

FIRST ANNUAL BOUGHS OF HOLLY COUNTRY CLUB CHRISTMAS

A CHRISTMAS COMEDY WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS

By Pat Cook

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FIRST ANNUAL BOUGHS OF HOLLY COUNTRY CLUB CHRISTMAS

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SYNOPSIS: While Deborah tries to impress the Boughs of Holly Country Club board with a new Christmas show, the country club's president, Jocelyn, tries to impress Gertrude Webb, the club's loan officer, to secure a loan to refurbish the club, as Gertrude keeps passing loans so that she is entered to win a trip to Hawaii. There's only one thing missing from this Christmas show - Christmas! And if it weren't for Josh, who manages the country club, there'd probably be no Christmas show. Deborah soon realizes that the only way for the theatre group to impress the board is to cast several board members in their show, and what follows is a riotous seasonal romp of yuletide fun. Hilarious situations and oddball characters race in and out as opening night draws near, and just when everything seems to be falling apart, in steps Santa Claus.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FIVE MEN, TEN WOMEN)

JOSH.....Amiable country club manager, around 60.
(124 lines)

MICKEY BARNHOUSEMeek actor, around 30. *(84 lines)*

KAREN THIMBLETON.....Smart 35-year-old, backbone of the group.
(52 lines)

DEBORAH MANCINI.....Thirty-year-old stressed-out director. *(140 lines)*

CARLA CONNERSFrantic shuttle driver. *(12 lines)*

JOCELYN McADAMSRather stodgy 45-year-old board president.
(104 lines)

MIMI PORTERSarcastic board member, 40 or so. *(40 lines)*

EILEEN WALLEY.....Equally sarcastic member, also around 40.
(35 lines)

AUSTIN HINDERSHOTWise-cracking board member. (53 lines)

MAXINECountry club chef. (10 lines)

BIFF.....Slightly spaced-out tech person. (40 lines)

GERTRUDE WEBB.....Business-like loan officer. (34 lines)

PEGGY.....Nine year-old girl with a lot of questions.
(63 lines)

MOTHERPeggy's mother, around 30 or so. (20 lines)

LIONEL BABBSentimental president of a bank. (4 lines)

Time: A few days before Christmas, the present.

Place: Auditorium of the Boughs of Holly Country Club

Running time: Approximately 75 minutes

A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY

While this play may, of course, be presented as written, other acts, such as skits or musical acts may be added to give it more of a variety show feel. There are, in fact, sections written in the text itself where these additions may be placed.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

LIGHTS come up downstage right. There is a desk with a chair behind it and one in front of it. Sitting in the desk chair is JOSH; MICKEY is seated in the other chair.

JOSH: Now then sir that I have your name and address, you wish to file a complaint?

MICKEY: I suppose, Sergeant. Not really sure.

JOSH: You're not sure you want to file a complaint?

MICKEY: I mean, nothing was taken.

JOSH: But someone DID break into your house last night, right?

MICKEY: Yes. (*JOSH writes this down on a pad.*) Wait. No!

JOSH: Huh?

MICKEY: I mean he didn't break into the house.

JOSH: He didn't? (*He erases the line on the pad.*) But he got into your house, is that correct?

MICKEY: Yes.

JOSH: (*Writes as he speaks.*) Entered . . . the . . . house through the front door. (*Looks up.*) So it was unlocked?

MICKEY: No, it was locked.

JOSH: So he came through an open window?

MICKEY: No, they were also locked.

JOSH: I don't understand, sir.

MICKEY: He didn't come through a door or window.

JOSH stares at him as he again erases a line.

JOSH: Maybe you better start from the beginning. When did this happen?

MICKEY: Last night.

JOSH: Right. (*He writes.*) The night before Christmas. (*He looks up.*) And all through your house?

MICKEY: Oh, not a creature was stirring.

JOSH: Not even a mouse?

MICKEY: (*Stiffly.*) We do NOT have mice.

JOSH: Just the facts, sir.

MICKEY: The stockings were hung by the chimney with care.

JOSH: I beg your pardon?

MICKEY: We are donating several stockings to the Order of St. Nicholas and wanted to make sure they were clean. They're due to pick them up any time now

JOSH: (*Writes.*) The stockings were hung by the chimney with care -

MICKEY: (*Taps the pad.*) In hopes that St. Nicholas would soon be there.

JOSH: Not so fast.

MICKEY: When out on the lawn there rose such a clatter.

JOSH: (*Still writing.*) On the lawn there rose a ladder.

MICKEY: No, I didn't say 'ladder'.

JOSH: (*Erases and writes again.*) Rose such a clutter.

MICKEY: Not clutter, CLATTER.

JOSH erases again and stares at MICKEY.

JOSH: What's a clatter?

MICKEY: Clatter, a noise.

JOSH: (*Irritated.*) Then just say you heard a noise!

MICKEY: Sorry. I sprang from my bed -

JOSH: You were in bed?

MICKEY: Right. Mamma in her 'kerchief and I in my cap.

JOSH: You wear a cap to bed?

MICKEY: My mother-in-law gave it to me.

JOSH: Uh-huh.

MICKEY: You know how it is when somebody gives you something; you feel obligated to wear it at least once. And the wife tells her everything. You married?

JOSH: Go on. You sprang from the bed.

MICKEY: Then to the window I flew like a flash. I tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

JOSH: You threw up what?

MICKEY: The sash. See, a window frame is called a sash.

JOSH: (*Leans over the desk.*) You opened the window!

MICKEY: That's what I said.

JOSH: *(Erasing again.)* I'm going to need another eraser. Did you see anything? *(MICKEY looks down as if thinking about this.)* Hello? Did we get cut off? I retire in two years so if you could pick it up a little -

MICKEY: You really won't believe this.

JOSH: Hey, you're hearing clatters, wearing caps and throwing up sashes, what's not to believe? *(He leans in.)* Now. What did you see?

MICKEY: A miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer.

JOSH stares at him for a medium pause. He then looks up.

JOSH: How do they find me? How do all the nuts find me? Is there a newsletter out or something? A website?

MICKEY: You asked what I saw.

JOSH: *(Looks at MICKEY.)* You couldn't report this to the night shift, no, you had to come in today. Okay, I'll just do my job, you tell me whatever, and I'll do my best not to giggle. A sleigh and reindeer.

MICKEY: Tiny reindeer.

JOSH: Oh, not the standard, run-of-the-mill size, you mean? TINY reindeer.

MICKEY: Right. Eight of them.

JOSH: *(Writing, to MICKEY.)* Probably come eight to a pack.

MICKEY: Herd.

JOSH: Huh?

MICKEY: Herd of reindeer.

JOSH: Sure I've heard of reindeer.

MICKEY: No, you said pack, they - the reindeer - travel in herds.

JOSH: Oh. What travels in packs?

MICKEY: Gum.

JOSH: Whatever! Now - the person driving the sleigh? *(He leans in quickly to MICKEY.)* It was a person, right?!

MICKEY: Well, sure.

JOSH: Wasn't a gremlin or an elf or anything then? *(Writes on his pad.)*

MICKEY: Wait . . . now that you mention it. He was a right jolly old elf. *(JOSH slams the pencil down on the top of the desk and looks at MICKEY.)* And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself. *(Meekly.)* Well, wouldn't you?

JOSH: Right.

MICKEY: Are you getting all this down.

JOSH: Yes, and it's starting to get me down, too. *(He writes and talks to himself.)* I'm not turning in this report.

MICKEY: What?

JOSH: Nothing. Now, this person, this ELF! HE got into your house, right?

MICKEY: Right.

JOSH: How? *(MICKEY looks down again as if thinking.)* He's looking down again; where did I put those Tylenols? *(He opens a drawer.)*

MICKEY: This isn't easy for me, you know.

JOSH: Hey, it's no sleigh-ride for me either. *(He pulls out a plastic bottle.)* And I don't have eight reindeer. *(He takes out a couple of tablets and picks up the pitcher and a glass.)*

MICKEY: Tiny reindeer. *(JOSH glares at him.)* Sorry.

JOSH: So? *(He tips up the pitcher but no water comes out.)* How did he get in the house? *(He looks into the pitcher.)* Of course, no water. *(He looks again at MICKEY.)* Well? How did he get into your house?!

MICKEY: He came down the chimney.

JOSH pulls back the pitcher as if to throw it at MICKEY who ducks. At this moment, KAREN enters the scene with a folder.

KAREN: Hold on! What's going on here?

JOSH: Trust me on this one - you don't want to know.

KAREN: Whatever. *(She drops the folder on the desk.)* When you get through with his statement you need to look into that one.

JOSH: What's it about? Reindeers and sleighs? *(He smiles as he opens the folder.)*

KAREN: How'd you know? *(MICKEY and JOSH slowly turn to look at her.)* We just got in this report.

MICKEY: Eight tiny reindeer and a jolly old elf?

KAREN: Yeah. Only thing is the lead reindeer was kind of odd.

JOSH: What do you mean odd?

KAREN: He had a very shiny nose. And if you ever saw it, you would even say it glows. (*JOSH puts his head down on the desk and sobs loudly. KAREN looks at MICKEY.*) Did I say something wrong?

DEBORAH: (*Offstage.*) Lights!

LIGHTS come up on the rest of the stage. Around the area are other chairs, a rack of clothes, boxes and bits of scenery. There is also a partially decorated Christmas tree STAGE LEFT. DEBORAH enters from STAGE RIGHT, carrying a clipboard.

KAREN: What?

MICKEY: Was that okay?

DEBORAH: Looks great. Josh, you're doing a wonderful job.

JOSH: (*Rises.*) Thanks, Deb, I try my best.

DEBORAH: You always do. I don't know what we'd do without you. (*She looks out.*) Biff, how'd the lights look?

BIFF'S VOICE: A lot better than those milk cans and bug lights we've been using.

DEBORAH: Never mind the editorials. (*She looks at the others.*) Let's get set up for the next scene.

JOSH: Way ahead of you. (*He exits STAGE RIGHT.*)

MICKEY: How was I, Miss Mancini?

DEBORAH: (*Looking at her clipboard.*) Huh? Oh, fine, Mickey, just fine.

MICKEY: I mean, I always try to do my best, you know that.

KAREN: She said you were fine, let it go.

CARLA enters from STAGE LEFT.

MICKEY: I just wanted to know, I didn't mean anything.

CARLA: We made it! One more time! We made it! (*She gets down on all fours and kisses the stage.*)

KAREN: What sketch is this?

DEBORAH: No sketch, that's Carla Conners. She drives the country club shuttle.

CARLA: It was either that bus or me, by cracky! And we made it! (*She gets to her feet.*)

DEBORAH: (*Moves to CARLA.*) Did you pick up the members of the board?

CARLA: They're right behind me. (*She turns and sees no one.*) Well, they WERE right behind me.

KAREN: This is a great stage.

DEBORAH: Really is. I mean, if we get to use it. It's still up in the air, you know.

KAREN: I know. I'm getting tired of playing that cow pasture.

DEBORAH: It's our amphitheatre.

KAREN: It's some plywood on top of old milk crates . . . (*She leans in to DEBORAH.*) . . . in a cow pasture. SO embarrassing!

DEBORAH: It's not that bad, in the fresh outdoors.

KAREN: Yeah, sometimes TOO fresh. Remember last year? I'm in the middle of a scene from *The Glass Menagerie* when this flying squirrel swoops through and - WHAP - flattens out on the back wall?

CARLA: (*Thinking.*) Wait, when I made that last turn, did any of them fall out the back?

MICKEY: (*To CARLA.*) Fall out the back?

DEBORAH: You really should get that door fixed.

CARLA: First things first. We need to get a door and THEN we'll fix it.

DEBORAH: I hope they like our show. That'll cinch the deal.

KAREN: Wait, I thought Josh said it was already set for us to do the show here. And he is the manager here.

DEBORAH: He said he'd do what he can. (*She puts a hand on KAREN'S shoulder.*) And you know how much we depend on him.

KAREN: Sometimes too much, I'm afraid.

DEBORAH: What makes you say that?

MIMI and JOCELYN enter from STAGE LEFT with MIMI holding JOCELYN as if to steady her. EILEEN follows them in.

JOCELYN: We're here? We're finally here?

MIMI: And in one piece.

EILEEN: Solid ground again, I thought we were road kill.

JOCELYN: I remember something about taking a turn and then falling out of my seat.

MIMI: I know. That's when you hit your head on the seat belt buckle.

CARLA: We have seat belts on the bus?

MIMI: It's a shuttle.

EILEEN: No thanks to you, Carla!

MIMI: Yeah, Carla! When are you going to get those brakes fixed?

CARLA: First things first. You GET me some brakes -

JOCELYN: (*Straightening herself.*) Whatever! We're here, that's all that matters.

MIMI: (*Looking around.*) Jocelyn, where's Austin?

JOCELYN: Well, he STARTED with us.

AUSTIN stumbles on from STAGE LEFT, a bit ragged, falls to his knees and kisses the stage.

AUSTIN: We made it!

MIMI and EILEEN help him to his feet.

MIMI: What happened to you?

AUSTIN: (*Indicates JOCELYN.*) When Jocelyn fell off her seat she knocked me out the back doorway.

CARLA: TOLD you we needed a back door. (*AUSTIN glares at her.*)

EILEEN: Why do we always have to ride in the shuttle, anyway?

JOCELYN: (*Stiffly.*) It's tradition. It's in the rules. Dates back to the 1920s.

CARLA: So does the bus.

EILEEN: It's a shuttle.

DEBORAH: (*Moves to JOCELYN.*) I'm Deborah Mancini, the director of the show.

KAREN: And I'm Karen Thimbleton. (*She indicates MICKEY.*) And this is Mickey Barnhouse.

JOCELYN: I am Jocelyn McAdams, we spoke on the phone.

MIMI: I'm Mimi Porter, she's Eileen Walley and he's Austin Hindershot. We're pleased to meet you. At least, we WILL be when we regain our motor skills.

CARLA: Motor skills! (*She snaps her fingers.*) Did I turn off the bus?! (*She races off STAGE LEFT.*)

JOCELYN / EILEEN / MIMI: It's a shuttle!

DEBORAH: And we are SO grateful that you're letting us use your country club for our annual Christmas pageant.

JOCELYN: MAY be letting you use it. You must understand we have to make sure everything is in order.

EILEEN: (*Rubs her shoulder.*) Like no broken ribs, fractures or concussions. (*She looks at her hand.*) Oh, look at that! (*She bites a nail.*)

AUSTIN: (*Looking at the others.*) There's five of you here, right?

MIMI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: (*Shaking his head to clear it.*) Just checking my eyesight.

JOCELYN: Where's Josh?

DEBORAH: He's backstage, getting ready for our next skit. (*She nods to KAREN and MICKEY.*) Let's get set up for a run through.

KAREN: Right.

MICKEY and KAREN exit off STAGE RIGHT.

DEBORAH: I know you'll love the show. (*She exits OFF after the others.*)

MIMI: (*After DEBORAH exits.*) I sure hope this works.

JOCELYN: Of course it will work. The Boughs of Holly Country Club has been an institution in this city for almost a hundred years.

EILEEN: We know, we've served on the board for 100 years.

JOCELYN: This lovely estate has made it through hard times before and we can do it again.

AUSTIN: IF the bank will float us a loan. (*He falls into a chair.*)

JOCELYN: Exactly. But I'm sure they will, once they see it, and how we plan to refurbish it. And THEN they'll understand its importance. And its place in our city. That's why we're assisting the fine arts. (*She indicates where DEBORAH just exited. She looks out.*) We've always been progressive, always maintained civility in the face of chaos, always stood as a community cultural center.

MAXINE enters from STAGE RIGHT.

MAXINE: Here you are. When do you want - ?

MIMI: (*Stops MAXINE.*) Not now, she's doing the speech.

AUSTIN: *(Blandly.)* I never get tired of hearing it.

JOCELYN: *(Continuing.)* And once that Savings and Loan sees that we are a vital part of the community, they'll grant us that loan. It stands for tradition, like a bank cornerstone, a George M. Cohan song or the Boy Scouts. And with that loan we can bring the old place back up to its former grandeur. It will again become a place of culture, refinement and enlightenment! *(She lowers her head.)*

MAXINE: *(After a slight pause.)* When do I serve the Sloppy Joes?

JOCELYN moves to MAXINE.

JOCELYN: Maxine, we're trying to impress a loan officer and you're serving Sloppy Joes?

MAXINE: Hey, there's only so much you can do with hamburger. As if that isn't bad enough, I have to grind it up myself.

AUSTIN: You want it ground up let Carla take it for a ride on the bus.

JOCELYN / MIMI / EILEEN: Shuttle!

AUSTIN: Oh, right. I forgot. You three wouldn't DARE let it be known that you ride a bus.

MAXINE: Whatever, I need to get some funds from petty cash.

JOCELYN: What for?

MAXINE: Hamburger helper.

AUSTIN: Why don't we just set a match to the place and be done with it?

JOCELYN opens her purse.

JOCELYN: Here, here. *(She pulls out a billfold and takes out a few bills.)* And make sure I get a receipt.

MAXINE: Fine. *(She takes the bills and exits off STAGE RIGHT.)*

JOCELYN: *(Yells after her.)* But write on the bill 'Filet Mignon'!

EILEEN: *(To AUSTIN.)* You comfortable in your chair there?

AUSTIN: Oh, this isn't a chair, it's a chaise lounge.

BIFF wanders on from STAGE RIGHT, holding a leash. He looks around the stage.

EILEEN: *(To JOCELYN.)* Have you thought about what we'll do if we DON'T get the loan?

JOCELYN: Failure is not an option.

MIMI and AUSTIN see BIFF.

EILEEN: Uh-huh. Odd, how it shows up on a lot of our lists.

JOCELYN: We'll take it one step at a time. Let's just deal with the loan officer first.

BIFF whistles and snaps his fingers.

BIFF: Ginger? Where are you, Ginger?

AUSTIN: *(To MIMI.)* You think that may be him?

MIMI: I hope not. What's he doing? *(EILEEN moves over to MIMI and AUSTIN.)*

AUSTIN: Beats me. Maybe he wants us to sign his leash, ha-ha-ha.

MIMI: If you were standing I'd knock you down.

JOCELYN moves to BIFF.

JOCELYN: May I help you?

BIFF moves to her and speaks in a confidential tone.

BIFF: Have you seen a turkey around here?

JOCELYN: Have I seen a turkey around HERE?

BIFF: I asked you first.

JOCELYN: You lost a turkey?

BIFF: Well, it's not something I'm proud of.

JOCELYN: Wait, why would you come here with a turkey?

BIFF: I had to, she couldn't find the place by herself.

JOCELYN: Do you always travel with a turkey?

BIFF: No, sometimes I go out and she stays home and answers the phone.

EILEEN, MIMI and AUSTIN, start laughing quietly.

EILEEN: (*Watching JOCELYN and BIFF.*) Wow, this just gets better and better.

JOCELYN: Who do you think you are to bring a turkey to our country club?

BIFF: (*Continues to look.*) Who do you have to be to bring a turkey to your country club?

JOCELYN: Sir, we do not allow livestock in here.

BIFF: Don't worry, honey, your secret is safe with me.

JOCELYN: (*Insulted.*) Are you insinuating something gratuitous with that innuendo? (*BIFF stares at her.*)

BIFF: (*Holds up the leash.*) It's not an innuendo, it's a leash. (*JOCELYN snatches the leash from him.*)

MIMI: (*To the others.*) We shouldn't be laughing.

EILEEN: Why, do you suspect fowl play?

The TRIO tries to keep from laughing again. JOCELYN shoots them a look and they try to straighten up.

BIFF: Have you seen my turkey or not?

AUSTIN: (*Between laughs.*) Gobble once for yes, twice for no. (*This sends the others into gales of laughter.*)

GERTRUDE enters from STAGE LEFT and looks around.

JOCELYN: I don't have time for this! I have better things to do than look for some turkey! (*She moves STAGE LEFT and, not seeing her, almost bumps into GERTRUDE.*) Oh, excuse me!

GERTRUDE: You're looking for a turkey?

JOCELYN: No!

BIFF: Then what are you doing with her leash? (*JOCELYN throws the leash at BIFF who catches it.*)

MIMI: (*To the others.*) This must be Act Two.

GERTRUDE: You lost a turkey?

BIFF: It's not something we're proud of.

JOCELYN: (*To BIFF.*) Stop that!

EILEEN: I think this is where we came in.

JOCELYN: (*Irate, turns to GERTRUDE.*) And just who're you?!

GERTRUDE: Gertrude Webb. I'm the loan officer from First Federal Savings and Loan.

JOCELYN: *(Stunned.)* Oh. *(She meekly laughs.)*

AUSTIN: Why aren't we taping this?

GERTRUDE: Did you say you're looking for a turkey?

JOCELYN: No, really, I am SO sorry.

GERTRUDE: The reason I ask is that I just saw one when I drove up.

BIFF: *(Rushes over to her.)* What? You didn't hit my turkey with your car?!

GERTRUDE: No, but I once knocked an owl out of a tree with a rock.

BIFF: Ginger! *(He rushes off STAGE LEFT.)*

GERTRUDE: *(To the others.)* That was when I was a little girl.

AUSTIN: Doesn't matter, you still get points.

GERTRUDE: I hope I'm not interrupting anything.

JOCELYN: No, no, not at all.

AUSTIN: No, we were just talking turkey. *(MIMI and EILEEN both slap his shoulders.)* Ow!

JOCELYN: We were expecting you. In fact, we have everything all set up for your review. *(She moves STAGE RIGHT.)* I'll just check with our manager. *(She yells off.)* Josh?!

GERTRUDE: You know, I think it's wonderful that you're putting on this Christmas show.

MIMI: Well, we do what we can.

GERTRUDE: And . . . oh, I see! You were rehearsing!

EILEEN: Huh?

GERTRUDE: For the show. You were rehearsing the show.

MIMI: Well, no, we -

JOCELYN: *(Catches this.)* Yes! That's it exactly!

GERTRUDE: Excellent. The fact that you all are taking parts in the show really shows a community spirit.

AUSTIN: Do what?

MIMI: Us? IN the show?

JOCELYN: Of course. Why, we want to make sure that we do all we can for our lovely city.

GERTRUDE: You'd be surprised how many people try to con us into giving out loans. I mean we're not Santa Claus.

JOCELYN: Of course not, who is?

At this moment, JOSH, dressed as SANTA CLAUS, enters from STAGE RIGHT.

JOSH: You called?

MIMI, EILEEN and AUSTIN roar with laughter at this.

JOCELYN: *(To the trio.)* STOP THAT!

LIGHTS black out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

It is about an hour later. DEBORAH is again onstage and checking her clipboard. MICKEY is standing near her.

DEBORAH: Let's get to the next sketch. *(She turns a page.)* What's next?

If a musical group or sketch is added, it may go here. If not, continue.

MICKEY: *(Sheepishly.)* Uh . . . Miss Mancini, there's something I . . . I mean, after rehearsal, if you're not doing anything . . . the thing is I was wondering . . .

DEBORAH: *(Impatiently.)* What is it, Mickey?!

MICKEY: *(Quickly.)* The Santa Claus sketch!

DEBORAH: Oh, right. *(She moves STAGE RIGHT.)*

MICKEY: *(To himself.)* I should've asked her then! I'm SUCH a wishy-washy . . .

DEBORAH: *(Calls off.)* Josh? You ready?

JOSH: *(Offstage.)* Coming!

MICKEY: Next time for sure. Next time I won't chicken out. *(DEBORAH moves next to him.)* Next time I'll ask her and nothing will stop me!

DEBORAH: *(Overhears this.)* Next time you'll ask me what?

MICKEY: *(Panicky.)* Uh . . . who does your teeth?

DEBORAH: Huh?

MICKEY: They're always so white and straight and . . . and your breath is lovely.

DEBORAH: Can we discuss my dental hygiene later?

MICKEY: Oh sure! *(He moves STAGE LEFT, talking to himself.)* 'Who does your teeth', I am such a goob! *(He exits.)*

DEBORAH: *(Calls off again.)* Josh!

JOSH, still dressed as Santa Claus, enters from STAGE RIGHT.

JOSH: Right here. *(He picks up a folding chair and places it downstage center.)* Just had to do a couple of things for Mrs. McAdams.

DEBORAH: She really depends on you, doesn't she?

JOSH: Hey, what can I say? *(He stands proudly.)* This place would fall to pieces without me.

DEBORAH: I can imagine. You sure you're not trying to do too much?

JOSH: What? NO, of course not.

DEBORAH: I mean you're in a lot of the show and also having to carry out your job requirements -

JOSH: I'm fine, I go through this every year. *(He looks off STAGE RIGHT.)* Where's Peggy?

DEBORAH: *(Thinking.)* Yes, you do, don't you.

JOSH: *(Calls out.)* Peggy?! Peggy!

PEGGY and her MOTHER enter from STAGE RIGHT. PEGGY looks a little depressed.

PEGGY: I'm here.

MOTHER: Yes she is and she knows all her lines, too.

DEBORAH: She didn't have any problems getting out of school, did she? We don't want to get her into any trouble.

MOTHER: No, no, not at all. The principal personally got her out of class.

PEGGY: It was SO embarrassing, gah!

JOSH: You know, when I was your age, I'd do anything to get out of school.

PEGGY: They had school way back then?

MOTHER: *(Nudges PEGGY.)* Peggy!

JOSH: (*Amiably.*) Yes they did, but it was just for me, George Washington and Methuselah.

MOTHER: I'll just be in the lounge if you need me. I need to make a few phone calls. (*She exits off STAGE LEFT.*)

JOCELYN: Fine. Now, why don't you two - (*She looks off.*) Mrs. McAdams should see this. Where did she get to now? (*To PEGGY.*) You two run lines, I'll be right back. (*She exits off STAGE RIGHT.*)

PEGGY: Yeah, right.

JOSH: (*Looks at PEGGY.*) Okay, why don't you got over there (*Indicates STAGE RIGHT.*) and we'll take a crack at this thing. (*He sits.*)

PEGGY: (*Moves STAGE RIGHT.*) Sure, fine.

JOSH: And - (*He looks out.*) - lights come up. (*He laughs and speaks in a deeper voice.*) Ho ho ho, Merry Christmas, MERRY Christmas, ho ho ho. Who's next to see Santa Claus? (*PEGGY doesn't move but seems to be thinking of something else.*) I SAID who's NEXT to see Santa Claus?!

PEGGY: Oh! (*She trots over to him and says her lines without any meaning.*) Oh, Santa Claus, I've been waiting all year to see you.

JOSH: Well, here I am. (*He reaches over and places her on his lap.*) Say, you're a big girl, aren't you.

PEGGY: Yes, I'm nine years-old.

JOSH: Oh, I thought you were much older than that. Now, what can I do for you?

PEGGY: Well, Santa, I've heard lots of stories about you and I don't know what is real and what is not.

JOSH: Stories? About me? Maybe you are thinking of someone else. What kind of stories? Tell me one.

PEGGY: Okay. I heard one about you that says you went over with Columbus when America was discovered.

JOSH: No, no, dear, that wasn't old Santa Claus. That was the Santa Maria.

PEGGY: Oh! Then I heard one that you are really a city in New Mexico.

JOSH: No, that's Santa Fe.

PEGGY: Oh. Then there's the one where you help get things unclogged.

JOSH: No, that's Sani-Flush.

PEGGY: (*Gets off his leg.*) This is so silly.

JOSH: (*His usual voice.*) Uh oh. I take it things are not well in your world, Peggy?

PEGGY: Nah, it's just that I feel kinda . . . stupid.

JOSH: Funny, you don't look stupid.

PEGGY: Well, I do.

JOSH: I see. How come?

PEGGY: Oh, it's just so dumb.

JOSH: (*Motions her over.*) No, what is it? What could be so bad?

PEGGY: It's all this pretending. All this junk about Christmas and stuff.

JOSH: And I'll bet some of the other kiddos have been razzing you?

PEGGY: Huh?

JOSH: Giving you a hard time.

PEGGY: (*Moves to him.*) Yeah. I mean I'm too old for Christmas.

JOSH: Oh, I don't believe that. NO-body is too old for Christmas.

PEGGY: I'm ten years-old! (*JOSH looks at her.*) Almost.

JOSH: And you think all this is silly?

PEGGY: Phony-balonie is what Johnny Burdock says.

JOSH: Oh, I see.

PEGGY: And he knows! He told me all about it.

JOSH puts an arm around PEGGY.

JOSH: And what did this great wise man tell you?

PEGGY: That it's silly and I'm silly and the only reason I'm doing it is to get outta class.

JOSH: Uh huh.

PEGGY: And since the Principal has been over to our house a lot, they think I'm getting treated special or something. And that's why they say I'm in this show.

JOSH: And why ARE you doing it?

PEGGY: 'Cause Mommie . . . I mean, my mother is making me do it.

JOSH: And that's the only reason?

PEGGY: Well . . . I guess.

JOSH: Or could it be that maybe, just maybe, you like it?

PEGGY: Well?! (*She turns away.*) No, I just do it.

JOSH: Now look here. *(With one finger he turns PEGGY'S face toward him.)* Don't you like Christmas?

PEGGY: Yeah! Well, I did. But that was back when I was just a kid.

JOSH: Oh. And I guess you think I'm silly?

PEGGY: Oh NO! Not you, Josh. I like you.

JOSH: But I'm doing this show and you said it was silly.

PEGGY: No, I . . . *(She looks away.)* . . . you just don't understand.

JOSH: Okay. Maybe this will help. Do you know why I do the show every year?

PEGGY: Why?

JOSH: *(Leans in to her.)* Because Santa Claus himself asked me to. *(PEGGY looks at him and then turns away.)*

PEGGY: Oh PLEASE!

JOSH: Don't buy that?

PEGGY: You think?

JOSH: Peggy, it's like this. Christmas . . . well, it isn't just a show.

PEGGY: You mean this one?

JOSH: No, I mean it's not just presents or decorating tress or blinking light bulbs.

PEGGY: Blinking light bulbs?

JOSH: You know, colored bulbs on trees and houses and like that. This is about more than that. It's . . . it's a feeling. A wonderful experience, a joyous occasion. Peggy, Christmas is about the heart. It's something we experience - *(He puts a hand to his chest.)* - here.

PEGGY: Huh?

JOSH: It's a time for people who love each other to show it. Your mother and you and families all over the world to come together and enjoy each other. And for strangers who've never met to be nicer to each other when they meet on the street or in stores. Look out there. *(He points out.)*

PEGGY: *(Looks out.)* At what?

JOSH: The night of the show this place will be filled with just those people. All sorts of people, some family, some friends, some who've never met. But they'll be sitting out there. And they will all have the Christmas spirit.

PEGGY: Wow!

JOSH: And you know something else. A LOT of them will wish they, too, could be in our show. They'll wish they could play a part. And SOME of them will wish they could be - *(He tickles her and she giggles.)*

PEGGY: *(Laughing.)* Okay, okay!

JOSH: Tell you what, let's take a break and get a coke.

PEGGY: Fine with me. *(They move STAGE RIGHT, PEGGY holding JOSH'S hand. She stops.)* Josh?

JOSH: Yeah?

PEGGY: Do you know EVERYthing?

JOSH: Sure. *(They both laugh and exit. After a beat, LIONEL walks onstage from STAGE LEFT. He looks STAGE LEFT as if watching JOSH and PEGGY.)*

LIONEL: Uh huh. *(He smiles.)* They really do have something here.

LIGHTS dim out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

It is a little while later. DEBORAH is onstage talking with AUSTIN, EILEEN and MIMI.

DEBORAH: So, what you're saying is that you want to be in the show?

MIMI: Yes.

AUSTIN: It's sort of an obligation.

EILEEN: He means it's an obligation in that we want give you a hand, help you, you know? *(She eyes AUSTIN.)* Right?

AUSTIN: Huh? Oh, yeah, that's what I meant.

DEBORAH: Then we're approved to do the show here?

EILEEN: Right.

KAREN and BIFF enter from STAGE LEFT.

MIMI: Of course.

KAREN: What's next?

AUSTIN: *(Sees BIFF.)* Uh oh, here comes Turkey Boy again.

DEBORAH: What?

BIFF: *(Raises a hand.)* I think he means me.

DEBORAH: *(Moves to BIFF.)* Oh, this is Biff. He's our techie. You know, he handles sound, lights -

MIMI: Livestock.

DEBORAH: Guess what? They've approved us! We get to do the show here.

KAREN: Great.

EILEEN: *(Reminding DEBORAH.)* If - ?

DEBORAH: Oh yeah. *(To KAREN.)* If they can be in the show.

KAREN: That'll be no problem. *(She turns to AUSTIN.)* I hope.

AUSTIN: Huh? What're you looking at me for?

MIMI: We try to get people not to stare at you but sometimes they just can't help themselves.

KAREN: *(To DEBORAH.)* No, I was just thinking that we only have just so many men's parts in the show.

DEBORAH: Oh, we'll work all that out. Biff, go back and get ready with sound and lights.

BIFF: Right. *(He starts off STAGE RIGHT.)*

EILEEN: Oh, did you find your turkey?

BIFF: Not yet, but Ginger can't get far. Not in those boots. *(He exits off.)*

AUSTIN: *(To KAREN.)* He puts boots on his turkey?

KAREN: You should've seen her in our Fourth of July show. She was wearing taps.

DEBORAH: Listen, I have the scripts backstage here. I can find parts for you all. *(She moves STAGE LEFT.)* If you'll come with me?

EILEEN: Okay, but I should tell you I can't dance or sing.

MIMI: And me, I don't have any talent at all.

AUSTIN: Other than that, we should be a smash.

DEBORAH: *(Not sure.)* Eeeeyeah. *(AUSTIN, MIMI and EILEEN exit off.)*

KAREN: What do we do?

DEBORAH: Just rehearse something. We open on Friday night so keep your fingers crossed. *(She exits off after the others.)*

KAREN: Hey, no problem. *(She looks out.)* Anyone here to rehearse? *(If an act is added, it may go here. If not, continue.)* Biff? Biff, where are you?

Over the speaker system BIFF'S voice is heard.

BIFF'S VOICE: Back here.

KAREN: You can hear me all right?

BIFF'S VOICE: Fine.

JOCELYN and GERTRUDE enter from STAGE RIGHT.

JOCELYN: And then we hope to revitalize the stables and start up our riding club again.

GERTRUDE: Lovely. You have some excellent plans there. Let me just check in with my office.

JOCELYN: There's a phone in my office.

GERTRUDE: Nonsense. *(She takes a cell phone from her purse.)* I'm never far from home, if you get my drift.

JOCELYN: Oh, of course. *(She moves to KAREN while GERTRUDE pushes buttons on her phone.)* Now, where is your director?

KAREN: She's getting scripts for your board members. Here, I'll show you. *(They exit off STAGE LEFT.)*

GERTRUDE: *(Into her phone.)* Hi, Uncle Bob? Me. Yes, it all looks great. They are really putting on a great show here. I KNOW! *(She looks around and then speaks confidentially.)* And if Mr. Babb okays this loan I'll be a shoe-in for that Hawaiian vacation. Right, I'll let you know. *(She folds up her phone and replaces it in her purse. She looks around and then puts her hands together as if praying.)* Oh, please, let this loan go through. Will you do that for me, please?

BIFF'S VOICE booms out.

BIFF'S VOICE: I'll do what I can!

GERTRUDE slowly looks around and then up. MICKEY enters with JOSH, now dressed in his usual clothes, from STAGE RIGHT.

MICKEY: Oh, I get what you're saying but I sort of get tongue-tied.

JOSH: All you need is a little self-confidence. Have faith in yourself.

MICKEY: And you think Deborah likes that?

JOSH: Just walk right up to her and ask her out, it's that simple. Look, just be yourself.

MICKEY: I think that's why I like to act, I like being somebody.

JOSH: Mickey, you ARE somebody. You're young, got a good job, very friendly, generous -

MICKEY: Maybe I ought to ask YOU out.

JOSH: (*Sees GERTRUDE.*) Miss Webb, is there something I can do for you? You haven't seen our golf course yet. It's just a few yards in back of the clubhouse.

GERTRUDE: No, I was out there a little while ago. All I saw outside the clubhouse were three or four derelict automobiles.

JOSH: That's the golf course.

MICKEY: (*A bit upset.*) Hey, we parked out there! Are you saying that - ?

GERTRUDE: Oh, excuse me, sir. I had no idea! (*She quickly exits off STAGE RIGHT.*)

MICKEY: (*Turns to JOSH.*) What's with her?

BIFF enters from STAGE LEFT.

JOSH: Listen, we have to be nice to her so we can get that loan.

BIFF: Yeah, well, it may not be all that hard.

JOSH: What?

BIFF: She's keen to giving out loans on account'a she's up for some vacation or other and that might cinch it.

JOSH: Where did you get all that?

BIFF: I just heard her, when I was up in the booth there. (*He points out.*)

JOSH: (*Sits in a chair.*) Oh MAN!

MICKEY: What?

JOSH: Is ANYbody thinking about Christmas here?

BIFF: Hey, I just bought a reindeer outfit for Ginger.

JOSH: No, I mean around here. I just WISH people around here would get into the Christmas spirit.

At that moment, AUSTIN enters from STAGE LEFT, dressed as SANTA CLAUS.

AUSTIN: Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas!

JOSH stares at him and then looks out.

JOSH: Be careful what you wish for.

LIGHTS black out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

It is a half hour later. DEBORAH is again checking her clipboard. MICKEY and KAREN are standing next to her.

KAREN: So when do we do the run-through?

DEBORAH: We'll try one after lunch.

KAREN: They're feeding us?

MICKEY: But I just bought a can of Vienna sausages. *(The ladies look at him.)* The big one. *(He illustrates with his hands.)*

DEBORAH: Mickey, you still play the parts you were first given but the rest of us may have to swap off with the board.

KAREN: Gladly, and I can tell you which parts they can have. *(GERTRUDE and JOCELYN enter from STAGE LEFT.)*

GERTRUDE: Oh, I'm sure we can reach an arrangement of some kind.

JOCELYN: Wonderful.

GERTRUDE: What I'll do is have my boss come down and take a look around. *(She looks at DEBORAH.)* Also, to see the show - he's a real sucker for this sort of sentimentality.

DEBORAH: We were just talking about having a run-through after lunch. Do you think he could be here then?

GERTRUDE: I'll find out. *(She moves to one side and takes out her cell phone. She speaks to her phone quietly during the next few speeches.)*

JOCELYN: Where are the others? *(She looks off STAGE LEFT.)* Austin? Mimi? Eileen? *(AUSTIN, still dressed as SANTA CLAUS, enters from STAGE RIGHT.)*

AUSTIN: *(As he enters.)* They're getting into their costumes. By the way, we came up with an idea.

JOCELYN: What?

AUSTIN: Why not make the Christmas show a dinner theatre?

JOCELYN: Say, that IS a good idea! We could set up tables and charge twice the price. *(If you are performing this play as a dinner theatre, have the cast look out at the audience and smile.)*

DEBORAH: Biff? *(She looks out.)* You in the booth? Can you come down here?

BIFF: *(Offstage.)* Coming.

DEBORAH: I have some light cues to give you.

JOSH enters from STAGE RIGHT.

JOSH: Deborah, there you are. Is he playing Santa now?

KAREN: We were just going to tell you.

DEBORAH: Yes, Josh. Look. *(She pulls JOSH DS.)* This is something that has been bothering me for some time now.

JOSH: You don't think I can do Santa Claus? I've been playing him for years!

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