

# THE TRUTH ABOUT SANTA

(an apocalyptic holiday tale)

by  
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The play takes place between Christmas Eve and Christmas morning in a number of locations including:

- Santa's workshop
- A cozy living room
- Santa's Compound
- A church
- Ice fields somewhere near the North Pole

The cast of characters, in order of appearance, are:

JO-JO.....A kindly elf, easily spooked.

JIM-JIM.....A hard-case elf, nobody's fool.

GEORGE.....30s/40s, a jealous man, off the wagon.

MARY.....30s/40s, resourceful, ready for a change.

FREYA.....10 or so, their daughter.

LUKE.....7 or so, their son.

SANTA.....Spirit of Christmas.

MRS. CLAUS..Santa's wife

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(an apocalyptic holiday tale)

SCENE 1

(Lights up on a workshop in Santa's North Pole compound. Jo-Jo and Jim-Jim, two elves, sit on stools, hammering with wooden mallets, making toys at a tiny work bench. Jo-Jo is the kindlier of the two, the more eager to please, the more easily spooked. Jim-Jim is the harder of the two, more guarded, more jaded. Vamp for "In the Dark of the Winter" begins to play. Hearing this, they begin hammering in time to the music, turn to us - and sing!)

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

IN THE DARK OF THE WINTER,  
THE COLD OF THE NIGHT,  
A SLEIGH PULLED BY REINDEER IS SAID TO TAKE FLIGHT. THE  
JOURNEY BEGINS ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY  
OF EVERY DECEMBER.  
IT'S YEARLY, THEY SAY.

AND BY THE NEXT MORNING THE JOURNEY IS DONE  
FOR THE NUMBER OF NIGHTS OF THE JOURNEY IS ONE.  
THE SLEIGH IS FIRST LOADED WITH BUNDLES OF TOYS  
AND ALL OF THE THINGS THAT A CHILD ENJOYS.  
BASEBALLS AND BICYCLES, TEA-SETS AND DOLLS.  
IT'S PACKED UP QUITE TIGHTLY SO NONE OF IT FALLS. BILLIONS  
OF PRESENTS ARE LOADED, IT'S SAID.  
EACH DESTINED FOR SOME KID  
ASLEEP IN HIS BED.

DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM.  
DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM.  
DUM-DUM.

JO-JO

AND ONCE IT IS FULL AND IS READY TO FLY,  
THE REINDEER WHO PULL THE SLEIGH LET OUT A CRY.

JIM-JIM

THEY CALL FOR THE MASTER WHO HANDLES THE WHIP-  
THE CAPTAIN WHO PILOTS THIS MAGICAL SHIP.

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

THEY ARE EAGER TO GO, FOR THE FLIGHT MUST BE SWIFT. THEY  
HAVE BUT ONE NIGHT TO DELIVER EACH GIFT.  
AND WHO IS THE FELLOW TO PULL OFF THIS TRICK?

JO-JO

YOU PROBABLY KNOW HIM.

JIM-JIM

WE'RE QUITE SURE YOU KNOW HIM.

JIM-JIM & JIM-JIM

HE GOES BY - "SAINT NICK".

DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM.  
DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM.  
DUM-DUM.

(The mood turns decidedly dark as the elves speak  
over the underscoring.)

JO-JO

Yes, this is a story you probably know. But the tale  
that's not told is the theme of our show.

JIM-JIM

For stories have crannies that aren't always seen, dim  
little nooks that are spiteful, and mean.

JO-JO

For even the rosier legend may carry a grim little secret  
that's often quite scary.

JIM-JIM

So, tonight we've decided to tell you a tale.

JO-JO

We hope you won't find it too boring, or stale.

JIM-JIM

For this is a story you may not have heard.

JO-JO

A story of Christmas.

JIM-JIM

And it's true.

JO-JO

Mostly!

(The elves sing once more.)

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

EVERY WORD!

(The elves exit "dum-diddy-diddy-dum"-ing as  
lights fade...)

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM.  
DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM-DIDDY-DIDDY-DUM.  
DUM-DUM.

(...and we find we've moved to...)

SCENE 2

(A cozy living room, late at night. A Christmas tree sits in the corner, aglow with lights and ornaments. The front door bursts open and George stumbles in, a bottle in each hand, sloppy drunk. He drinks heavily then, noticing the Christmas tree, throws a bottle noisily to the ground.)

GEORGE

(Meanly, to himself)  
What the Hell is this?

(From offstage we hear Mary.)

MARY(O.S.)

George?

GEORGE

She's got it all...got it all tarted up. Like a tart in a tart-house. Not in my house, pretty lady. Not tonight.

(George drinks heavily. Mary enters. She wears slippers and a robe.)

MARY

George?

(Seeing George)  
Oh. Oh, no.

GEORGE

What'd I tell you about that tree?

MARY

George, please, the children. You'll wake them.

GEORGE

I'll wake them?! Yeah, I'll wake them!

(From offstage we hear Freya.)

FREYA(O.S.)

Mama?!

MARY

Go to bed, sweetie!

FREYA(O.S.)

Is that Santa?! Is he here?!

LUKE(O.S.)

Santa's here?!

MARY

Not yet, children! Now go to sleep, or he won't come!

GEORGE

No, he won't come!

MARY

What did you do to yourself?

GEORGE

What did I do?! What did YOU do - to that TREE?!

MARY

It's a Christmas tree!

GEORGE

CHRISTMAS?! You take those bangles off of her.

MARY

George-

GEORGE

I said you take those chick-a-chacks offa that tree!

MARY

They're ornaments!

GEORGE

What do you think she is, a street-walker?! She's a tree, pretty lady! Trees are pure. Least they used to be.

MARY

You promised you wouldn't do this.

GEORGE

Oh, yeah?! And what about MARRIAGE vows?! Those are promises, aren't they?! A kind of promise!

MARY

I have no idea what you're talking about!

GEORGE

And what did you do to those boxes?! Fancy pants?! Is that what you got them in?!

MARY

I wrapped them, George. They're presents.

GEORGE

They're fancy pants! I'm taking them off!

(Mary pulls a sauce pan out from under her robe. She brandishes the pan threateningly.)

MARY

Oh no, you won't.

GEORGE

(Scornfully)

What's that suppose to be? A pan?!

MARY

I don't want to hurt you.

GEORGE

Didn't stop you from breaking all the marriage vows in the world, now did it?! Didn't stop you from fancy pants! So you take those bangles off-a her! You strip those pants, or so help me - YEAH, OKAY!!

(George charges the tree. Mary winds up and smacks George soundly across the face with a satisfying "pang". George careens back, slams into a wall, then crumples to the floor, clutching his battered skull.)

GEORGE

Cranium!

MARY

You keep your voice down!

GEORGE

Busted it up!

MARY

You busted it up, George, not me!

GEORGE  
I did?!

MARY  
Just Stay back!

GEORGE  
Lip's all tingly.

MARY  
It'll be more than tingly if you pull a stunt like that again.

GEORGE  
Oh, I'll do more than pull a stunt, pretty lady. That tree's pure, see? Pure as the driven snow, whatever that means. So I'll pull a stunt! I'll pull those trink-a-links right offa her!

(George drives for the tree again. Mary winds up and smacks him hard once! Twice! And again, sending him flying back across the room.)

FREYA(O.S.)  
Mama?! We hear bells! Is Santa here?!

LUKE(O.S.)  
Santa's here?!

MARY  
Santa's not here, children, I'm just - - banging my pan, that's all! Now go to sleep!

GEORGE  
Can't feel my face too good.

MARY  
Get out.

GEORGE  
Shattered my cheekbone. Hurts real bad.

MARY  
I don't care anymore, George. I just want you to go.

(Suddenly, from far off, we hear the unmistakable jingling of sleigh-bells, then ho-ho-ho's. Santa's on his way.)

GEORGE

What's that? Who's there?

MARY

It's midnight. Oh, God, I didn't realize it had gotten so late.

GEORGE

Is that him? That's him, isn't it?

MARY

You can't be here, George, not tonight, not like this.

GEORGE

This is my house!

MARY

This is his night!

GEORGE

Not in here, it's not! Not in- Here he comes.

(We hear the jingly tread of boot-bells at the front door. Santa enters - a fearsome, avenging Santa.)

SANTA

(Gravely)

Merry Christmas.

MARY

Merry Christmas, Santa.

SANTA

(To George)

Get up.

MARY

Don't hurt him, Santa. Please.

GEORGE

You got some nerve, you know that?! Coming into my house in the middle of the night!

SANTA

Tonight I come and go as I please.

GEORGE

Tonight's a working night for you, is that it?

SANTA

That's right.

GEORGE

Got your list, do you?

SANTA

I always have my list.

GEORGE

I got MY list! Guess what?! You're on it! 'Cause I know what you do! At night! In other people's homes! You're the one who's naughty, see! NOT ME!!

(George charges. Santa, with super-human strength, grabs George, spins him around, and hurls him hard into the wall.)

MARY

Santa, please! He doesn't know what he's doing!

SANTA

He knows.

(George staggers to his feet.)

GEORGE

You know when I'm sleeping?! I know when YOU'RE sleeping!

SANTA

SLEEPING?!!

(Santa jingles his bells at George. George cries out, covers his ears, then collapses to the floor in agony.)

SANTA

I have not slept since The Creation! I am of the eternal! And now you shall feel my power!

(Santa lifts a massive gift box over his head meaning to crush George with it. Freya and Luke appear in the doorway.)

FREYA

Santa?

LUKE

Santa?!

(Startled, Santa drops the package on George. From here on out, Santa assumes his familiar, jolly demeanor when dealing with the children, but switches to grim and avenging when dealing with the adults.)

SANTA

Ho-ho-hello, children!

(The children run to Santa. He hugs them.)

FREYA

Did you bring us presents?

SANTA

I brought you one present - a kind of present.

MARY

Santa, please, they're not ready.

SANTA

They are ready. They will have to be ready.

(To Freya and Luke)

For I am your present, children. I - am your father! Ho ho ho ho ho ho ho- !

MARY

Stop!

SANTA

Ho ho- ho?!

MARY

For God's sake, the shame!

SANTA

There is no shame! So now the time has come for you to join me - - at the North Pole.

FREYA

Father...Christmas?

SANTA

I'm tired of the lies, the once-a-year rendezvous, the tip-toeing around. No more! Get your things.

MARY

But...Mrs. Claus. I thought-

SANTA

I told her this morning.

GEORGE

Then she called me, you believe that?! Told me the whole story - the whole Story of Christmas! Yeah, I been drinking ever since! And the way I figure it?! I ain't never gonna stop drinking!

SANTA

Indeed! Now how would you children like to ride in my sleigh tonight?

FREYA

Oh, boy!

LUKE

Oh, boy!

(Luke and Freya race off.)

GEORGE

Not that I didn't suspect. Those children, with their strange powers.

MARY

Don't you DARE talk about their powers!

GEORGE

And you, Mary, so cold. Always cold. Cold as Christmas.

MARY

I love him, George. And he loves me.

GEORGE

He "loves" you?! He can't love anybody! He loves everybody, so that means he loves nobody!

(George charges, Santa holds up a finger, George convulses then collapses. Luke and Freya re-

enter wearing winter coats and carrying little suitcases.)

SANTA

Go outside now, children. And don't feed the reindeer, they have their own special food.

(The children race outside.)

SANTA

I'll wait for you in the Sleigh. Don't be long.

(Santa exits after Luke and Freya.)

MARY

Well, I suppose this is goodbye.

GEORGE

How long has this been going on?

MARY

George, please-

GEORGE

How long?!

MARY

Since the time of Zagnuth in ancient Mesopotamia. Since the rise of Saturnalia and the coming of Yule. For a thousand years - a thousand, thousand years!

(She thinks)

Which is a million! A million years!

GEORGE

You're not that old!

MARY

You never really understood me, did you, George.

GEORGE

Not really.

MARY

I wasn't the first of his mortal consorts! But, so help me, I shall be his last!

GEORGE

(Accusatorially)

I have no idea what you're talking about!

MARY

Merry Christmas, George. Happy New Year.

(Mary exits. George call after her.)

GEORGE

I don't understand you?! You don't understand me! What about my needs - my medical needs?! Cranium! Sternum's all splintered up! Can't breathe too good! What about those things, Mary, huh?! What about my cranium! Ow! Ouch! Cranium!

(Outside, we hear a whip, and then the Jingling of sleigh-bells. George slumps to the floor. We hear Santa outside fading into the distance as the lights fade to black.)

SANTA(O.S.)

On, Dasher! On, Dancer! Don't touch that, children! Mmmerry Christmas! Ho-ho-ho...! Mmmerry Christmas!

(Black out.)