENNIFER: (LOOKING AT THE LENGTH OF THE LIST.) You have an awful lot of things to do.
CLAUS: That's true, my dear. (HE GOES BACK TO HIS LIST.)
JENNIFER: (AFTER A MOMENT.) Are you sure we're not bothering you?
CLAUS: (WHO REALLY DOES HAVE A LOT TO DO.) Oh, of course, I'm sure. Now, just go ahead and enjoy the toys.
JENNIFER: Oh, yes, Sir!

(JENNIFER AND MICHAEL WANDER HAPPILY AMONG THE DISPLAYED TOYS.)

MICHAEL: (HOLDING UP A TOY.) Jenny, look at this!

JENNIFER: (POINTING TO ANOTHER TOY.) And look at this!

(AT THIS MOMENT MRS. WELLINGTON AND HER CHILDREN WILBUR AND WILHELMINA APPEAR ON THE STREET OUTSIDE THE SHOP.)

– **END OF SECOND E-MAIL SEGMENT** –

Time passes – The third E-mail sequence following runs through the end of the First Act.

– **START OF THIRD E-MAIL SEGMENT** –

JENNIFER: (ENTERING FROM THE WORKROOM.) Mr. Claus?

CLAUS: Yes, Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Do you have time to talk to me for a minute?

CLAUS: Yes, it seems I do have the time after all, my dear. What is it?

JENNIFER: It's about Michael – he's my brother –

CLAUS: Yes, I know.

JENNIFER: You do? Oh. Well, anyway, Michael tries very hard to take care of me and protect me, and he thinks I'm too young to help him.

CLAUS: You're both very young to be on your own.

JENNIFER: Yes, I know. But we are and there is nothing we can do about it.

CLAUS: (TO HIMSELF.) Maybe there is something I can do about it.

JENNIFER: I beg your pardon, Sir?

CLAUS: Oh, nothing, child. Now what was it you wanted to ask me?

JENNIFER: Well, I was wondering – you see, Michael pretends he doesn't care about getting Christmas presents – he says he's too old to play with toys – but I know he's just saying that, because he knows I have no money to buy him a present.

CLAUS: Don't you think Santa Claus might bring him something?

JENNIFER: Well, I hope so, but Santa Claus does have a lot of people to take care of, and he just might forget.

CLAUS: You think so?

JENNIFER: And Santa Claus might be angry with Michael, too.

CLAUS: Why?
JENNIFER: Well, Michael keeps saying he's too old to get presents from Santa Claus – I know he doesn't mean it – but Santa Claus might think he does mean it – and poor Michael won't have anything for Christmas.

CLAUS: Uhm-hm, yes, I see.

JENNIFER: So I was wondering, Mr. Claus, Sir, if you would let me do a few things around your shop so that I could maybe earn a Christmas present for Michael.

CLAUS: Uhm-hm.

JENNIFER: I could help wrap the boxes, and put hair ribbons on the dolls, and things like that.

CLAUS: Yes, I suppose you could. All right, my dear, go tell Nix to put you to work.

JENNIFER: Oh, thank you, Mr. Claus! Thank you so very much!
(SHE RUNS OFF BACK INTO THE WORKROOM.)

CLAUS: (TO HIMSELF.) I must think of something I can do for those two children. What should it be?

LADY ANNA: (RETURNS BRIEFLY AS HER MUSIC PLAYS. SHE DANCES.)

CLAUS: Yes, of course. That's exactly what I shall do. Thank you, my Lady Anna.

LADY ANNA: (DANCES OFF.)

NIX: (ENTERS HURRIEDLY FROM THE WORKROOM.)
Sir! I must protest! How can I work with all these people cluttering up my workshop?

CLAUS: Come now, Nix, can't you make use of them in some way?

NIX: (SIGHS.) Oh, well, I suppose I could. If I have to.

CLAUS: Good. You do that.

(MICHAEL, JENNIFER AND MR. TOMPKINS ENTER. TOMPKINS CARRIES A ROCKING HORSE WHICH HE PUTS ON THE WORKBENCH.)

TOMPKINS: Nix, how's this? I think I've fixed it.

NIX: (INSPECTS THE HORSE.)

MICHAEL: What can we do now?

JENNIFER: We're ready to work.

NIX: (TO TOMPKINS.) Not bad. Not had at all. (TO CLAUS.) I guess he'll work out.

CLAUS: All right, everyone. It's Christmas Eve and all of these

toys have to be ready for delivery by tonight.

MICHAEL: I can deliver them, Sir!

JENNIFER: Me, too!

CLAUS: Some of them, perhaps. But many of them are going very far away, and will have to be delivered by me.

TOMPKINS: How will you be there in time?

CLAUS: (SMILES.) I have my own way.

NIX: (SMILES.) Yes, indeed. He certainly does.

TOMPKINS: Does “your way” have anything to do with the animals out in the stable?

CLAUS: Yes, it does as a matter of fact.

NIX: (SNICKERS.) It sure does.

CLAUS: (TO NIX.) Hush! (TO THE OTHERS.) Now shall we begin?

NIX: Well, we’d better, if we’re going to be ready in time.

CLAUS: Very well. To work, everyone! We have toys to repair, presents to wrap, ribbons to be tied, and all in a few hours.

(A LIVELY SHORT MUSICAL INTERLUDE FOLLOWS. EVERYONE WORKS VERY BUSILY. BOXES AND BOXES OF TOYS ARE CARRIED BACK AND FORTH AND EVERYONE MOVES VERY QUICKLY. WHEN THE MUSIC ENDS THE WORK IS DONE. THEY ALL GATHER IN THE SHOP. EVERYONE IS QUITE JUSTIFIABLY TIRED.)

CLAUS: Well done, my friends. Thank you for the assistance. Now, it’s late and you’re all tired. Go home and rest. You’ve all worked very hard. Nix and I will finish the rest of the toys.

TOMPKINS: (SPEAKING SIMULTANEOUSLY.) Mr. Claus –

MICHAEL: (SPEAKING SIMULTANEOUSLY.) But, Sir –

JENNIFER: (SPEAKING SIMULTANEOUSLY.) Oh, but Sir –

CLAUS: Yes, I know. I haven’t forgotten. If you all return here tomorrow morning you will find everything that you have requested from me.

TOMPKINS: Thank you, Sir. Good night, then.

MICHAEL: Yes, Sir.

JENNIFER: Thank you, Sir.

CLAUS: Good night to you all. And a Merry Christmas!

TOMPKINS: The same to you Sir!

MICHAEL: Merry Christmas!

JENNIFER: Good night, Nix!

(TOMPKINS, JENNIFER AND MICHAEL GO OFF DOWN THE STREET.)

NIX: (WATCHING THEM GO.) They're gone.

CLAUS: Good. Now, we must go about the rest of our business.

NIX: Yes, Sir.

CLAUS: (AS THEY START OFF TOGETHER TOWARD THE WORKROOM.) We'll have to hurry. We're running a little late this year.

NIX: Yes, Sir. I'll start packing up the toys.

CLAUS: I'll help you. But first I have to – (THEY HAVE GONE INTO THE WORKROOM.)

(THE LIGHTS DIM. IT IS LATER THAT NIGHT. MICHAEL AND JENNIFER RE-ENTER QUIETLY AND CROSS TO THE DOOR OF THE SHOP. MICHAEL OPENS THE DOOR CAUTIOUSLY, THEN HE ENTERS THE SHOP. JENNIFER FOLLOWS HIM.)

JENNIFER: Michael, what are you doing?

MICHAEL: Shhhhh!

JENNIFER: Why do I have to be quiet?

MICHAEL: Shhhhh!

JENNIFER: Come on, let's go home. I'm tired.

MICHAEL: Wait a minute.

JENNIFER: Michael, what are you doing?

MICHAEL: Just taking a peek.

JENNIFER: But why?

MICHAEL: Shhhhh!

JENNIFER: (WHISPERS.) Why?

MICHAEL: Well, I'm not exactly sure but –

JENNIFER: But what?

MICHAEL: Shhhhh! They'll hear you!

JENNIFER: Who?

MICHAEL: (POINTS.) Them!

JENNIFER: The toys? (LAUGHS.) What are you talking about?

MICHAEL: Well, I'm not sure exactly, but I have a feeling –

JENNIFER: What feeling?

MICHAEL: (LOOKS AROUND CAREFULLY.) There's something
strange going on around here.

JENNIFER: (LAUGHS.) Oh, Michael, don't be silly!
MICHAEL: No, listen to me. (SHE'S STILL LAUGHING.) Shhhhh!
Stop laughing.
JENNIFER: (SHE CONTROLS HER LAUGHTER WITH SOME
DIFFICULTY.) All right, I'm listening.
MICHAEL: Did you see those animals out in the stable behind the
shop?
JENNIFER: No. Why?
MICHAEL: They're not like anything I've ever seen.
JENNIFER: What do you mean?
MICHAEL: And there's a sleigh hidden in a shed.
JENNIFER: A sleigh?
MICHAEL: And did you see that list he had?
JENNIFER: Yes, the list!
MICHAEL: And in the workroom there's a map on the wall.
JENNIFER: That's right. I saw it, too.
MICHAEL: A map of the whole world!
JENNIFER: The whole world! And all the toys!
MICHAEL: And the sleigh!
JENNIFER: The sleigh!
MICHAEL: And his name!
JENNIFER: Mr. Claus!
MICHAEL: Right!
JENNIFER: Oh, Michael, you don't think –
MICHAEL: Why not?
JENNIFER: Oh, he couldn't be!
MICHAEL: Who else could he be?
JENNIFER: Oh, my!
MICHAEL: Shhhhh! (HE CROSSES TOWARD THE WORKROOM
DOOR.)
JENNIFER: (WHISPERS.) What are you going to do?
MICHAEL: I don't know. I just want to see –

(SUDDENLY THE SOUND OF MANY SMALL
VOICES CAN BE HEARD FROM THE WORKROOM.)

JENNIFER: Shhhhh! Listen!
MICHAEL: What is it?
JENNIFER: Voices!
MICHAEL: I hear them!
JENNIFER: Who is it?
MICHAEL: I don't know, but I want to see what's going on.

(THE VOICES GROW LOUDER. ARE THEY ELVES?
ARE THEY TOYS? ARE THEY BOTH?)

JENNIFER: Oh, so do I!

MICHAEL: Come on, Jenny, let's go into the workroom.

JENNIFER: Do you think we should?

MICHAEL: It's the only way to find out for sure.

JENNIFER: That's true. All right, let's go. I just hope he won't be angry.

MICHAEL: I hope so too. Come on, Jenny. Hurry!

JENNIFER: I'm coming, Michael.

(THEY TIPTOE QUIETLY TOWARD THE
WORKROOM. THE VOICES GROW LOUDER STILL.
MUSIC PLAYS AND THE VOICES CONTINUE TO
GROW LOUDER AND LOUDER AS MICHAEL AND
JENNIFER COME CLOSER AND CLOSER TO THE
CLOSED WORKROOM DOOR. AS THEY OPEN THE
DOOR AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE ROOM, THE
LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK, AND CLOCK CHIMES
STRIKE THE HOUR OF MIDNIGHT AND IT IS . . .

THE END OF ACT I