

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

By

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THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

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THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALICE, a thoughtful, angelic child

RICKY, Alice's video-obsessed, self-centered brother

MOTHER, Alice and Ricky's mother

MRS. CLAUS, Santa's encouraging and clever wife

SANTA, the Big Man of the Christmas season

JINGLE, a conniving elf

JANGLE, Jingle's protégé

ELF, any one of Santa's shop workers

DASHER, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

DANCER, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

PRANCER, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

VIXEN, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

COMET, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

CUPID, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

DONNER, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

BLITZEN, a reindeer employed by Santa to pull his sleigh

REINDEER, any of Santa's reindeer

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

The play begins with ALICE alone at the kitchen table. She is singing “Jingle Bells” to herself. MOTHER is folding laundry in another room and may or may not appear onstage.

ALICE. *(Speaking to herself.)* I’ve been so good this year. I’ve helped Mom with all of the cooking and cleaning. I’ve gotten straight A’s at school. Mom never even had to remind me to do my homework. And, I gave all the money I earned from my lemonade stand to charity. I’ve been so good that Santa already wrote to tell me that he’s put me on his Nice list. I know I’ll get my dollhouse this year. I can’t wait for Christmas!

MOTHER. Alice! Could you help me fold this laundry?

ALICE. Coming! I’ll be there in a minute. I just need to put Ricky’s letter to Santa in the mailbox. *(Speaking to herself.)* I can’t believe he just left it here.

MOTHER. Alice! Ricky just dumped these clothes on the chair. Do you know where he is?

ALICE. He’s on the phone complaining about the WiFi.

MOTHER. That figures.

ALICE. *(Speaking to herself.)* I don’t know about Ricky. All of those clothes he never puts away. It just makes Mom so mad. All he cares about are his video games and the internet. *(Sighing.)* But I still hope Ricky makes Santa’s Nice list. It would be really awkward if I got a Christmas present and he didn’t. I wouldn’t want him to feel bad.

SCENE 2

MRS. CLAUS and SANTA are seated at a table. They are going through a pile of letters.

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MRS. CLAUS. This letter is from a Ricky Williams.

SANTA. Is he on our Nice list or our Naughty list?

MRS. CLAUS. Let's see. Ricky Williams. Here he is. We've got a question mark next to his name. He's in our gray area. We're undecided about him.

SANTA. What's Ricky asking for this year?

MRS. CLAUS. Hmm ... His penmanship could sure use some work. I really wish he wrote bigger too. My eyesight is really getting bad. I need a magnifying glass to read this. (*Grabbing a magnifying glass.*) There. That's better. Hmm ... I think it looks like he wants something called Mimecraft.

SANTA. Mimecraft? What's that?

MRS. CLAUS. I'm not sure. Perhaps Ricky wants to become a mime. (*Mrs. Claus imitates a mime.*)

SANTA. That must be it. I guess he's asking for a how-to book on pantomime.

MRS. CLAUS. I don't think we've ever gotten a request for that before. Interesting.

SANTA. But not as interesting as all those kids who wrote that they want to just dance.

MRS. CLAUS. Oh, I love to dance too, and it's so nice to know that not all children are obsessed with video games. A little music goes a long way in a child's imagination.

SANTA. Is there anyone else at that address?

MRS. CLAUS. Let me check my files. Yes. There's an Alice Williams. Ricky's sister.

SANTA. Which list is she on?

MRS. CLAUS. We have her at the top of our Nice list. She's a real angel. We already sent her a Nice list acceptance letter. She wants a dollhouse.

SANTA. Now there's a wonderful gift! Well, we wouldn't want to stir up any jealousy between siblings. Maybe we ought to put Ricky on the Nice list too. Besides, one stop drop-off is always appealing.

MRS. CLAUS. Then that settles it. Ricky goes on the Nice list.

SANTA. Good. What does the next letter say?

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MRS. CLAUS. Let's see. (*Reading the next letter to herself.*) Another request for an iPatch.

SANTA. Yo ho ho! These kids seem to be going through a big pirate phase this year. Maybe there's a new *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie.

MRS. CLAUS. Hmm ... Or maybe an iPatch isn't for pirates. It's certainly spelled a little odd with a little letter 'i' in front. All these new toys and games that have come out in the past decade. I-This. I-That. Video this. Video that. It's all so confusing.

SANTA. Whatever happened to asking for a hula hoop or a football?

MRS. CLAUS. Or a dollhouse.

SANTA. Like Alice.

MRS. CLAUS. I guess it's just the modern age.

SANTA. Don't I know it. That Amazon is going to put me out of business. Why bother writing me a letter and mailing it all the way to the North Pole when you can just select what you want with a click of a button and put it in a shopping cart online?

MRS. CLAUS. Oh, now, Dear. You know you offer more personalized service than Amazon. That's what distinguishes you from all the other Christmas competitors. And you encourage children to be good throughout the year, so parents love you too.

SANTA. (*Sulking.*) I'm just a dinosaur heading for extinction.

MRS. CLAUS. Don't say that, Dear. Parents still love to read "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" to their children. That'll be sure to keep the young ones believing in you from one generation to the next.

SANTA. People are still reading children's books?

MRS. CLAUS. Of course they are. People can't spell anymore, and they can't write cursive, but children's stories will never grow old. "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" will always be a part of their Christmas, and so will Santa Claus.

SANTA. Aww ... you're my ray of perpetual sunshine.

MRS. CLAUS. (*Patting Santa's knee.*) Anything that I can do to keep people's spirits up—both yours and the children's.

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! That's why I married you.

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MRS. CLAUS. Yes. There's a sunny side to everything. You just need to find the right way to look at it.

SANTA. That attitude will take you far.

MRS. CLAUS. It already has.

SANTA. All the way to the North Pole. Ho! Ho! Ho!

MRS. CLAUS. Come on, then. It's about time we check on the elves. Maybe they can shed some light for us on the latest and greatest toys.

SCENE 3

Santa and Mrs. Claus enter an empty room scattered with toys. JINGLE, JANGLE, and the other ELVES are out back shooting baskets.

MRS. CLAUS. Hmm ... I thought we'd pass the reindeer outside on our way over here.

SANTA. Strange indeed that we didn't see them. And it looks like no one's around here either.

MRS. CLAUS. Jingle! Jangle! *(There's no response.)* Where is everyone?

SANTA. Is it just me, or do you hear a noise coming from out back?

MRS. CLAUS. Silver bells, maybe?

SANTA. No. More like a thumping sound.

MRS. CLAUS. Hmm ... Well, I don't know. But, I thought the elves were supposed to be taking inventory today.

SANTA. Maybe we should text them. Isn't that what people do these days?

MRS. CLAUS. *(Gets out her phone and tries to text.)* Let's see now ... It's so hard to see these letters.

SANTA. Let me try. *(Tries to press buttons.)* Darn! My fingers are just too fat for these buttons.

MRS. CLAUS. This modern technology isn't always cut out for us old folks. I'll give the elves a little tinkle, so they'll know we're here. *(She rings a bell.)* Ringaling! Ringaling! *(They wait.)*

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SANTA. Well, that didn't work. I'm going to check out back. (*As soon as Santa pulls on the back door, an alarm sounds and lights flash. Santa and Mrs. Claus are startled.*)

MRS. CLAUS. What on earth? (*The elves come running in wearing sweatbands.*)

ELF. Santa! Mrs. Claus!

SANTA. Good grief! I could have had a heart attack! What was that?

JINGLE. It's our burglar alarm.

SANTA. Burglar alarm? I didn't know we had any burglars up here in the North Pole.

JINGLE. It's just a precaution.

MRS. CLAUS. But it went off when we were trying to go out back. Shouldn't it work the other way around—when someone tries to come inside?

JINGLE. It's a wiring glitch.

SANTA. Huh?

JINGLE. Now. Now. It's nothing for you to worry about. We'll take care of it.

ELF. So, uh ... we weren't expecting you. Is there something that you needed?

MRS. CLAUS. We just wanted to stop by and see how things were going.

JINGLE. Oh, you know us. Busy. Busy.

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! I see you've worked up quite a sweat.

ELF. Oh, yeah. (*Wipes brow.*) It's hard for us to catch our breath during peak season.

ELF. And this dry, cold air makes us so thirsty. (*Takes a sip from water bottle.*)

MRS. CLAUS. We know how hard you've been working. You were taking inventory today, isn't that right?

ELF. Inventory?

JINGLE. Oh. Yeah. We wanted to talk to you about that. Our toy warehouse is running out of space.

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ELF. There's no place to store the new toys.

JINGLE. We were thinking that maybe we need to just throw out all of those board games and other old-fashioned toys that kids don't play with anymore.

ELF. Yeah. The truth is, if we could just stockpile a bunch of iPads and cellphones that would meet most of our demand.

ELF. Don't forget video games. Those are popular items too.

ELF. Basically, hi-tech is the way to go, for sure.

ELF. Out with the old. In with the new.

MRS. CLAUS. What has the world come to!

ELF. Technology isn't all that bad, Mrs. Claus.

ELF. Yeah. That GPS that Santa used last year worked like a charm.

ELF. It was the first time the reindeer didn't make any wrong turns on their route.

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! You're right. I had forgotten all about that.

MRS. CLAUS. But what will you do with all those toys in our warehouse that nobody asks for anymore? Surely, there must be a good home for them somewhere.

ELF. Nah.

JINGLE. We were thinking of a big bonfire.

MRS. CLAUS. (*Gasps.*) Have mercy!

SANTA. A bonfire?

MRS. CLAUS. Won't that melt the snow?

ELF. Not as much as global warming already has.

MRS. CLAUS. Oh, dear!

JINGLE. Now don't you worry about a thing, Mrs. Claus. We'll take care of everything.

ELF. We've already got the marshmallows.

JINGLE. We just need to go through all our stock and discard anything that hasn't been requested in the past two years.

MRS. CLAUS. I can't watch.

SANTA. It'll bring tears to my eyes.

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ELF. We'll let you know when we're done.

MRS. CLAUS. But we need to say a proper goodbye.

SANTA. Let us know before you begin the fireworks.

ELF. Will do!

ELF. Sure thing.

ELF. Is there anything else we can do for you?

MRS. CLAUS. Oh, yes. There was something. Could you have a look and see if you recognize this item?

ELF. *(An elf takes a paper from Mrs. Claus, and the elves look it over together.)* iPatch?

ELF. It doesn't sound familiar.

JINGLE. But don't you worry, Mrs. Claus. We'll take care of it.

MRS. CLAUS. Oh, marvelous!

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! I knew we could count on you.

MRS. CLAUS. Now, where are those reindeer?

SANTA. We missed them outside.

ELF. I think they've been spending a lot of time in the stable lately.

SANTA. Shouldn't they be flying some laps in the sky?

MRS. CLAUS. Maybe we should go check on them.

SANTA. Good idea. *(Smiles lovingly at Mrs. Claus.)* Shall we? *(Santa and Mrs. Claus exit arm in arm.)*

JANGLE. Say, what did you mean by "we'll take care of it." I've never even heard of an iPatch. How are we going to make those things in our shop if we don't even know what they are?

JINGLE. Simple. We just need to go on Amazon and order them there.

ELF. Oh! You're a genius!

JINGLE. *(Proudly.)* Yep. That's how I got to where I am now.

ELF. Which is?

JINGLE. At the top of the world!

JANGLE. Ha! Ha! Top of the world. North Pole. You're a hoot.

ELF. Nah. That would be an owl.

JANGLE. Ha! Ha! Hoot. Owl. Another good one.

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JINGLE. Follow me, and I'll show you the ropes.

ELF. Or, at the very least, Jingle will show you some hoops.

JINGLE. Yeah. Did you see how well that Santa detector worked? Just like I said it would.

JANGLE. Yup. Ha! Ha!

ELF. Come on! Let's go out back and play some more basketball. *(The elves exit out back. A bouncing basketball is heard.)*

SCENE 4

Mrs. Claus and Santa are standing outside.

MRS. CLAUS. Hmm ... Wasn't this pathway supposed to be cleared?

SANTA. Yes. It was.

MRS. CLAUS. But it's not. We'll have to say something to the reindeer about this. Now where are they?

SANTA. Let's check the top of the porch. *(Santa and Mrs. Claus look up.)*

MRS. CLAUS. I'll give them a little tinkle. *(Rings her bell.)* Ringaling! Ringaling!

SANTA. Nope. Not there. Let's check the top of the wall.

MRS. CLAUS. *(Rings her bell.)* Ringaling! Ringaling!

SANTA. Nope. Not there either.

MRS. CLAUS. Didn't the elves say they thought the reindeer had been spending time in the stable?

SANTA. You're right. They did say that, didn't they?

MRS. CLAUS. Let's go to the stable.

SANTA. What would I do without you? *(Santa and Mrs. Claus walk arm in arm to the stable.)*

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SCENE 5

Mrs. Claus and Santa are at the door of the stable looking for the REINDEER.

MRS. CLAUS. I'll give a little tinkle, so they know we're here. (*Rings her bell.*) Ringaling! Ringaling! (*They wait.*)

SANTA. Dasher? Dancer? (*Santa takes a step. There's a crunch.*)

MRS. CLAUS. Prancer? Vixen? (*Mrs. Claus takes a step. There's a crunch.*)

SANTA. Comet? Cupid? (*Santa takes a step. There's a crunch.*)

MRS. CLAUS. Donner? Blitzen? (*Mrs. Claus takes a step. There's a crunch.*)

SANTA. Sshh! I hear something.

MRS. CLAUS. What does it sound like?

SANTA. It sounds like a crunch. Don't move. Just listen. (*Santa and Mrs. Claus freeze where they are.*)

MRS. CLAUS. I don't hear anything.

SANTA. I don't hear anything either.

MRS. CLAUS. Let's keep going. (*More crunching is heard as they both walk again.*)

SANTA. Freeze! (*Mrs. Claus and Santa stop where they are.*)

MRS. CLAUS. What?

SANTA. I heard it again.

MRS. CLAUS. I still don't hear anything.

SANTA. I could have sworn ...

MRS. CLAUS. (*Mrs. Claus takes another step then lifts up her shoe*) I think I'm stepping on something.

SANTA. What is it?

MRS. CLAUS. Crumbs!

SANTA. From what?

MRS. CLAUS. I don't know.

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SANTA. Let me have a smell of it.

MRS. CLAUS. What?

SANTA. I'll tell you what it is. *(Santa sniffs.)*

MRS. CLAUS. Well?

SANTA. Sour cream and onion.

MRS. CLAUS. Junk food?

SANTA. Sour cream and onion flavored potato chips. Definitely.

MRS. CLAUS. The reindeer should not be eating that.

SANTA. Look! There's a whole trail of crumbs.

MRS. CLAUS. Where does it lead?

SANTA. Behind the haystack!

MRS. CLAUS. Let's have a look. *(Santa and Mrs. Claus creep up to the haystack. The reindeer are sitting behind it eating chips and playing video games.)*

SANTA. There you are. We've been looking everywhere for you.

MRS. CLAUS. Have you been sitting around eating chips and playing video games all day?

SANTA. *(The reindeer do not respond.)* That's what it looks like to me.

MRS. CLAUS. What are these reindeer doing eating chips and playing video games? They're supposed to be getting fit for the season.

SANTA. Looks like the only working out they're doing is with a joystick.

MRS. CLAUS. Joystick? Joystick? Think of the children who will miss out if these reindeer can't pull the sleigh. Where will their joy be?

SANTA. Dasher? Dancer?

MRS. CLAUS. Prancer? Vixen?

SANTA. Comet? Cupid?

MRS. CLAUS. Donner? Blitzen?

SANTA. Hello? Earth to reindeer.

MRS. CLAUS. It's like they've all been hypnotized.

SANTA. They don't even seem to know we're standing right behind them.

MRS. CLAUS. This just will not do!

SANTA. How can we get their attention?

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MRS. CLAUS. I have an idea. (*Mrs. Claus pulls the electrical cord out of the socket, and the video screen goes black.*)

SANTA. Brilliant! That's why I married you.

REINDEER. Hey! What happened to our game?

REINDEER. Yeah. (*The reindeer look around and see Santa and Mrs. Claus.*)

REINDEER. Santa?

REINDEER. Mrs. Claus?

REINDEER. How long have you been standing there?

MRS. CLAUS. Long enough.

SANTA. We found the trail of potato chips.

MRS. CLAUS. How many times have we told you to only eat food in the trough?

REINDEER. Oops!

REINDEER. We forgot.

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! I don't believe that.

MRS. CLAUS. You better watch out, or you're going to end up on our Naughty list this year.

REINDEER. Oh, no!

REINDEER. Not the Naughty list!

REINDEER. We'll clean up the mess.

MRS. CLAUS. And junk food no less!

REINDEER. Our bad.

MRS. CLAUS. It doesn't look like you've shoveled the pathway either.

REINDEER. We were going to get to that.

SANTA. You've been slacking off on doing your chores.

MRS. CLAUS. When was the last time you went outside to play?

REINDEER. Umm ...

REINDEER. It's too cold to be outside.

SANTA. What?

MRS. CLAUS. You're reindeer!

SANTA. You're made for cold weather.

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MRS. CLAUS. That's why you live here in the North Pole.

REINDEER. We're waiting for global warming to kick in a bit more.

MRS. CLAUS. My word!

SANTA. All of you need to go outside right now and practice your flying.

MRS. CLAUS. You heard Santa!

REINDEER. *(Standing up slowly.)* Aww ... Just when we were having fun.

REINDEER. Yeah. We made a lot of progress on that level.

REINDEER. We'd never gotten that far before.

MRS. CLAUS. I'm sure you'll be able to do it again.

REINDEER. But we've left our online teammates in the lurch!

MRS. CLAUS. I'm sure they'll survive just fine without you.

SANTA. Believe it or not, there was life before the advent of the internet, you know. *(The reindeer start shuffling out the door.)*

REINDEER. It's hard to imagine.

REINDEER. Life must have been so boring back then.

REINDEER. Yeah. What did they do for fun without the internet?

SCENE 6

RICKY is sitting in an armchair in the family room eating chips and playing video games. Alice walks in and sees him.

ALICE. Ricky! Have you been sitting there eating chips and playing video games all day?

RICKY. Not all day. I had to take some bathroom breaks.

ALICE. And you're eating in the family room? You know that makes Mom really mad. She wants us to keep the food in the kitchen.

RICKY. *(Takes another handful of chips.)* Don't worry. I'll clean it up.

ALICE. You always say that, but you never do.

RICKY. What's the big deal?

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ALICE. You're supposed to help me shovel the driveway. It's full of snow.

RICKY. I'll get to it.

ALICE. Well, I'm going out there right now before it gets dark. *(Alice puts on her coat and goes outside. Mother appears and pulls the cord out of the electrical socket. The video monitor turns off.)*

RICKY. Hey! What happened to my game? *(Ricky turns and sees Mother.)* What'd you do that for?

MOTHER. Your sister is absolutely right, Ricky. Get yourself up off the couch, and go help Alice clear the driveway.

RICKY. Aww, Mom!

MOTHER. And when you're done, why don't you play a little outside?

RICKY. What? In the snow? Why would I want to do that? It's cold out there.

MOTHER. When I was young, we actually liked to go outside and play in the snow. *(Speaking dreamily.)* We used to flap our arms and legs on the ground and make snow angels. And we would build snowmen and snow forts. We had so much fun!

RICKY. Yeah. Yeah. It's all overrated. You just didn't know what you were missing 'cause you didn't have internet back then. *(Ricky slowly puts on a coat and shuffles out the door.)*

SCENE 7

Mr. and Mrs. Claus enter the elves' shop. The floor is strewn with board games and other non-tech toys.

SANTA. Thank you for letting us know.

ELF. Sure. Sure. *(The elf towels off and drinks from a water bottle.)*

MRS. CLAUS. We wanted to pay our final respects.

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SANTA. (*Catching sight of a doll and picking it up.*) Ho! Ho! Ho! I remember when this doll was the most popular toy around. We had the elves working around the clock for months to keep up with the demand.

MRS. CLAUS. (*Clasping her hands together.*) Children's eyes would light up like stars when they'd see her. They'd even send us pictures of themselves carrying these dolls in their arms. What a delight that was to see!

SANTA. (*Looking at an action figure.*) And lookie here at this action figure. We had heaps of kids playing with these hulking heroes. Dragging them through the mud. Under bushes. In the water. The superhero always arriving just in the nick of time to save the day. My heart is pounding just thinking about the adventures they had!

MRS. CLAUS. And here's one of those board games that families used to gather round and play together in the evenings. Family game night—now there's a thing of the past! (*Elves enter, skating around the room.*)

ELF. Get a load of these!

ELF. We uncovered boxes of these ancient oldies stacked behind our rollerblade inventory.

SANTA. I remember those four-wheeled critters. They're called roller skates. For years, kids would clamor for those things.

MRS. CLAUS. They were so easy to put on. Children just slipped them on over their tennis shoes and off they went skating around the neighborhood.

SANTA. They loved those clacking clunkers.

MRS. CLAUS AND SANTA. (*Santa and Mrs. Claus both sigh.*) Those were the days!

SANTA. May I?

ELF. May you what?

SANTA. May I put on those roller skates for a wee bit. For old times' sake?

MRS. CLAUS. Now, Santa. I don't want you to hurt yourself.

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SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! I know what I'm doing. I was a real pro in my youth. I used to skate everywhere. That was before I moved to the North Pole and got a sleigh and reindeer.

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, you're not so young anymore. This could be dangerous.

SANTA. You worry too much. I'm not going to hurt myself. Help me out here, Jingle. *(Santa sits down in a chair and the elves put roller skates on him.)*

JINGLE. You're all set.

ELF. Just grab hold of our arms. *(Elves help Santa stand in the roller skates.)*

MRS. CLAUS. Be careful!

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! Nothing to it.

MRS. CLAUS. Maybe you should wear a helmet.

SANTA. Nonsense. *(Santa let's go of the elves and raises his arms in the air.)* Look! No hands!

ELF. Are you sure you want to do this by yourself, Santa?

SANTA. I'm sure.

ELF. We could just trot along beside you to be safe.

SANTA. I'll be fine. *(The elves begin to back away.)*

ELF. Easy does it, Santa.

ELF. Slowly.

SANTA. *(Santa begins to skate tentatively.)* What did I tell you? Piece of cake. *(Santa picks up speed.)* Whee! Look at me! I've got wheels! *(Santa circles around the room then points to the door that leads to the basketball court.)* Open that door. I'm going to go for a spin out back.

ELF. Not the back door!

ELF. Stop! *(Mrs. Claus opens the back door. An alarm sounds and lights flash.)*

ELF. Too late.

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MRS. CLAUS. *(Looking up at the flashing lights.)* I thought you elves were going to fix that. *(Santa begins to stumble as he heads out the back door.)*

ELF. Santa!

ELF. Look out for the ... *(Santa trips over the basketball and falls to the ground.)*

MRS. CLAUS. basketball?

ELF. Santa, are you all right?

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, are you hurt?

SANTA. Ooooo ... *(Santa grabs his ankle. Mrs. Claus and the elves run to his side.)*

MRS. CLAUS. What's this basketball doing here?

ELF. I have no idea where it came from.

ELF. It probably fell off the production line and rolled away from our shop. *(Mrs. Claus turns around and sees the basketball hoop.)*

MRS. CLAUS. A basketball hoop? Out here?

ELF. Oh, well ... uh ...

ELF. It's for testing out our products.

ELF. Yeah. That's it. Test and evaluation.

ELF. For quality control.

SANTA. *(Groaning.)* Oooo ... I think I've twisted my ankle.

ELF. Are you in pain?

SANTA. No. I just like to groan.

ELF. Oh. OK. *(The elves look at each other.)*

SANTA. Of course I'm in pain!

ELF. Why didn't you just say so?

MRS. CLAUS. Oh, now, Dear, don't get upset. It's not good for your blood pressure.

ELF. *(Whispering to other elves.)* If he was really worried about his blood pressure, you'd think he'd try to lose a few pounds.

MRS. CLAUS. *(Turning to Elf.)* Did you say something?

ELF. Oh, no. It was nothing.

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ELF. He was just talking to himself. He does that sometimes.

SANTA. Oooo ...

MRS. CLAUS. Let me have a look at your ankle. (*Mrs. Claus bends down.*) It's swelling up. Santa needs an ice pack.

ELF. Ice pack?

ELF. We don't have an ice pack.

MRS. CLAUS. Goodness! This is the North Pole. Just go gather a little snow. Here, take my handkerchief!

ELF. Oh. Great idea!

ELF. Isn't she the clever one!

SANTA. That's why I married her.

ELVES. We'll be right back. (*The elves exit to collect some snow.*)

SANTA. I don't think I can walk.

MRS. CLAUS. It'll heal. It just might be difficult to get around for a while.

SANTA. But Christmas is coming! I need to deliver presents soon. All those kids who have been good throughout the year ... they're counting on me.

MRS. CLAUS. Dear, now don't stress yourself out. Try to relax.

SANTA. Relax? How can I relax when I've fallen on my bum during the most important season of the year?

MRS. CLAUS. The year is not over yet. There's still time for you to recover. You must think positively!

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! There's my ray of sunshine talking again, giving me hope.

MRS. CLAUS. That's why you married me.

SCENE 8

Santa is seen sitting in a chair. His foot is propped up on a pillow.

MRS. CLAUS. How are you doing, Dear?

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

SANTA. This darn ankle! It really puts a damper on things.

MRS. CLAUS. Maybe these will make you feel better. *(Mrs. Claus presents Santa with a plate of cookies and a glass of milk.)*

SANTA. Milk and cookies! You know me so well. Strange that I didn't smell any cookies baking in the oven. I've never known my nose to fail me.

MRS. CLAUS. Your nose is just fine. You didn't smell these cookies, because I bought them at the store. I'm too busy to make something from scratch. Do they taste o.k.?

SANTA. *(Takes a bite of a cookie.)* Oh, you know me. *(Santa gives her a thumbs up.)* I'll give a thumbs up to just about anything that has a little sugar in it.

MRS. CLAUS. You're a real saint.

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! That's right. Saint Nick to be exact.

MRS. CLAUS. I'm so glad you still have your sense of humor.

SANTA. I do find things to chuckle about here and there, but I can't help thinking about work.

MRS. CLAUS. Don't you worry about that, Dear. I'm taking care of everything. You stay here and rest. No need for you to get up. I'm just going to zip down to the toy shop on the snowmobile now. I'll be back this afternoon.

SANTA. Break a leg, blade runner! Ho! Ho! Ho! Just kidding!

MRS. CLAUS. Don't you be naughty while I'm gone.

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! I'm a saint, remember? *(Pauses.)* But it can be a little boring sitting here by myself all day.

MRS. CLAUS. Why don't you read "'Twas the Night Before Christmas?" That story never gets old, and it's sure to warm your heart. *(Mrs. Claus exits. Santa looks at his watch. He pulls out a book.)*

SANTA. If I could count the number of times I've read this book ... *(Sighs.)* "'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house ... " Never gets old, eh? Well, I don't know about that. *(Santa puts the book down and begins to bounce a ball by his side. He chants rhythmically.)* S

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

my name is Santa. I fill my sleigh with presents. I give them all to children. And I love ... *(The ball rolls away, out of reach. Santa's voice tapers off.)* Christmas. *(Santa picks up the book again.)* Oh, well. What else can I do? Let's cut to the chase at least. *(Santa flips a few pages.)* "And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name: Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen! On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!" *(A herd of hooves are heard overhead. Santa looks up.)* What's going on up there?

REINDEER. *(Poking their heads through the window.)* You called for us, Santa?

SANTA. Well, actually, I was just reading.

REINDEER. Oh, that's too bad.

REINDEER. Yeah, we were looking for something to do.

REINDEER. We're bored.

REINDEER. Yeah, Mrs. Claus caught us playing video games in the barn again.

REINDEER. She pulled the plug on us.

REINDEER. And made us go outside.

REINDEER. But then she didn't tell us what to do once we got out here.

REINDEER. We've just been standing around.

REINDEER. It's so cold!

REINDEER. Can we come in and warm up?

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! Sure. I could use the company. *(The reindeer enter the room.)*

REINDEER. How's your ankle coming along?

SANTA. It's still a bother.

REINDEER. Will it be better by Christmas?

SANTA. Oh, sure. Sure. Nothing to worry about.

REINDEER. That's good.

REINDEER. I see Mrs. Claus set you up really nicely with that plate of milk and cookies.

SANTA. Would you like some?

REINDEER. How could we resist? *(Santa holds out the plate, and the reindeer pass it around, each taking a cookie.)*

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

REINDEER. I guess you must have a lot of stuff to do.

SANTA. To tell you the truth, this ankle has really put me out of commission. Mrs. Claus is taking care of business. Which leaves me ... well, would you all like to join me for a game of cards?

REINDEER. Cards?

REINDEER. That's so old-fashioned.

REINDEER. We'd rather play video games.

REINDEER. There are plenty of great ones online.

REINDEER. You ought to give it a try.

REINDEER. I know a good game for you. It's called Cookie Town.

REINDEER. You'll love it.

REINDEER. Or how about Toy Factory?

REINDEER. Oh, yeah. That one would be perfect.

REINDEER. We just need to get the big gaming monitor from the barn.

REINDEER. And hook you up.

REINDEER. It'll be easy.

SANTA. Well ... I don't know.

REINDEER. We'll teach you how to play.

REINDEER. It's a cinch.

SANTA. I'm kind of old to be learning something new.

REINDEER. Nonsense.

REINDEER. Video game GUIs are very user friendly.

SANTA. Gooley? I don't want anything gooley in here. Mrs. Claus would get really mad if I got anything sticky.

REINDEER. Sticky? What are you talking about?

SANTA. You just said video games are gooley.

REINDEER. Oh! Ha! Ha! That's funny!

REINDEER. We're not talking about G-O-O-E-Y type gooley.

REINDEER. We're talking about G-U-I type GUI.

REINDEER. It's just an acronym.

REINDEER. It stands for graphical user interface.

SANTA. Huh?

REINDEER. Never mind. We'll go bring up the equipment and show you how it all works.

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

SANTA. I don't know ...

REINDEER. Trust us.

REINDEER. You won't regret it.

REINDEER. You have no idea what you've been missing.

SANTA. What will Mrs. Claus say?

REINDEER. Don't worry. We've got your back.

REINDEER. Just tell her you're familiarizing yourself with the latest and greatest gifts for children.

REINDEER. Yeah. How can you be Father Christmas if you've never played any of the games that kids are asking for these days?

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! You're absolutely right. I can't be some clueless no-nothing blindly giving out gifts.

REINDEER. All right!

REINDEER. Would you mind if we borrowed your sleigh?

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! Of course not. Go right ahead. It would probably be good if you got it out and dusted it off a bit before the big day anyway.

REINDEER. We won't be long.

SANTA. I'll be sitting right here when you get back.

REINDEER. Come on, let's go! *(The reindeer signal to each other and exit the room.)*

SANTA. Those reindeer are so thoughtful! What would I do without them?

SCENE 9

The reindeer are standing outside next to a sleigh that's stocked with a large monitor and other gaming gear.

REINDEER. Do we have everything?

REINDEER. I think so.

REINDEER. Don't forget the popcorn machine. *(Reindeer appear and load a popcorn machine onto the sleigh.)*

REINDEER. Or the chips. *(Reindeer appear and load bags of chips onto the sleigh.)*

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

REINDEER. Or the soda. *(Reindeer appear and load soda onto the sleigh.)*

REINDEER. We need to make sure Santa has the full experience.

REINDEER. Yeah. What would video gaming be without junk food and sugary drinks?

REINDEER. Brr ... this snow is cold.

REINDEER. Good thing we don't have to fly this thing far.

REINDEER. OK. It looks like we're all packed up.

REINDEER. Are we all ready?

REINDEER. Ready as ever.

REINDEER. Let's hit the air.

REINDEER. On your mark.

REINDEER. Get set.

REINDEER. Up we go! *(The reindeer jump up and fall down with a thud.)*

REINDEER. Well ... that didn't work.

REINDEER. We must be out of practice.

REINDEER. Come on. We can do better than this.

REINDEER. Let's try it again. *(The reindeer try again with the same result.)*

REINDEER. Flying this sleigh is tougher than I remember.

REINDEER. It shouldn't be this hard.

REINDEER. Santa's house is only at the top of the hill.

REINDEER. On the count of three. 1 ... 2 ... 3! *(The reindeer land again with a thud.)*

REINDEER. I can barely get my hooves off the ground.

REINDEER. This is exhausting.

REINDEER. Maybe we're out of shape.

REINDEER. Whew! Let's take a short break.

REINDEER. And catch our breath.

REINDEER. Well ... If this is any indication, then I'm sure not looking forward to Christmas.

REINDEER. Yeah. Can you imagine how heavy the sleigh will be when it's loaded down with all those gifts?

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

REINDEER. Ugh!

REINDEER. Good thing that a lot of kids have asked for cell phones.

REINDEER. Yeah. At least those are nice and light.

REINDEER. Come on, gang! Let's give it one more try. We need lift off.

REINDEER. Up! *(The reindeer jump up and quickly fall to the ground.)*

REINDEER. What are we going to do?

REINDEER. Santa's counting on us.

REINDEER. We need more oomph.

REINDEER. We need more vroom. *(The reindeer look at each other.)*

REINDEER. Time to harness the snowmobiles!

REINDEER. That's it!

REINDEER. Sheer genius!

REINDEER. The elves have their snowmobiles parked by their basketball court. I'm sure they'll let us borrow them.

REINDEER. It'll be easy peasy to pull the sleigh with the snowmobiles.

REINDEER. Hoo! Haa!

REINDEER. Thank goodness for the Industrial Age.

REINDEER. Let's go round up the snow cats. *(The reindeer herd themselves offstage.)*

SCENE 10

Santa is staring at a large gaming monitor, a joystick clutched in his hands. The reindeer surround him.

REINDEER. Show that joystick who's boss.

REINDEER. That's it, Santa!

REINDEER. You've got it!

REINDEER. Watch your elbow, Santa. You just knocked over the soda.

SANTA. Oops!

REINDEER. Boy, you picked this game up fast. Look! You just advanced to the next level.

REINDEER. Nice move!

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! I think I've got the hang of this.

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

REINDEER. Is this a blast or what?

SANTA. I had no idea how much fun this would be.

REINDEER. You look like a real pro now.

REINDEER. See what you've been missing?

REINDEER. Whoa! That was some maneuver.

SANTA. *(Pointing to himself.)* You're looking at the Master!

REINDEER. Should I make some more popcorn? We're running low.

REINDEER. Nah. It looks like it's getting dark outside.

REINDEER. Yow! We've been here a lot longer than I realized.

REINDEER. I hope Mrs. Claus doesn't walk in on us.

REINDEER. We wouldn't want to get caught playing video games again.

REINDEER. Well, we're not the ones playing video games this time around. It's Santa.

REINDEER. True. But I have a feeling Mrs. Claus would be mad at us just the same.

REINDEER. Santa, you'd better keep an eye out. You wouldn't want Mrs. Claus to catch you.

REINDEER. We'd better go. It's late.

REINDEER. We're going to head on out now, Santa.

REINDEER. Are you all set? *(Santa doesn't respond.)*

REINDEER. Santa?

REINDEER. Santa? *(The reindeer shrug.)*

REINDEER. I guess he heard us.

REINDEER. Come on, let's go.

REINDEER. Good seeing ya, Santa.

REINDEER. We're leaving now, Santa. *(The reindeer wave and exit. Santa is glued to the screen.)*

SCENE 11

It is evening. The clock ticks. The clock chimes. The door opens and Mrs. Claus enters. Santa doesn't move.

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

MRS. CLAUS. What a day! Busy. Busy. No time to breathe. I'm concerned about the reindeer's readiness for the Big Night, so I've scheduled a flight test for tomorrow. I do hope you were o.k. by yourself all day, Dear. *(Santa doesn't respond.)* Santa? Santa? *(Mrs. Claus looks around the room.)* Now, where could he be? *(A crunching sound is heard.)* I hear something. It sounds like a crunch. *(Mrs. Claus freezes. Then she walks a few more steps. More crunching is heard.)* I think I'm stepping on something. *(She picks up her foot and looks under her shoe.)* Are these crumbs on the bottom of my shoe? Goodness! I'll have to talk to the elves about their cleaning. I know they're busy this time of year but really! *(Mrs. Claus walks around.)* What's this? There's a whole trail of crumbs! Where does it lead? *(Mrs. Claus follows the trail and looks up to find Santa glued to a gaming monitor.)* Santa? *(Santa doesn't respond.)* Santa! What are you doing eating chips and playing video games? Santa! It's like you've been hypnotized. I'm standing right behind you. Answer me! This just will not do! I need to get your attention. Aha! *(Mrs. Claus pulls the electrical cord out of the socket, and the monitor goes black.)*

SANTA. What happened to my game? *(Santa looks around and sees Mrs. Claus.)* Mrs. Claus? How long have you been standing there?

MRS. CLAUS. Long enough. I found the trail of potato chips. How many times have I told you to eat at the table?

SANTA. Oops! I forgot.

MRS. CLAUS. *(Looking at the floor.)* I can't believe this. Is that a puddle of soda on the floor?

SANTA. Don't worry. I'll clean up the mess.

MRS. CLAUS. *(Crossing her arms.)* Here I am working my tail off all day long, and you've been sitting around eating chips and playing video games.

SANTA. Uh ... I know this doesn't look good.

MRS. CLAUS. You can say that again.

SANTA. I know this doesn't look good.

MRS. CLAUS. I didn't mean that literally. What do you have to say for yourself?

SANTA. There is some good that has come from this, you know.

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

MRS. CLAUS. (*Skeptically.*) And what would that be?

SANTA. I can relate better to my customers.

MRS. CLAUS. You're just as bad as those reindeer.

SANTA. My four-legged friends have shown me the light.

MRS. CLAUS. What? The reindeer are behind all this? I should have known.

SANTA. I had no idea what I was missing.

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, have you lost your mind?

SANTA. Let me show you. You'll love this. (*Santa hobbles over and plugs in the electrical cord. Then he picks up the joystick.*)

MRS. CLAUS. Don't move another inch. (*Santa freezes.*)

SANTA. What's wrong?

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, don't you see what has happened? You've been brainwashed!

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! That's ridiculous!

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, let go of the joystick. (*Santa clutches the joystick firmly.*) Santa, put the joystick down.

SANTA. I ... I ... I just want to show you one thing.

MRS. CLAUS. Santa. Give me the joystick. (*Mrs. Claus holds out her hand and approaches Santa. Santa takes a hop backward.*)

SANTA. It'll only take a second.

MRS. CLAUS. (*Stepping closer.*) Santa, hand it over.

SANTA. (*Santa turns to the side and tries to hide the joystick.*) No!

MRS. CLAUS. Now!

SANTA. It's mine! You can't have it.

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, I'm going to put you on the Naughty list if you don't give me that joystick.

SANTA. No! Not the Naughty list.

MRS. CLAUS. And, I'm going to take away your milk and cookies too.

SANTA. Ho! Ho! Ho! No! No! No! You can't do that to me. I'm Santa Claus.

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, listen to yourself. You've gone mad. You're just like all those children on our Naughty list who are glued to their chairs like zombies.

THE CHRISTMAS CRISIS

SANTA. I'm not glued to my chair. It just looks that way because my ankle is injured. It has nothing to do with this video game.

MRS. CLAUS. Then hand over the joystick.

SANTA. *(Struggling.)* My fingers are stuck. They won't let go. See?

MRS. CLAUS. *(Examining his fingers, she starts pulling them away from the joystick one by one.)* There's one. There's two. Three. Now four. And ... five. There. Done. *(Santa's fingers snap back around the joystick.)*

Santa!

SANTA. *(Santa starts sobbing.)* I can't help it. It's like it's taken over me.

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, I think you're addicted to video games. This is serious. Christmas is coming. How will you deliver presents to all the good children of the world if you can't pull yourself away from that game controller? What are we going to do?

SANTA. I don't know.

MRS. CLAUS. If you don't come through, then Amazon will take over the holiday for sure. And Saint Nick will become a name of the past. Just a footnote in history—a distant memory from days of yore.

SANTA. What happened to my ray of perpetual sunshine?

MRS. CLAUS. She had a heatstroke.

SANTA. I want my apostle of positivity back.

MRS. CLAUS. Santa, you need help.

SANTA. You might be right.

MRS. CLAUS. Of course I am. That's why you married me. So, listen up. You can still be saved, but I will have to take drastic measures. Christmas is depending on it. *(End of Act 1)*

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—

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