

'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

By Michele L. Vacca

*(An original Christmas play suggested
by the Clement Moore poem)*

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'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS

DAVID SHELDON, the Papa

MARGARET SHELDON, the Mama

their Children:

ELIZABETH

TIMOTHY

VIRGINIA

GREAT AUNT WINIFRED SHELDON

SANTA CLAUS

THE TOYS WHO ACCOMPANY SANTA:

PATCHES The Clown

MISS JANE, A Rag Doll

LA BELLA ISABELLA, A Spanish Doll

BORIS GUDONOV, A Cossack Wind-Up Doll

LADY ANNA

Two Christmas CAROL SINGERS

CHARACTERS:

DAVID SHELDON – the Papa, an affectionate, devoted family man, who writes his stories as much for his own amusement, as for that of his children.

MARGARET SHELDON – the Mama, a woman of great warmth and intelligence, who loves her family very much.

ELIZABETH – the oldest daughter, who says she's too old to believe in Santa Claus, but who still puts out cookies and milk for him – just in case

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he stops by.

TIMOTHY – the only boy and the middle child. He wants to believe in Santa Claus, but he’s not too certain that there really is such a person.

VIRGINIA – the youngest child. She definitely still believes in Santa Claus. In fact, she even cleans the fireplace for him.

GREAT AUNT WINIFRED SHELDON – She’s 96 years, 3 months, and 12 days old, and complains about everything – all the time. Nothing pleases her, and it’s an annual mystery to the family that she visits them at all. (She’s very spry and should be “played” as though she’s 70-ish years old.)

SANTA CLAUS – He is exactly what everyone expects him to be; jolly and kind. He does reveal a few personal secrets – but not too many.

PATCHES THE CLOWN – one of Santa’s favorite toys. Patches makes everyone laugh, even Santa Claus.

MISS JANE – another of Santa’s special toys, a very shy rag doll, who’s afraid to stay anywhere as a present, because of a traumatic experience she once had.

LA BELLA ISABELLA – the Spanish doll, very conceited and very beautiful. She stays with Santa because she has not yet found a home in which she wants to stay.

BORIS GUDONOV – the Cossack wind-up doll, who stays with Santa because he loves Isabella, who pretends not to love him in return.

LADY ANNA – a symbol of the spirit of Christmas, who never speaks, but just dances. She’s neither a doll nor a toy; she stays with Santa because he needs her.

CAROLERS (A MAN AND A WOMAN) – just the type of people you’d expect to find singing carols for their neighbors’ pleasure.

VOICES – can be played by the various cast members.

TIME: late Victorian

PLACE: Anywhere in some part of the world where there is a Santa Claus legend.

SETTING, COSTUMES, SANTA’S MAKEUP:

A Victorian setting works quite well. There must be a writing desk for Papa, a Christmas tree, and a fireplace. Other furniture and decor selections will depend on director/designer decisions and requirements, and upon individual budget considerations. Possibilities include a sofa or love seat, stuffed chair, ferns, small table, etc.

Costume styles of the era between 1840 and 1910 work well for the play, although modern clothing could also be used. Bright, imaginative colors and textures work best for the dolls, and Santa should be costumed in the traditional manner. It will be necessary to arrange for the purchase/rental of a good quality Santa Claus wig and beard.

DOUBLING:

Optional doubling can reduce the cast size to 9. For example; one actress can play ANNA and ELIZABETH, TIMOTHY can play PATCHES, MAMA and MISS JANE can double, and the CAROLERS play BORIS and ISABELLA. Certainly, other combinations are possible.

NOTE: The use of music, live or taped, greatly enhances the production of this play. Suggestions for choreography can be found in Act II in the “celebration” sequence toward the end of the Act.

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by Michele L. Vacca

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ACT I

(MUSIC PLAYS; DISTANT CHRISTMAS CAROLS; PERHAPS. THE STAGE IS IN SEMI-DARKNESS. THE MAIN SETTING IS THAT OF A COZY AND COMFORTABLE PARLOUR OF A HOME OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. THERE IS A FIREPLACE, VARIOUS FURNISHINGS, SUCH AS SEVERAL CHAIRS, A SOFA, A WRITING DESK FOR PAPA, AND A SMALL CHRISTMAS TREE, WHICH IS ONLY PARTLY TRIMMED. THERE IS A STREET LAMP OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. THE QUIET OVERTURE ENDS, AND THERE IS A CHANGE OF MOOD. LIVELIER MUSIC PLAYS AND A SERIES OF VOICES ARE HEARD.)

VOICE OF SANTA CLAUS: Ho, ho, ho! ‘Tis the night before Christmas!

(AS HE SPEAKS THERE IS THE SOUND OF LAUGHTER, ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOUNDS OF SCAMPING FEET, THE RATTLING OF PAPER, SMALL CRASHES AND GIGGLES, SMALL BELLS JINGLING, AND CONTINUED SOUNDS OF HURRYING AND BUSY MOVEMENT AND BUSTLE.)

VOICE I: Hurry! Hurry!
VOICE II: Is it time to go?
VOICE I: Hurry! Hurry!
VOICE III: I can hardly wait!
VOICE IV: Don't forget the bag! He's waiting!
VOICE I: Hurry! Hurry!
VOICE II: Wait for me!

VOICE IV: It's time to go!
VOICE I: Hurry! Hurry!! Hurry!!!
VOICE OF SANTA CLAUS: Is everyone ready?
VOICES: Yes, sir! Right away,
SANTA: It's Christmas Eve!
VOICES: Hurray!!!
SANTA: And we have work to do!
VOICES: Yes, sir!
SANTA: Follow me! Ho, ho, ho!
VOICE I: Hurray! We're going!
VOICE II: I can hardly wait!
VOICE IV: Did we forget anything?
VOICE I: Hurry! He's waiting! He's waiting for us!
VOICE IV: He's waiting for us to load the sleigh!
VOICE III: Bring the list! Who's got the list?
VOICE I: Hurry!
VOICE II: The bags! Bring the bags!
VOICE IV: The map! Don't forget the map!
VOICE III: The list!
VOICE II: The bags!
VOICE IV: The map!
VOICE I: Hurry! Hurry!! Hurry!!!
SANTA: (LAUGHING HEARTILY) Ho, ho, ho!!!

(DURING THE PREVIOUS DIALOGUE SOUNDS OF PEOPLE RUNNING BACK AND FORTH ARE HEARD, AND SANTA'S LAUGH CONTINUES THROUGHOUT. THE LIGHTS OCCASIONALLY COME UP QUICKLY BUT THEY NEVER CATCH ANYONE. AFTER SANTA'S FINAL LAUGHTER FADES AWAY, THE VOICES FADE TOO, AND THE MOOD CHANGES AGAIN. SOFT, PEACEFUL MUSIC PLAYS, AND THE LIGHTS COME UP SLOWLY ON THE HOUSE INTERIOR. THE TREE IS ONLY PARTIALLY TRIMMED, AND A FEW BOXES ARE STREWN ABOUT. AS THE LIGHTS COME UP FULL, TWO CAROL SINGERS ENTER, AND MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE AUDIENCE, AND PAST THE HOUSE. AS THEY PASS BY, PAPA ENTERS, DRESSED TO GO OUT. HE WAVES AT THE CAROLERS AND THEY WAVE BACK. AS THEY GO, PAPA LOOKS AT A LONG SHOPPING

LIST, WHICH HE PERUSES CAREFULLY . . .)

PAPA: Let's see now. "Cranberries – yes – bread . . . um-hmmm . . . peanuts . . . good . . . I like peanuts . . . rutabagas . . . rutabagas???. . . um . . . oh, well . . . onions . . . uh-huh . . . present for Aunt Winifred" – uh-oh. Maggie!

MAMA: (AS SHE ENTERS) Yes, David?

PAPA: I'm going out now. Is there anything else you want to add to the list?

MAMA: I can't think of anything. (LOOKS AT IT) No, that's all we need. Hurry back, now.

PAPA: I will. (STARTS OUT)

MAMA: We still have a lot to do around the house.

PAPA: I know. (KISSES HER) I won't be long. Bye.

MAMA: Good-bye. (SHE TURNS AWAY AND BUSIES HERSELF WITH OTHER THINGS.)

PAPA: (TO HIMSELF AS HE GOES OUT THE DOOR) "A present for Aunt Winifred."

MAMA: (ALONE) Let's see now. I think I'll hang the stockings. (AS SHE DOES SO.) One for Papa, one for me, one for Elizabeth, Timothy, and one for Virginia. I wonder if I should put one up for Aunt Winifred. No, I suppose not. Oops! The cookies! Time to take them out! (RUSHES OFF)

(AS SHE GOES, TIMOTHY ENTERS. HE CHECKS VERY CAREFULLY TO BE SURE HE IS ALONE, THEN EXAMINES THE STOCKINGS ON THE FIREPLACE.)

TIMOTHY: Why does Mama always put up such small stockings? (UNFOLDS A MUCH LARGER STOCKING THAT HE HAS BROUGHT IN WITH HIM. HE TAKES DOWN THE STOCKING MAMA PUT UP AND HANGS THE NEW ONE. HE STEPS BACK TO ADMIRE IT.) That's much better. Now that stocking will really hold a lot of stuff. (LAUGHS) I bet Mama won't even notice. (SEES PACKAGES UNDER TREE) Aha! Look at all those presents! I wonder which ones are for me. (AS HE POKES AND PROBES HIS WAY THROUGH THEM) Here's one! A nice big one! (HE SHAKES IT) Not too heavy. And it doesn't rattle. I hope it's not a stupid

sweater or something like that. (THROWS IT DOWN)
Here's another one for me. It's not very big. (SHAKES IT) Hmm. It's pretty heavy. No noise. I wonder what it is. (STARTS TO UNWRAP ONE END) Let's see.
Uh-oh, I tore the paper. (AS LONG AS IT IS TORN HE MIGHT AS WELL KEEP LOOKING) I wonder what it could be –

ELIZABETH: (WHO HAS ENTERED IN TIME TO CATCH SOME OF HIS ACTIVITY) Timothy!!

TIMOTHY: (STARTLED, YELLS) Awk! (THE PACKAGE FLIES UP INTO THE AIR.) Oh, hello, Lizzie.

ELIZABETH: What do you think you're doing?

TIMOTHY: Huh? Who, me?

ELIZABETH: Yes, you.

TIMOTHY: Oh, nothing.

ELIZABETH: Hmph!

TIMOTHY: Oh, hmph, yourself!

ELIZABETH: You'd better stop or I'll tell Mama.

TIMOTHY: Go ahead. See if I care. (TAUNTING) Lizzie.

ELIZABETH: Don't call me Lizzie.

TIMOTHY: All right. Lizzie.

ELIZABETH: Oh, you!

TIMOTHY: (MOCKING) Oh, you!

ELIZABETH: Stop that!

TIMOTHY: (MOCKING) Stop that!

ELIZABETH: Mama!

TIMOTHY: (MOCKING) Mama!

MAMA: (OFF STAGE) What's going on out there?

ELIZABETH: See? Now you'll catch it.

TIMOTHY: Oh, no, I won't. Good-bye, Lizzie!

ELIZABETH: Ohhh! (THEN SHE NOTICES THE PRESENTS UNDER THE TREE) Hmm. (READS) To Elizabeth. (PICKS UP PACKAGE AND SHAKES IT.) I wonder what it could be. (PICKS UP ANOTHER) And this one. (SHAKES IT) Hmm

TIMOTHY: (RE-ENTERS, SEES HER UNDER THE TREE WITH THE PRESENTS) Aha!

ELIZABETH: Oh! (HER PACKAGE FLIES UP INTO THE AIR.)

TIMOTHY: Caught you!

ELIZABETH: Caught me what?

TIMOTHY: You know.

ELIZABETH: I was only straightening them out.

TIMOTHY: Uh-huh.
ELIZABETH: Well, I was.
TIMOTHY: Sure, Lizzie.
ELIZABETH: And don't call me Lizzie!
TIMOTHY: Sure, Lizzie.
ELIZABETH: Ohhh! Come here!
TIMOTHY: Lizzie, Lizzie, can't catch me!
ELIZABETH: Oh, yes, I can! (SHE CHASES HIM OFF.)
TIMOTHY: (OFF) OUCH!
ELIZABETH: (OFF) So there!

(THE YOUNGEST CHILD, VIRGINIA, NOW ENTERS. SHE CARRIES A DUST MOP, A BROOM, AND OTHER CLEANING ITEMS. SHE GOES TO THE FIREPLACE AND BEGINS TO CLEAN IT VIGOROUSLY.)

VIRGINIA: Mama always forgets to clean the fireplace. (SHE CLEANS AND CLEANS AND DOESN'T HEAR TIMOTHY COME INTO THE ROOM. HE HAS HIS HANDS AND MOUTH FULL OF COOKIES, WHICH HE MUNCHES VERY NOISILY.)
TIMOTHY: (AS HE ENTERS) Mmmmmmm. Good cookies. Mmmmm. Virginia!
VIRGINIA: (STARTLED, BUMPS HER HEAD) Ouch!
TIMOTHY: What are you doing?
VIRGINIA: Uh – nothing.
TIMOTHY: Want some cookies?
VIRGINIA: Oh, yes! Ummm. They're still warm.
TIMOTHY: Ummmm.
VIRGINIA: Ummmm. Can I have another one?
TIMOTHY: Well –
VIRGINIA: Tim!
TIMOTHY: Oh, all right. Here.
VIRGINIA: Ummmm!
MOTHER: (OFF) Who's been eating these cookies??
TIMOTHY: Uh-oh.
VIRGINIA: Uh-oh.
TIMOTHY: Hurry, Virginia. I'll hide the rest over here.

(THEY CRAM AS MANY COOKIES AS THEY CAN INTO THEIR MOUTHS, AND HE HIDES THE REST

SOMEWHERE IN THE ROOM, POSSIBLY UNDER A SOFA CUSHION. THEY STAND INNOCENTLY WITH THEIR MOUTHS FULL AS THEIR MOTHER ENTERS THE ROOM. ELIZABETH FOLLOWS MAMA.)

MAMA: All right, which one of you took those cookies?

ELIZABETH: Well, I didn't take any.

MAMA: What about you two?

TIMOTHY: (WITH HIS MOUTH FULL) Mumph, mumph, mumph, mumph.

MAMA: What did you say?

TIMOTHY: (TRIES AGAIN) Mumph. Mumph.

MAMA: Is this a game you two are playing?

VIRGINIA: (SHAKES HER HEAD, ALSO TRIES TO TALK WITH HER MOUTH VERY FULL) Mumph. Mumph.

MAMA: All right, you two. I know what's going on around here. I may be only your old mother, but I'm not stupid. I can see the crumbs on your faces and on the floor. Now, swallow those cookies you have in your mouths before you choke.

TIMOTHY: (GULPS DOWN HIS MOUTHFUL OF COOKIES) Yes, Mama.

VIRGINIA: (GULPS DOWN HER MOUTHFUL OF COOKIES) Yes, Mama.

ELIZABETH: (TO THEM) How childish.

MAMA: Elizabeth! That will be quite enough out of you!

TIMOTHY: (SNEERS TO ELIZABETH) Aha!

MAMA: You too, Timothy!

VIRGINIA: (SNEERS AT TIMOTHY) Aha!

MAMA: And you, too, Virginia! (NOW SHE HAS TIME TO NOTICE THE SCRUBBING AND CLEANING EQUIPMENT BY THE FIREPLACE) What's all this? All right, which one of you is responsible for this mess?

VIRGINIA: I am, Mama. I was just trying to – I mean I wanted to make sure that – uh – I only wanted to help, Mama.

MAMA: Virginia, you know very well we spent the last three days cleaning the house very thoroughly.

VIRGINIA: Yes, I know.

MAMA: And now there are cookie crumbs, and dust and soot from the fireplace all over the room.

VIRGINIA: I'm sorry, Mama.

MAMA: So am I. I'm sorry I have to clean up this mess you've

made. What on earth possessed you?
ELIZABETH: I know why she did it, Mama.
TIMOTHY: Me, too.
VIRGINIA: (TO THEM) Be quiet!
ELIZABETH: She wanted to clean the fireplace because –
VIRGINIA: Elizabeth!
TIMOTHY: – Because of Santa Claus!
VIRGINIA: Timothy!
ELIZABETH: Virginia still believes in Santa Claus!!!
TIMOTHY: Virginia believes in Santa Claus!
VIRGINIA: So what if I do?
ELIZABETH: See? She does believe in Santa Claus!
TIMOTHY: What a baby.
VIRGINIA: I am not a baby.
TIMOTHY: Yes, you are! Baby!
VIRGINIA: (TO TIMOTHY) I hate you!
MAMA: (WHO HAS BEEN TRYING TO CLEAN UP THE
MESS IN THE FIREPLACE) Be quiet! All of you!
Elizabeth, Timothy, don't tease your sister. It's very
unkind.
TIMOTHY: Lizzie started it.
ELIZABETH: I did not!
MAMA: I don't care who started it. You can both finish it. Now.
ELIZABETH: Yes, Mama.
TIMOTHY: Yes, Mama.
VIRGINIA: (TO THEM) So, there.
MAMA: And as for you, Virginia, you mustn't tell your brother you
hate him. Not even when you are very angry.
VIRGINIA: Yes, Mama.
MAMA: Now, take these things and put them away. (GIVES HER
THE CLEANING SUPPLIES) Where you found them.
VIRGINIA: Yes, Mama.
MAMA: Now, all of you – (LOOKS DIRECTLY AT THE
STOCKING FOR THE FIRST TIME) Timothy!
TIMOTHY: Uh-oh.
MAMA: (POINTS TO STOCKING) What's the meaning of this?
TIMOTHY: You mean – the stocking?
MAMA: Yes, I do. Where did this come from?
TIMOTHY: I – uh – I made it.
ELIZABETH AND VIRGINIA: (GIGGLE)
MAMA: Don't you think it's a little large?
TIMOTHY: Well – uh – yes, I suppose so.

MAMA: Do you think you'll find more presents in your stocking if you hang this one?

TIMOTHY: Well – uh – I just didn't want anything to – uh – fall out – and uh – you know – get broken.

MAMA: Nothing will fall out and break, Timothy. You have to use your own stocking, that's our tradition. If you use a stocking that isn't yours, you're being dishonest.

TIMOTHY: Oh.

MAMA: Now, take that stocking down, and put your own back up.

TIMOTHY: But mine is so small, Mama.

ELIZABETH: Well, so is mine.

VIRGINIA: Mine, too.

TIMOTHY: Do I have to, Mama?

ELIZABETH: Yes, you do!

VIRGINIA: We didn't change ours!

MAMA: Girls! Go on, Timothy, take it down.

TIMOTHY: (SIGHS) All right, Mama.

VIRGINIA: Good!

ELIZABETH: Serves him right!

TIMOTHY: (TO THEM) Quiet! (HE GOES TO CHANGE THE STOCKING.)

MAMA: (WATCHING HIM) Now, I want the three of you to finish cleaning your rooms.

VIRGINIA: Oh, Mama.

ELIZABETH: Ugh.

TIMOTHY: Awww –

MAMA: Go on. It has to be done, so you might as well do it now.

ELIZABETH: Can't we trim the tree instead?

MAMA: We'll do that later. After you clean your rooms.

ELIZABETH: Ohhh.

VIRGINIA: Awwwww.

TIMOTHY: Ugh. (THE GIRLS GO OFF, BUT TIMOTHY REMAINS BEHIND.)

MAMA: (TURNING HER BACK TO THEM BUSIES HERSELF WITH CLEANING)

TIMOTHY: (STARTS TO SNEAK OVER TO CHANGE HIS STOCKING AGAIN)

MAMA: (WITHOUT TURNING AROUND) Leave that stocking alone.

TIMOTHY: (REACTS) Drat. How did she know? (STARTS OFF, THEN DECIDES TO SNEAK INTO THE KITCHEN.)

MAMA: (AGAIN WITHOUT TURNING AROUND) And leave

those cookies alone, too.

TIMOTHY: Drat. How does she do that? (HE GOES OFF TOO.)

MAMA: (SIGHS) A moment of peace and quiet. What a nice
change. (SHE STARTS TO SIT DOWN. THEN A
LOUD CRASH!!! OFF STAGE

MAMA: So much for peace and quiet. It was nice while it lasted.

ELIZABETH: (OFF) Timothy!

VIRGINIA: (OFF) Look what you did!

TIMOTHY: (OFF) I didn't do anything!

MAMA: (DASHES OFF) What happened? What's wrong?
(AS MAMA GOES OFF, PAPA RETURNS, HIS ARMS
FULL OF PACKAGES. JUST AS HE ENTERS THE
HOUSE, TIMOTHY SNEAKS ON STAGE, HASTILY
DRESSING TO GO OUT.)

PAPA: Hello, everybody! I'm home! Oh hello Tim.

TIMOTHY: Good-bye, Papa.

PAPA: Good-bye?

TIMOTHY: (TO HIMSELF) I'll need some food. (TAKES THE
COOKIES FROM THEIR HIDING PLACE) There. I'm
ready.

PAPA: Ready for what? What's going on around here?

TIMOTHY: I'm running away from home.

PAPA: (LAUGHS) Oh, really? And why is that?

– **END FIRST E-MAIL SEGMENT** –

(Time/action passes. Prior to this next segment Scrooge-like Aunt Winifred has entered and bestowed “interesting” gifts on the family in an amusing scene. Some Carolers entered and entertained before leaving. The next segment plays through the end of Act One. Auntie and Mama have just left the living room with Timothy repeating Aunt Winifred’s earlier line about “Hooligans!”)

– **START SECOND E-MAIL SEGMENT** –

(SHE – Aunt Winifred – AND MAMA GO OFF.)

PAPA: (TO CHILDREN) Now, off to bed, you three.

ELIZABETH: Yes, Papa. (SHE GOES)

TIMOTHY: Oh, all right, Papa.
VIRGINIA: But, Papa –
PAPA: Go on, now.
TIMOTHY: (TO VIRGINIA AS THEY GO OFF) Hooligan!
VIRGINIA: (LAUGHS)

(THEY GO OFF TOGETHER.)

MAMA: (RETURNS) Whew!
PAPA: Well? Is she settled in her room?
MAMA: I certainly hope so. Of course, she had to tell me that she hates the wallpaper in her room, that our house is drafty, and she can't stand our children, our cooking, and our friends.
PAPA: (LAUGHS) I know.
MAMA: She makes me so angry.
PAPA: Now, Margaret –
MAMA: And then I feel guilty about being angry.
PAPA: I know what you mean.
MAMA: Why does she come here if she hates it so much?
PAPA: A good question.
MAMA: It's just that her complaining and moaning spoils Christmas for all of us.
PAPA: I know. But what can we do?
MAMA: Nothing, that's just it. We just have to put up with her.
PAPA: (AS THEY GO) Weren't those stockings absolutely hideous?
MAMA: (LAUGHS) They were the ugliest ones yet.

(THEY GO OFF.)

(DURING THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN MAMA AND PAPA, AUNTIE HAS REENTERED AND OVERHEARS THE CONVERSATION. AS MAMA AND PAPA LEAVE, SHE SPEAKS TO HERSELF.)

AUNTIE: Spoil Christmas, do I? Complain and moan do I? Hmph! So they thought the stockings were hideous, did they? (PICKS UP HER BAG THAT SHE LEFT BEHIND IN THE ROOM EARLIER.) Well, that's gratitude for you. Hmpf! (SHE STALKS OFF.)
(AFTER A BRIEF MOMENT TIMOTHY ENTERS

QUIETLY AND LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.)

TIMOTHY: No one here. (QUICKLY CHANGES HIS STOCKING BACK TO HIS VERY LARGE ONE) There. Much better. (HE GOES TO THE TREE AND STARTS TO POKE AT THE PACKAGES.) I wonder what this one could be? Or this one . . .

(ELIZABETH ENTERS, CARRYING A PLATE OF COOKIES AND A MUG OF MILK. SHE LOOKS AROUND, BUT DOES NOT SEE TIMOTHY. SHE SETS THE PLATE DOWN ON PAPA'S DESK, AND ARRANGES THE COOKIES CAREFULLY.)

TIMOTHY: (TIPTOES UP TO HER AND YELLS IN HER EAR)
Boo!

ELIZABETH: (SCREAMS) Timothy! You startled me!

TIMOTHY: What are you doing?

ELIZABETH: Oh, nothing.

TIMOTHY: Uh-huh.

ELIZABETH: Good night, Timothy. (SHE STARTS OFF.)

TIMOTHY: I think I'll have one of these cookies.

ELIZABETH: (HASTILY PICKS UP PLATE) Don't you dare touch them. They're not for you, anyway.

TIMOTHY: Who are they for, then?

ELIZABETH: Never mind.

TIMOTHY: They're for Santa Claus, aren't they?

ELIZABETH: Well –

TIMOTHY: Aren't they?

ELIZABETH: Well, what if they are?

TIMOTHY: I thought you were too old to believe in Santa Claus.

ELIZABETH: I am, but it's a tradition to put out cookies and milk.
(PUTS COOKIES BACK ON THE DESK)

TIMOTHY: That's true.

ELIZABETH: Besides, if there really is a Santa Claus, and if he came by, wouldn't he be hungry?

TIMOTHY: Probably. You're pretty smart, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: I know.

TIMOTHY: Uh – Elizabeth, I hope Santa Claus – if there is a Santa Claus – well, I hope he brings you another music box.

ELIZABETH: Thank you, Tim. I hope so, too. If there is a Santa Claus.

TIMOTHY: Oh, right. If there is. (THEY GO OFF TOGETHER.)

PAPA: (RE-ENTERS JUST IN TIME TO SEE TIMOTHY AND

ELIZABETH LEAVE, CHUCKLES WHEN HE SEES THE STOCKING CHANGE) Well, I see Timothy's been busy. (NOTICES THE COOKIES) Aha! What have we here? Cookies and milk, hmmm? (CHUCKLES AGAIN) For Santa Claus, I suppose.

VIRGINIA: (ENTERS, NOW DRESSED FOR BED) Papa?

PAPA: Virginia! You should be asleep by now.

VIRGINIA: I know, Papa. But I can't sleep. I keep thinking about Christmas, and, well, you know, Papa.

PAPA: Yes, I know.

VIRGINIA: Will you tell me a story?

PAPA: Umm, well, yes, I suppose I could do that.

VIRGINIA: Oh, good!

PAPA: In fact, I have a brand new story for you. It's about Santa Claus.

VIRGINIA: REALLY? Tell me.

PAPA: Not until you put some slippers on your feet, young lady. Do you want to catch cold?

VIRGINIA: Oh, I suppose not – but I'll be right back, Papa.

PAPA: I'll be here. (SHE GOES AND HE GETS OUT SOME PAPERS, AND OTHER WRITING GEAR. HE IS ABOUT TO PUT SOME FINISHING TOUCHES ON HIS NEW "STORY." HE READS IT ALOUD.) Let's see now –

'Twas the night before Christmas,
When all through the house
Not a creature was stirring,
Not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung
By the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas
Soon would be there;

(HE MAKES A SMALL ADJUSTMENT, THEN CONTINUES.)

The children were nestled
All snug in their beds,
While visions of sugarplums
Danced in their heads;
And Mama in her kerchief,
And I in my cap,

Had just settled our brains
For a long winter's nap,

(PAPA YAWNS, AND STRETCHES. THE LIGHTS
FLICKER, BUT HE DOESN'T NOTICE. HE GOES
BACK TO HIS PAPERS.) Where was I? Oh, yes –

Had just settled our brains
For a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn
There arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed
To see what was the matter.

(AS PAPA READS THESE LINES, THE LIGHTS
CONTINUE TO FLICKER AND FLASH AND
SOUNDS OF DISTANT VOICES AND SLEIGH BELLS
ARE HEARD. THE SOUNDS GROW LOUDER AS
PAPA CONTINUES TO WORK ON HIS STORY.)

Away to the window
I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters
And threw up the sash.

(THE MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS SEEM MUCH
NEARER NOW. CERTAINLY THEY ARE MUCH
LOUDER. PAPA CONTINUES.)

When, what to my wondering eyes
Should appear,
But a miniature sleigh,
And eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver,
So lively and quick,
I knew in a moment
It must be St. Nick

VOICE OF SANTA: Ho, Ho, Ho!

VOICE I: Here we are!

VOICE II: It's time!

VOICE IV: It's Christmas Eve!

VOICE I: Hurry! Hurry!

VOICE II: So much to do!

VOICE OF SANTA: Ho, Ho, Ho!

VOICE III: The list! Who has the list?

VOICE I: The map! Where is the map?

VOICE II: The bags! Don't forget the bags!

VOICE OF SANTA: Ho, Ho, Ho!

PAPA: And he whistled and shouted

VOICE OF SANTA: Ho, Ho, Ho!

PAPA: And called them by name: Now –

VOICE OF SANTA: Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now Prancer and
Vixen! On, Comet! On, Cupid! On Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall! Now dash
away! Dash away! Dash away, all!!!!

PAPA: (DURING SANTA'S SPEECH, HE LEAVES HIS
WRITING, AND DASHES TO THE WINDOW, LOOKS
UP INTO THE FIREPLACE, TRYING TO FIND THE
SOURCE OF THE VOICES, ETC.) Oh, my! What's
happening? Can it be? I don't believe it! I must be
dreaming!

VOICE OF SANTA: Ho, Ho, Ho!

(THE MUSIC BUILDS AND THE LIGHTS FLASH.
THE SOUNDS OF VOICES AND SLEIGH BELLS
GROW LOUDER. PAPA LOOKS UP AT THE
CEILING AND – THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.)

END ACT I

– **END OF TOTAL E-MAIL SEGMENT** –

(There are 60 total pages in the complete script)