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Cast of Characters*

JIM
JOHN
MICHAEL

* Actors are encouraged to use their own names**

** Or, you could use your adult film star names, by taking the name of your first pet and your mother's maiden name. Michael, however, would've been the less than inspiring "Herman Uscicki," Jim would've been the slightly more marketable "Skippy Walsh," and John would be the winner with "Tiny Boy Sauers."

Acknowledgments

Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!) premiered at Cape May Stage, Cape May, New Jersey on November 27th, 2003, with the following cast and crew:

JIM Jim FitzGerald
JOHN John K. Alvarez
MICHAEL Michael Carleton

Director Michael Carleton
Set Design Bob Phillips
Stage Manager Canyon Allen
Original Music Will Knapp

The following acknowledgement must appear on the title page in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play:

Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!)
received its world premiere at Cape May Stage,
Michael Carleton, Artistic Director.

Production Notes

Sheet music can be found at the back of this book.

Note on playing the text: The script is peppered throughout with topical references, and a few local/theatre-specific references, which by the time your production rolls around might be as topical as the Chia Pet, so feel free to update them (for the love of God, *please* update them). Likewise, think of the script as an all-cotton sweatshirt: stretch it to fit the particular quirks and talents of your cast, crew, and audience. And come to think of it, Chia Pet jokes still make us laugh.

Fun Christmas Fact

Phoardendron flavescens, or Mistletoe, is actually a parasitic plant that grows on the bark of other trees. It derives its name from the Anglo-Saxon “Mistel” for dung, and “tan” for twig, from the belief that Mistletoe sprang from branches where birds had sat and done what birds do do on branches. The tradition of kissing under the mistletoe is in reality a pagan custom that originated with the Vikings, who would dip sprigs of the plant in the blood of sacrificed bulls, and give them to people as protection against evil spirits and storms. So...next time you're in a doorway beneath a sprig of dung-branch, think about Viking blood sacrifices and pucker up!

EVERY CHRISTMAS STORY EVER TOLD (AND THEN SOME!)

by Michael Carleton, Jim FitzGerald,
and John K. Alvarez

original music by Will Knapp

ACT I

(Stage is dark. The sound of sleigh bells and distant singing of Christmas carols. A spotlight comes up center stage, and JIM strolls into the light. He is dressed to the Victorian nines—frock coat, long scarf, fingerless gloves, top hat—straight out of Dickens. He carries a large, leather-bound volume, which he opens and proceeds to read from, in grand style.)

JIM. Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to.

Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail...

(As he reads, JOHN enters and stands in the edge—very un-dramatically—of the light, looking at JIM. He is dressed as Marley's ghost—wrapped in rags, dragging chains, white make-up. JIM notices, but tries to ignore him, carrying on with the reading.)

I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it.

JOHN. Hey, Jim...pssst. Hey...

JIM. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

JOHN. Jim...I can't do this.

JIM. Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. (*Whispering out of the side of his mouth, trying to carry on:*) What?!

JOHN. I can't do this.

JIM. (*Still trying to carry on, forcing a smile and speaking sotto voce:*) What are you talking about?

JOHN. This. I can't do *this*. I can't do another Christmas Carol.

JIM. John, we ARE doing Christmas Carol. Right now. Here. There are people here. Watching us. Doing Christmas Carol...

JOHN. I know, man, but...

JIM. We've rehearsed Christmas Carol for three weeks. These people are expecting Christmas Carol. It's a Beloved Holiday Classic. Now *go*...

(He tries to carry on as if nothing has happened.)

Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner...

JOHN. But it's been done to death!

JIM. What!?

JOHN. Everybody's seen it. Everybody knows it...God bless us, everyone... Bah humbug... Nice Ghost, Fat Ghost, Scary ghost... yadda, yadda, yadda... I've done a gazillion Christmas Carols. First time I did it I was Tiny Tim, now I'm the old dead guy... I just can't do it again...

JIM. This is *not* the time to bring this up...

JOHN. And what makes it a "Beloved Holiday Classic"? I mean, it's not like I automatically think "Christmas Carol" every December... I mean, yeah, I *do*, but that's just because every theatre I've ever worked at does it, and I'm just doing this one because I need the insurance weeks...

(MICHAEL enters, dressed as the ghost of Christmas present—big Cloak, garlands, fruit-dripping headpiece, vaguely Carmen Miranda-ish.)

MICHAEL. Hey, guys, what's up? (He pleasantly, casually acknowledges the audience.) Hey!

JIM. John doesn't want to do Christmas Carol. He *hates* Christmas!

JOHN. Oh, dude, that is *so* not fair! I do not hate Christmas. I love Christmas. I was just saying that "Christmas Carol" is not my personal *idea* of Christmas...

JIM. Humbug!

MICHAEL. He's got a point.

JIM. What!?

JOHN. Yeah!

MICHAEL. Don't get me wrong, Christmas Carol's a great story. Fezziwig, redemption, God bless us everyone, Nice ghost, Fat ghost, Scary ghost... but honestly, I'm just doing this 'cause I need the insurance.

JIM. Oh, come on! Christmas Carol is a classic! Loved by millions worldwide...

JOHN. And everybody does it!

JIM. Yes!! Exactly! *Exactly!* Everybody does it! Which is why *we're* doing it, which is why *we're here*, why *they're* here. They expect it. It's a tradition! That's *why* everybody does it. Because it's a tradition. Traditions are traditional, and traditionally we...tradit...this. Traditionally!

MICHAEL. Actually, it's only a tradition in the English-speaking world, and even then only a small portion of the English-speaking world. There are vast parts of the globe where Christmas is celebrated entirely differently. For instance, did you know that if you wanted to say "Merry Christmas" to an Easter Islander, it would be, "Mata-Ki-Te-Rangi. Te-Pito-O-Te-Henua!"

(He heavily strikes an "island idol" pose.)

(They both stare at him.)

JIM. What are you talking about?

MICHAEL. I've been doing some research.

JOHN. Besides, we've never even watched Christmas Carol at my house. Except for the Muppets...

MICHAEL. Kermit the Frog as Bob Crachit. Perfect example of anthropomorphic cross-culturalism.

JOHN. Yeah! Or Mr. Magoo!

MICHAEL. Pop culture tie-in, animation as a viable medium. A classic in its own right.

JIM. Oh, come on, guys! We're talking Christmas Carol! Okay, okay... how about the 1951 classic film version, starring... starring... oh god, what's his name... Alistair something...

JOHN. Truth is, there's a lot of other Christmas stories I think of before Christmas Carol...

JIM. It was black and white...

JOHN. Why don't we do some of those?

JIM. ...Alistair Cooke... Alistair Crowley... Ally Sheedy...

MICHAEL. Cool! Sort of bring it into a relatable context. Explore what Christmas really means to today's audience!

JIM. You're not serious...

MICHAEL. Sure! We've got everything we need! Today's audience... *(Indicating the audience.)* They're not going anywhere for the next hour and a half. Right?

JOHN. Yeah, and we could even get some of their ideas! Like a focus group!

JIM. Focus group?!

JOHN. I've been doing some research.

MICHAEL. C'mon, Jim, it'll be fun! Get in the spirit! "Mata-Ki-Te-Rangi!"

(Both JOHN and MICHAEL strike an “island pose.”)

JIM. How can we do everybody’s idea of Christmas in an hour and a half? Without rehearsing? It’s impossible.

JOHN. We’ll do it fast.

MICHAEL. Very fast.

JOHN. Streamlined...

MICHAEL. Distilled. Pared down to its dynamic essence. A... minimalist version.

JOHN. *(Announcer at a wrestling match:)* CHRISTMAS EXTREME! LET’S GET READY TO JINGLE!!

JIM. This is *not* happening...

MICHAEL. Think of it as a *new* tradition, Jim... imagine ol’ Chuck Dickens sitting down for the very first time, imagine that thrill... snow falling, candles burning, clock ticking, figgy pudding... fig-ging... nice cuppa hot tea steaming at your elbow, mind afire with the possibility of capturing for all posterity the true *spirit* of Christmas... Jim, that could be *you*. Can you do that, Jim? Can you *feel* the spirit? Can you BE the spirit?

JOHN. We got spirit...

MICHAEL. Yes, we do...

JOHN. We got spirit...

MICHAEL. How ’bout you?

JIM. *(Torn, but acquiescing:)* Okay...but we do Christmas Carol, too. That’s part of the deal, that’s part of *my* idea of Christmas...

MICHAEL. Yeah, sure, cool. Christmas Carol, no problem. This is gonna be great! *(Shouting to booth:)* Hey, Ebenezer, can we get some house lights here?

(House lights come up.)

Hey! Howya doin’?

JOHN. *(Big and expansive:)* MERRRRRRRY CHRISTMAS!!!!

JIM. Hi. (I am SO sorry about this ladies and gentlemen.)

MICHAEL. Okay! Who wants to start? Help get us started here... anybody... just name anything—stories, movies, TV shows... traditions... anything that springs to mind when we say...

ALL. ...CHRISTMAS!

(The boys solicit ideas from the audience for a brief while, drag it out of them. If you have to, put individuals on the spot, feed them ideas, etc. After a while get back to script, and if the following have not been mentioned, working in...)

JOHN.

*Frosty the Snowman
Rudolph
The Grinch
Charlie Brown*

MICHAEL.

*Christmas Around World
American Traditions
Christmas Foods
Fruitcake*

JIM.

*It's a Wonderful Life
Christmas Carol
Holiday Specials
Miracle on 34th St.*

MICHAEL. Okay! Great! Great, those are all good ideas. Lotta good stuff there. Lotta contemporary, 21st century ideas, but remember... we have to keep in mind what Christmas is *really* about...

JIM. Yeah, and I'm glad you brought that up. Finally...which is what I've been trying to say all along...is that Christmas is about a lot more than all this crass commercialism. It has a deeper, much more serious, more *significant* meaning. At its core we all know Christmas is about *one* thing...

JOHN. Santy Claus!

JIM. *(Seeing that JOHN is really serious:)* Well...uh, yeah, John, that too, but...

JOHN. And I love it when he comes riding in on that Norelco electric razor...brrrrrrrrmmmmmm...brrrrrrmmmmmm...

(JOHN "zooooms" around the stage.)

JIM. Yeah, John, right, but what I was saying is that...

MICHAEL. *(Interrupting:)* Don't worry, Jim, we'll get to that. We got a lot to do, and not a lot of time to do it in. We need to get started...

JIM. And we'll do Christmas Carol, right? You promised...

MICHAEL. Yeah, sure, no problem!

JOHN. *(Continuing to “zooooom”:) And Mrs. Santa rides on a “Lady Norelco”...*

JIM. He’s serious...

MICHAEL. Okay! Are we ready? Great! I’ve got some notes here that should help us get started...we can divvy these up and use them throughout the evening...

(He passes out several note cards each to JOHN and JIM.)

For instance, Christmas Traditions Around the World, Christmas in other countries: Christmas in Sweden—In Sweden, children eagerly await the arrival of the *Jultomten*, a wizened little gnome who lives beneath the floorboards and rides in a sleigh pulled by the *Julboker*, or “Goats of Thor”...

JIM. You’re making this up.

MICHAEL. I am not. My family’s Swedish, this stuff happens. Now go get ready for the next bit. It’s on the cards there. Okay, so: Traditional Swedish holiday foods include *surströmming*—baltic herring which has been buried in the ground and allowed to ferment; *lutfisk*—codfish which has been dried, soaked in lye, buried in the ground and allowed to ferment; and jellied pigsfeet. On Christmas Eve, a young girl of the house starts the festivities off dressed in a long white dress, and a wreath with lighted candles is put on her head—she is called the *Juldottir*, which translates roughly as “girl with the flaming head.”

JOHN. *(Offstage, possibly accompanied by the burst of a fire extinguisher:) Ahhhhhh, aaahhhhhh, my hair, oh god my hair! I’m on fire, help meeeee...!!!*

MICHAEL. But what about the other side of the dreidel? As I mentioned earlier, this is not only the Christmas season, but a time of celebration for many cultures, around the world—this time of year is also the season of Hanukah, also known as Chanukah, or CHA-NOO-kah...

JIM. *(Crossing upstage:) Gesundheit!*

MICHAEL. Thank you. And there are many similarities, and differences, we can learn from—for example, Christmas is one day, the same day every year—25th of December. Hanukah is actually eight days, and begins on the 24th of Kislev, whenever that falls, no one is ever really quite sure. When a non-Jewish friend asks, you simply consult a calendar provided free by your local butcher.

And whereas Christmas is a major holiday, the biggest in the Christian calendar, Hanukah is a relatively minor one, with the same theme as most Jewish holidays: “They tried to kill us, we survived, let’s eat!”

In addition, this time of year is the season of Kwanzaa, also known as “Kwanzaa,” a relative newcomer to the Holiday arena, and one with a definite advantage—you will never, ever see a “Donny & Marie Osmond Kwanzaa Special.”

JIM. *(Entering:)* That’s great! Entertaining, yet so informative. And in America, we celebrate by performing Charles Dickens’ Beloved Holiday Classic, “A Christmas Carol.” Lights, please! Marley was dead...

JOHN. *(Rushing on:)* But wait! What about all those special,...Specials? The stories I grew up with—that warmed my cockles? Rankin Bass, Charles Schultz, Dr Seuss. WHAT ABOUT THE GRINCH!!!!

MICHAEL. He’s got a point, Jim. The Grinch is a B.H.C. too.

JIM. B.H.C.?

MICHAEL. *Beloved Holiday Classic.*

JIM. *(With effort:)* OK. Fine, sure. OK. So we’ll do the Grinch, get it out of the way and move on...

(The following is delivered to the audience very rapidly, just getting it over with.)

OK, so there’s this mean guy—all GREEN mind you—who lives on top of this mountain called...Mt. Crumple-butt, or something. And he just *hates* all the creatures who live down below. And he just *hates* when they go and celebrate something that vaguely resembles Christmas, so he gets this idea to go on this obviously drug-induced

orgy of theft and steal all their whozits and billybingers and roast beast and then thinks, “Oh. Why am I so mean?” So he gives it all back and turns nice.

(The others look vaguely disappointed...)

And he has a dog.

JOHN. Wait a minute! There’s more to it than that! Sure he’s mean... But that’s because “His heart was two sizes too small.”

(A placard with a tiny heart is held up in front of JIM.)

MICHAEL. Or it could be that his shoes were too tight...

(He places the “grinch hat” on JIM’s head—in the original production, this was a Korean War helmet liner with some fright green yarn glued on and a ridiculously tiny Santa hat.)

JOHN. Whatever the reason, his heart or his shoes... *(Prompting JIM:)* ...go on!...

JIM. You’re gonna make me do this, aren’t you? You’re gonna make *me* be the Grinch...

(JOHN nods.)

JOHN. Whatever the reason, his heart...

MICHAEL. ...or his shoes...

JIM. *(Reluctantly:)* He stood there on Christmas just *hating* the Whos.

JOHN. *(Gasping, with MICHAEL:)* How can you hate the Whos? We’ve got who-bangles, who-beads, whiz-pops, and fraps...

MICHAEL. Who-dickies, who-werps, zingboffs, and baps!

JIM. *(Aside:)* I’m beginning to understand the Grinch’s point of view in all this.

JOHN. Boffles, buffles, whizbangs and flecks...

MICHAEL. Bingos and bottles and lots of...bad checks!

JOHN. And the sing, Sing, SING, SINGING! Whoo Hoo!

JIM. I must stop this Christmas from coming, but Howww-ooooooo... *(What a painful rhyme.)*

MICHAEL. But first—a musical interlude—

ALL. *(With underscore and lame dance steps:)*

You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch.

You're an evil, rotten soak;

JIM. You don't care about old Marley,

You're a miserly ol' bloke—

Mr. Scrrroowwiinnnnch!!!

(It was worth a shot...)

ALL. You're a scoundrel, Mr. Grinch;

MICHAEL. You're a spotty, loathsome worm!

JOHN. You're the bottom of the barrel,

BOTH. Just a microscopic germ—

Mr GRRRRII—

(Underscoring cue abruptly ends in a grating record scratch.)

JIM. OK, OK! I think they get the point.

JOHN. Then he got an idea!

JIM. A WONDERFUL, AWFUL IDEA! *(To MICHAEL:)* Where do you think you're going, reindeer boy? *(He produces a single antler—original was made of a cardboard tube and coat hanger painted brown—and straps it to MICHAEL's head—quite ridiculous looking.)* I'll clean out those Whos to their last can of who-hash!

MICHAEL.

The Grinch grabbed the Who's tree, up the chimney he shoved,

When he heard a small sound like the coo of a...doved.

He turned around fast, and he saw a small Who!

Little Cindy-Lou Who, who was no more than two.

JIM. Wait a minute! There's something missing...

JOHN. What?

JIM. Cindy-Lou Who!!!

MICHAEL. Who?

JIM. Yes.

JOHN. What?

JIM. No, *who*.

MICHAEL. Who what?

ALL. THIRD BASE!

JOHN. All right, who's gonna help us out here? We're gonna need a Cindy Lou Who...

(JOHN runs into the audience and fetches a "volunteer," Cindy Lou Who. Hopefully a burly "guy." A Cindy Lou headpiece is helpful, embarrassing, and very funny...especially if it has pink fur and blinking antennae.)

ALL. She stared at the Grinch, and she *said*...

JIM. Hey, buddy, I'm doing this...now GO...she *said*... *(Holding up a cue card with correct line.)*

VOLUNTEER.

"Santy Claus, why,
Why are you taking our Christmas tree? WHY?"

(All cheer—YEAH!!)

JIM. Why my sweet little tot...

JOHN. The sham Shanty Claush lied,

JIM.

"There's a who-light on this who-tree that won't who-light on one side.

So I'm taking it who-home to my workshop, my dear.
I'll fix it up there. Then I'll bring it back who-here."

MICHAEL.

Then he patted her little curly who-head,
Got her a drink and sent her to bed.

JOHN. *(To guy:)* Whoa, slow down there, DiNiro. You're not done yet, my friend...stay right there...

JIM. “Pooh-pooh to the who-Whos!”

JOHN. He was Grinch-ish-ly who-humming,

JIM. “They’re finding out now that no Christmas is coming!
All the Whos down in Who-ville will all cry BOO-HOO!”

(If the audience responds with a “BOO-HOO”—and they generally do—the guys give them a big “thumbs up.” Then the distant strains of Who music are heard.)

JOHN. Every Who down in Who-ville, the tall and the small, was singing!

JIM. Without any presents at all!

JOHN.

He HADN’T stopped Christmas from coming!
IT CAME!

JIM. Somehow or other, it came just the same!

MICHAEL.

And what happened then...?
Well...in Who-ville they say
That the Grinch’s small heart
Grew three sizes that day!

(JOHN holds another placard, with a great big heart!)

JOHN.

And he brought back the whiz-pops! And the bread made with
yeast!
And he...

MICHAEL. HE HIMSELF...

JIM. The Grinch, carved the Roast Beast

*(The boys and the volunteer lead the audience in a quick chorus of
“Wha-who doree,” hands clasped and swinging, and lead the volunteer back to his/her seat.)*

Wha-who Doree!
Wha-who Doree!
Welcome Christmas,

Christmas day!

MICHAEL. Let's have a big round of applause for Cindy Lou Who! Hey, that was great! Now come on, Jim, admit it...if I didn't know better, I'd even say you were beginning to enjoy yourself there towards the end...

JIM. Yeah, well...you know...there *are* a couple of similar themes between Dickens and Dr. Seuss—the Grinch's transformation, the universality of Christmas...

JOHN. Grinch bless us, everyone!

JIM. Yeah, John, uh...that too, and so, hey...I think this makes the *perfect* segue. Can we get some lights, please? Marley was dead to begin with, that much...

JOHN. But what about Rudolph?

JIM. Rudolph?

JOHN. Yeah, Rudolph's a B.H.C. too.

JIM. (*He hates the term.*) Beloved...Holiday...Classic.

JOHN. Yeah! About how he saves Santa, and the elves, and all that...

MICHAEL. C'mon, Jim! It'll be fun! Let's go get ready!

JIM. Okay, okay, fine. We'll do Rudolph. But John, tell ya what—why don't you read these next Christmas 'round the world segments... they're all about Santa. I'll just go get ready.

(*JIM hands JOHN several note cards, gives him a "thumbs up" and exits.*)

MICHAEL. We'll be right out, go for it!

(*MICHAEL exits.*)

(*JOHN is left center stage—he is clearly uncomfortable being alone in the spotlight.*)

JOHN. Okay...so...Christmas in Holland. In Holland, Santa Claus is known as "Sinterklaass," and children are told that he arrives on a steamer from Spain. He brings with him his helper, a twisted dark

gnome known as “Black Pete,” who carries a spiked rod to punish bad children. If a child is *really* bad, Santa grabs them and takes them with him back to Spain... oh, wow, that’s uh... that’s not very nice, let’s try the next one... Germany... In Germany’s Berchtesgaden Province, St. Nicholas is followed by twelve men in Goat’s heads and demons with birch switches who drive the young people out into the street and beat them, symbolic punishment for having misbehaved...oh, wow...

(He is clearly distraught, and finds another card.)

Um...Spain...in Spain, if a child has been bad, Santa comes dressed all in black, and carries them off in a sack...back to Holland... *(He is very upset.)* ...Mike! Mike...

(He exits.)

Rudolph/Gustav

JIM. *(Entering, singing like a nightclub entertainer:)* But do you recallllllll, the most famous reindeer of allllllll—Rudol...

MICHAEL. *(Interrupting:)* Jim, JIM...wait a minute...excuse me, Ladies and Gentlemen, but... due to the fact that the venerable and ancient legend of that ninth and most nimble of reindeer, that luminescent Lapland luminary, he of the bright (and biologically improbable) shiny nose was not created until 1939 by an advertising copywriter from the Montgomery Ward company—who still legally controls the copyright and trademark to his name, image and story to this day—we offer the following, similar, culturally valid, yet un-indictable version: Gustav, the Green-nosed Reingoat...

JIM. You’ve *got* to be kidding...

MICHAEL. Also known as Carl the Copper-nosed Caribou, Oswald the Orange-nosed Otter, and Milton the Mauve-nosed Marmoset. *(To JIM, with a big “thumbs up”:)* Good luck!

(MICHAEL exits.)

VOICE-OVER. Brought to you by Norelco, for that Santa-smooth shave... *(Sleigh bells and music.)*

(JOHN enters carrying an electric razor, and wearing a Santa hat. He swoops it across the stage making “brrrrrrrrrrmmmmmm” noises, circles JIM, and heads off. JIM just stares.)

Norelco...the Noël—Co.

JIM. *(Donning reindeer antlers and clipboard:)* All right, listen up now! We're gonna have trials for the upcoming reindeer...

MICHAEL. *(Offstage:)* Reingoat!

JIM. ...reingoat games, and a chance to pull Santa's sleigh. As you may or may not know, the existing team of Dasher, Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid and Donner and Phil are due for retirement.

JOHN. *(Entering in deer antlers and green nose—not yet lit up—chanting like a soldier:)* I don't know, but I been told, tinsel's made of silver and gold!

JIM. Now you there, you're Donner's boy, right?

JOHN. Yes sir!

JIM. All right, let's see ya jump...

JOHN. *(Very enthusiastic, a new recruit:)* HOW HIGH, SIR?!

JIM. Just jump.

(JOHN executes a very unimpressive, if wildly flailing, jump.)

JIM. Okaaaay, I guess those jumping genes skip a generation... *(To audience:)* whaddya say we give the Donner kid a pass...get it? Donner...pass?...aahhh, what the hell's eatin' you? Next!

MICHAEL. *(Poking around the corner with “girl antlers,” maybe a bow on his head:)* That's OK, Gustav, I think you're cute!

JOHN. She thinks I'm cute! She thinks I'm cuuuuuute!!!

(Excited, JOHN executes a massive slow-motion jump—aided by strobe lights and the theme song to the “Six Million Dollar Man,” at the peak of which his nose switches on, glowing bright green.)

JIM. What the hell is that?! Whoa, little fella...I'm afraid we can't let you join in any more of our reindeer...

MICHAEL. (*Offstage:*) *Reingoat!*

JIM. ...reingoat games. You're not like the rest of us, you're different. You're just too freakish. We could never accept you for who you really are, unless we really, *really* needed you, and then we might overlook our superficial and surface judgments, and pretend we liked you all along.

JOHN. Oh why, oh why am I such a misfit?

JIM. Well, besides the fact that you jump like a girl, and your nose glows like a radioactive avocado, you tend to tell jokes that have lame punch-lines, you're kinda clingy, your breath smells like stale oats, and...

JOHN. Okay, okay, I get the picture, I'm leaving...I'll run far, far away, where people won't notice my differences, where I'll blend right in because everybody there is a freak, even the governor—I'll go to *California!* (*or insert some local butt-of-jokes*)

(*JOHN exits.*)

MICHAEL. Meanwhile, back in Santa's workshop...

MICHAEL / JIM. (*In elf hats, singing:*)

We are Santa's elves,
filling Santa's shelves,
with a ho, ho, ho, and a hee, hee, hee,
in the merry old Land of Oz...

MICHAEL / HEAD ELF. Now you there, Hermy, you've got to come to elf practice and learn how to wriggle your ears and chuckle warmly, and go hee-hee, and ho-ho, and important stuff like that...

JIM / HERMY. But I don't like to make toys...

MICHAEL / HEAD ELF. Oh, well, if that's all...WHAT?! you don't like to make toys?

JIM / HERMY. No, what I really want to be is a dentist! I've been studying molars and bicuspid and incisors...

MICHAEL / HEAD ELF. Now listen you, you're an elf, and elves make toys...

JOHN. (*Popping in or skipping across:*) Hermy wants to be a dentist!

MICHAEL / HEAD ELF. You'll never fit in!

JIM / HERMY. Why am I such a misfit?

MICHAEL / HEAD ELF. Well, besides the fact that elves are mythical creatures, you're somewhat of a runt, you're kinda clingy, your breath smells like stale oats, and...

JIM / HERMY. Okay, okay, okay...California.

(JIM exits.)

MICHAEL / JOHN. (*Singing, and doing the dance moves:*)

We are Santa's elves,
filling Santa's shelves,
with a ho, ho, ho, and a hee, hee, hee,
heeeeyyyy, Macarena!

MICHAEL. (*Throwing on a Mrs. Claus kerchief or wig:*) Eat, Poppa, eat... you're gonna disappoint the children, no one wants a skinny Santa!

JIM. (*Enters, wearing a Santa hat and beard:*) How can I eat? That friggin' elf song is driving me crazy!

MICHAEL. So, off into the wide, wild, and wintry wastes the unwilling worried and woeful wascals went...

(He exits.)

(The sound of whistling wind, a growing storm. JIM / HERMY and JOHN / GUSTAV enter from opposite sides of the stage, huddled against the weather.)

JIM / HERMY. Hellooooooooooooo! Anybody out there?

JOHN / GUSTAV. Hellllloooooooooooooooooo! Nobody here but us chickens...

JIM / HERMY. Hey, what are you doing out here?

JOHN / GUSTAV. Well, all of the other reingoats were starting to laugh and call me names...

JIM / HERMY. Like Green Nose?

JOHN / GUSTAV. Yeah...

JIM / HERMY. And Cucumber-schnozz?

JOHN / GUSTAV. Yeah...

JIM / HERMY. And Flashlight Face? And Pickle-Puss, and Electric GoatBoy...

JOHN / GUSTAV. YEAH, Shrimpy little pointy-hatted leotard wearing elf guy...you got a problem with that?

JIM / HERMY. Did anyone ever tell you you have lovely bicuspidis when you're angry?

(MICHAEL enters as Yukon Cornelius—a couple of stuffed dogs on stiff leashes in front of him.)

MICHAEL / YUKON. MUUUUSSSHHHH, come on mush!!! What-sa matter varmints? Doncha understand North Pole talk? I said MUSSHHH!! This fog's as thick as peanut butter!

JIM / HERMY. You mean pea soup.

MICHAEL / YUKON. You eat what you like, and I'll eat what I like! Yukon Cornelius is the name, professional prospector, and colorful stereotype character providing comic relief...

(He "tosses" his pick in the air; they all elaborately follow its spin and watch it stick in the ground. He pulls it out, licks it.)

Nothin'!

(The sound of a monstrous roar is heard above the howling wind.)

JOHN / GUSTAV. What was that?

MICHAEL / YUKON. Why that's bound to be the 'Bumble! Straaaange and fearsome creature of the North! Close, too, by the sound of it. Looks like we'll have to face it here, boys—hold your ground, be braaaave...

(There is an expectant pause.)

JIM. *(As JIM:)* Mike, there's only three of us...

MICHAEL / YUKON. Can't be helped, tiny elf-dentist-man, he'll be here any second...

JIM. (*Explaining, sotto voce:*) No, Mike, I mean there's only three of us *here*, on stage, in the show...*how* can another character enter?

MICHAEL / YUKON. Ah...in that case...save yourself goat-boy and oral hygiene dwarf! I'll tackle the varmint alone, and fling him over that thar iiiiiicy precipice. Years from now when you talk about this—and you will—be kind... Aaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

(He rushes offstage left—towards the Bumble—with a loud and prolonged kamikaze scream—very long—the others wait with growing incredulity. It's REALLY long, and then eventually dies out—and starts again—REALLY long...)

MICHAEL. (*Entering stage right:*) And so, our intrepid duo, alone again...

JIM. Naturally...

MICHAEL. ...embark on a Styrofoam iceberg, setting sail on the cellophane sea...

JOHN / GUSTAV. ...Ohhhh, take one down, pass it around, no more bottles of eggnog on the walllll! (*Pause.*) One more time! 1000 bottles of eggnog on the wall, 1000 bottles of eggnog...

JIM / HERMY. DO YOU MIND?!

(The sound of a HUGE crash into another iceberg, or the squeal of brakes and a fantastic car crash—either works...the two travelers are jolted ashore.)

MICHAEL / CHARLIE-IN-THE-BOX. (*He wears a jester's hat, and jumps around inside a large gift box.*) Halt, who goes there?! I am the guardian of the Island of Misfit Toys!

JOHN / GUSTAV. Misfits? Why this place is *perfect* for us!

JIM / HERMY. And I bet your name is "Jack," right? 'Cause you're in a box, and...

MICHAEL / CHARLIE-IN-THE-BOX. No! It's Charlie! Nobody wants a "Charlie-in-the-Box." And they don't want all the other wonderful toys that end up here either: the Chocolate Covered Lead Soldiers, the Crying Game Barbie, the Pee-Wee Herman Pull-toy... Oh, if only we could meet someone who knew Santa person-

ally, who's lived at the North Pole even, or who worked for him, maybe. But way out here that's about as likely as meeting an orthodontist elf and a reingoat with a glowing nose. We'll *never* get outta here!

JIM / HERMY. Well, this might just be your lucky day! Not only can we take word of the Misfit Toys back to Santa, but I can also fix that unsightly overbite of yours, and it may help with the annoying way you talk...

MICHAEL / CHARLIE-IN-THE-BOX. Overbite?!

JOHN / GUSTAV. We misfits have to stick together!

JIM / HERMY. You betcha!

MICHAEL. So once again the ungainly garrulous green glowing goat and gregarious gum-guy gamely gallivanted into the ghastly, grisly, grey and glacier-glazed gloaming. Back to the North Pole with the speed of a flowing iceberg...but will they be there before the blinding blizzard?!

JOHN. Meanwhile, back in Santa's workshop...

JOHN / MICHAEL.

We are Santa's elves,
Men in pointy shoes,
Don't get paid and can't get laid,
Drown our nights in booze!

(Or a more PG version, if you want...)

We are Santa's elves,
Work until we drop,
All day long we sing this song,
Just can't seem to stop!

JIM / SANTA. Elves...why did I let myself be talked into elves? When I get my hands on that Keebler sonofa...

MICHAEL / HEAD ELF. Yo, Tubby—there's a storm coming in, and I don't know if you'll be able to do any joy-flying tonight. That fog's thicker than cottage cheese... *(Denser than George Bush? Paris Hilton? Any recent pop idiot.)*

JIM / SANTA. Nothing for it then, we'll have to cancel Christmas! I mean it's not like we'll be rescued at the last minute by some improbable plot device waltzing in to save us...

JOHN / GUSTAV. *(Entering, his nose is glowing brightly:)* Hey, Santa!

JIM / SANTA. That...schnozz! That terrible, beautiful, no-basis-in-reality schnozz! What I mean to say is, Gustav with your nose so bright, won't you be my date tonight? ...and...you know, guide my sleigh, and help me with all my other Santa duties, too...

(He hands GUSTAV a toy nutcracker, like an award.)

JOHN / GUSTAV. *(Very Sally Field:)* You like me, you really, really like me!

MICHAEL / HEAD ELF. Ya know, Gustav—we elves always liked you, and well...no, that's not really true, we always regarded you with suspicion and mistrust. But now that we really, *really* need you, let me be the first to say “congratulations,” and hey, let's do lunch sometime...

JIM. And so, Gustav the little misfit became Gustav the big misfit, and all of the other reindeer...

MICHAEL / JOHN. Reingoats!

JIM. ...reingoats loved him, and they shouted out with glee...

ALL. *(Singing:)* Gustav the green nosed reingoat, you'll go down in history!

(Blackout. Scandinavian music, whatever that means... maybe accordions.)

Christmas In ICELAND

(Lights up on...)

JIM. *(In large furry hat:)* Christmas in Iceland: In Iceland, Christmas celebrations begin with large quantities of Yule Ale, and move on to such delicacies as “Hangikjot”...

JOHN. *(In Viking helmet with long blonde braids:)* —Smoked Mutton.

JIM. “Kjotsup”...

JOHN. —Mutton Soup.

JIM. and “Kjoteisen”...

JOHN. —Mutton Ice Cream.

JIM. Children also love to find little gifts in their shoes of “Kjoterwafen”...

JOHN. —Chocolate covered mutton wafers. Mmmmmmm...

JIM. Other warm and delightful traditions—on Christmas Eve in Iceland, the dead are said to rise from their graves, and any children who have *not* received a new garment are told they will be taken away and eaten by the *Julakottir*, or “Giant Yule Cat.”

JOHN. The thirteen days following Christmas are filled with visits by the “Jolasveinar,” thirteen mischievous gnomes with names like:

JIM. “Door Slammer,”

JOHN. “Window Peeper,”

JIM. “Doorway Sniffer,”

JOHN. ...and “Sausage Grabber.”

JIM. And we’re not making this up.

MICHAEL. (*Offstage:*) No, no...I swear to God I’m wearing a new pair of socks...nooooo... (*The sound of a Giant Cat.*)

(*JIM and JOHN laugh in nostalgic recognition.*)

JIM. They always leave the heads.

JOHN. So, as they say in Iceland...

JIM / JOHN. Gledileg Jol, Everybody!

(*Cat sound again and...Blackout.*)

Fruitcake Section

(In the darkness we hear “Also sprach Zarathustra” [the 2001 theme], or some similarly vast and sweeping, cosmic question-type music, joined by the VOICE-OVER.)

VOICE-OVER. Since the Dawn of Time, Mankind has been fascinated by the unexplainable. Fatally attracted to the dark and swirling unknown. Unable to resist the siren’s call of a question, wrapped in an enigma, shrouded in a mystery...put in a box labeled “inscrutable,” filed in a locked and rusted cabinet in a disused room with a sign reading: “Do not open ’til Christmas,” cordoned off with police tape that says “Do not Cross,” waaaay beyond the “No Trespassing” fencepost, down an unmarked road, that’s really easy to miss if you don’t keep a sharp eye out, especially if it’s raining. He has always been curious, forever asking questions, tenaciously hanging on like a little yappy pug dog wrestling with a chew toy. He has wondered, “Why am I here?,” “What is the purpose of Life?,” “Is there life after death?,” and... “WHAT THE HELL’S THE DEAL WITH FRUITCAKE?”

(Lights up on MICHAEL, about to lob a fruitcake into the audience. Caught in the act, he recovers and begins to toss it casually from hand to hand.)

MICHAEL. Okee-Dokee... So what’s the deal with fruitcake? What’s the deal indeed... we’ve all heard about it, we’ve all seen it, we’ve all wondered. Now, we’re not gonna insult you by trotting out all the lame fruitcake jokes we’ve all heard over the years, like the theory that there’s only one actual cake that gets passed from hand to hand, re-gifted from year to year, no—we’re not gonna go there. We’re here to give you the facts about this much-maligned morsel, the straight dope, the skinny...

JOHN. *(Entering, also with fruitcake:)* Problem is, there’s very little actual data on fruitcakes out there. Fruitcakes are kinda like the Polka—a lot of people like ’em, but very few are willing to admit it.

JIM. *(Entering, again, with fruitcake:)* Au contraire, my formidable friend. Recent research has revealed a tantalizing trove of tasty tidbits about this tempting treat. Truth is, Fruitcakes are *more* like

Oysters, or Kathy Lee Gifford (*or insert any pop-culture icon here*)—you either love 'em, or you hate 'em...

MICHAEL. Or, you've never tried them. So, we'd like to change all that for you right now with a little number we like to call,

ALL. "FRUITCAKE-A-GO-GO!!!"

(They all make to lob their fruitcakes at the audience, just as...Blackout. In the darkness we hear Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass's version of "Spanish Flea." Lights up on MICHAEL in loud blazer with index cards, there are three empty stools onstage.)

(Note: This sequence should go at a good clip, as rapid as the audience volunteer's responses allow.)

MICHAEL. Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Fruit, Nut, and Dating Game!! Where we learn all the latest facts and figures on that fruitiest and nuttiest of cakes! Let's meet our players, shall we? Contestant Number One first came to America as an exchange student from Easter Island...

JOHN. *(Entering and sitting on stool:)* Mata Ki Te Rangī!

MICHAEL. He totally believes in Santa Claus, and hopes to be an astronaut when he grows up!

JOHN. Hey, Santa!

MICHAEL. *(As JIM enters and sits:)* Contestant Number Two is a dour fellow, who likes to crush small children's dreams by disillusioning them of cherished yet harmless childhood beliefs. In his spare time, he enjoys dressing up in women's clothes and lip-syncing to Nancy Sinatra...

JIM. Hey, wait a minute...

MICHAEL. Contestant Number Three comes to us all the way from...the second row! Let's have a big round of applause for contestant Number Three!

(Spotlight on audience member in the second row—female is preferable, but whatever, work with it—and MICHAEL quickly drags them up on stage, over protests, just do it as fast as possible.)

Thanks so much for joining us! And what do you do for a living?

(Whatever they respond with:)

That's just great! I bet your parents are very proud of you. It says here on our card that you're also attending night school, with hopes of becoming a cross-gendered exotic dancer. Well, best of luck to you!

Let's get started, shall we? Contestant Number One, first question: Food scholars date fruitcake back to ancient Egypt and the Roman Empire. According to some historians, Egyptian fruitcake was considered A) an essential food for the afterlife; B) hearty compact foodstuff for the conquering Roman legions; or C) Handy and lethal catapult ammunition?

JOHN. Gee, they all sound good to me...

(The sound of a friendly bell tone.)

MICHAEL. That is correct! The answer is *all of the above!* Contestant Number Three, first question for you, dear: What percentage of Americans give annual gifts of fruitcakes? Is it A) 12%, B) 28%, or C) 98.6%?

(Friendly bell tone—If they answer B, then:)

That is correct! 28% of Americans give annual gifts of fruitcake! Congratulations!

(If they answer anything else, Friendly bell tone and...)

No, but close enough! 28% of Americans give annual gifts of fruitcake! We're gonna give you the point anyways!

Contestant Number Two, the green "mystery bits" often found sprinkled throughout traditional fruitcake are actually the candied rind of the *citron* fruit—to tie up the score, what is the official Latin taxonomy, genus, species, and sub-species?

JIM. Uh...I don't know, how am I supposed to...

(Sound of a disapproving buzzer.)

MICHAEL. I'm sorry, time's up! Next round: Contestant Number One, which famous author once described fruitcake as (and this is an honest to god real quote, ladies and gentlemen) "A geological homemade cake"?

JOHN. Beats the dickens out of me...

(Friendly bell tone.)

MICHAEL. That is correct! *Charles Dickens* is the answer...

JIM. Hey, wait a minute...

MICHAEL. Contestant Number Three, next question for you: Do you find me attractive?

(It may take some prodding to get a response. Whatever they respond:)

(Either: Friendly bell tone and:)

MICHAEL. That is correct! You *do* find me attractive!

(Or: Disapproving buzzer and:)

I'm sorry, that's incorrect, you *do* find me attractive!

Contestant Number Two, second question: What is the difference between a horse...?

(He checks the back of the card, and that IS the whole question.)

JIM. Um...I'm...uh...not sure how to...

(Disapproving buzzer.)

MICHAEL. I'm sorry, time's up! On to the final elimination round! And remember, this round is worth *Bonus Points*, so it's still anybody's game! Contestant Number One, third and final question, think hard now: Do *you like* fruitcake?

JOHN. *(Thinking hard:)* Yes?

(Friendly bell.)

MICHAEL. That is correct! You *do* like fruitcake!

JOHN. *(Thrilled:)* I just guessed!

MICHAEL. Contestant Number Three, over the years the word "Fruitcake" has become synonymous as a term for someone who is crazy, around the bend, mad as a hatter, not all there, of unsound mind, sick in the tinker, stark raving mad, brainsick, daft, demented, disordered, distraught, dotty, insane, lunatic, maniacal,

mentally ill, moonstruck, a wee bit off, touched, unbalanced, un-sound, bonkers, cracked, daffy, gaga, loony, bananas, batty, buggy, cuckoo, fruity, loco, nuts, nutty, screwy, wacky, crackers, one sandwich short of a picnic, non compos mentis... For your bonus points, list another synonym that I haven't already used...

(After a bit of prodding, get something out of them...and get the audience to respond appreciatively.)

That's just great! Well, this is turning out to be a very close, very exciting game! And now on to the final question... Contestant Number Two, for your bonus points and a chance to win the match... is there a Santa Claus?

JIM. What?

MICHAEL. Is there a Santa Claus? Yes or no?

JIM. Uhhh...well...that's a hard...uh...a hard question...I, uh...

(He looks at JOHN, who is beaming, signaling him "Yes!," fingers crossed.)

MICHAEL. Time's a wasting, we'll need an answer Number Two...

JIM. Well, it's...it's complicated, sorta...

MICHAEL. Come on, Number Two, what's your answer for all the millions of children watching the show? All those shiny faced tykes, eyes all aglow, visions of sugarplums dancing in their heads...all those kids who wait all year for this one night, this *one* night when they pin their hopes and dreams on a visit from good ol' St. Nick, whose lives are so simple, and as yet unsullied by the harsh realities of adulthood, who have maybe a few more years of innocence, a few more years to dream and experience true wonder, who will grow up soon enough and have to deal with mortality, and world issues, and growing old and wondering what happened to those carefree days, who will sit and wait and watch the clock tick away what's left of their desperate lives, wishing they had held onto the magic just a little bit longer...is Santa real, yes, or no...?

(JOHN is bursting, unable to contain himself.)

JOHN. Yes!!

JIM. NO!

(A stunned silence.)

MICHAEL. What?

JIM. I am *so* sorry, John, but...look, I really can't do this any longer...ya just gotta understand...there comes a time when you have to accept reality. Santa...Santa is, well...he's...

(MICHAEL is aghast, JOHN is stricken. They both back away from JIM, joining and flanking the volunteer, three against one. JOHN holds her/him for comfort.)

MICHAEL. Yes, Jim? Would you care to tell John just what Santa is? Would you care to tell contestant Number Three here? *(To the volunteer:)* I'm sorry, what's your name? *(Get a reply, and no matter what they say, confirm it as:)* Cindy...would you care to tell little Cindy here?

(MICHAEL holds Number Three from the other side.)

Why don't you just tell us *all* the truth about Santa?

JIM. Oh, come on! This is not fair!

MICHAEL. No, I believe you have something to tell John. I think we'd *all* like to hear it.

JOHN. Say it ain't so, Jim...

JIM. You're making me out to be the bad guy here...

MICHAEL. Really, Jim, I had no idea you were so...Santa-Claus-trophobic.

JIM. Oh, for cryin' out loud, this is...I can't believe this, this is absurd...I don't make the rules, this is *reality*. He's a grown man...almost... All right, why don't *you* tell him the truth about the Easter Bunny?

(JOHN is stricken, eyes even wider and nearly doubles over in shock, unable to speak...or maybe just a simple "aak!")

MICHAEL. Oh, Jim, I think you've done enough damage already today, don't you? Why don't you just stick to the point, and tell little Johnny and little Cindy here about "reality"?

JIM. Okay, all right...sure. Okay, John, I'm gonna try this logically...Okay, now Santa visits all the children in the world, all the good, all the nice children, on Christmas Eve, leaves them presents, fills their stockings, eats and drinks their milk and cookies, and ho, ho, ho, off to the next...right?

JOHN. (*Uncertain, but hopeful:*) Yeah...

JIM. (*Whipping out a pocket calculator:*) Okay! Good...now...John, there are about 380 million children in the Christian world, okay, in the *Santa Claus believing* part of the world, right? Right. Okay, now if we break that down to an average of, say...three kids per house, that's...126 *million* houses he has to visit...in one night.

JOHN. (*Sees nothing wrong with this:*) Yeah?

JIM. John, even giving him all the time zones to work with, that breaks down to something like 800 houses *per second*.

JOHN. Yeah!

JIM. John, that means Santa has about 1/1000 of a second to park the sleigh, hop out, slide down the chimney, fill the stockings, down a couple of cookies, glass of milk, shimmy back up and zoom! on to the next house...

JOHN. Yeah!

JIM. That's 252 *million* cookies, John...that's almost 8 *million gallons* of milk...

JOHN. Wow...

JIM. And at only one present per kid, each not weighing much more than two pounds...

JOHN. I want a truck!

JIM. Okay...

JOHN. A red one, with flashing lights! And a GameBoy!

JIM. (*With increasing intensity:*) John, his sleigh would be carrying more than 380,000 *tons*, it would have to travel at 650 miles *per second*! 380,000 tons traveling at 650 miles per second in our atmos-

phere, would create so much air resistance and friction it would burst into flame with an explosion equal to ten Nagasakis...

(JOHN is dumbfounded.)

Do you understand what I'm getting at here?

JOHN. *(In awe:)* Yeah...

JIM. I thought you might. I know it's hard to accept, and I'm sorry, but...

JOHN. Santa...is... **EVEN MORE AMAZING THAN I THOUGHT!**

JIM. What!? No, John...I was trying to explain to you...

MICHAEL. Actually, Jim, Santa Claus, or Saint Nicholas, has considerable basis in reality, going back all the way to the 3rd century...

JIM. What?

MICHAEL. I've been doing some research.

JOHN. That's a lot of cookies...

JIM. This is insane...

MICHAEL. *(Turning to Number Three:)* So, Cindy—what about you? *(Arm around their shoulder, put them on the spot:)* Good ol' Saint Nick? Real or no? Whaddya say?

(Prompt them until an answer—JIM and JOHN can lobby as they see fit.)

(If "Yes," then:)

That is a bold statement, and I'm proud of you. Folks, don't you think that little Cindy here, admitting to an advanced state of arrested adolescence, is admirable? I think courage like that deserves to be recognized, don't you? Let's have a big round of supportive, if somewhat pathetic applause for Cindy! (Get applause, John hugs him/her furiously.) Thanks so much for playing!...

(If "No," then:)

No, I'm sorry, that's incorrect, you DO believe in Santa Claus, and this next scripted segment has been designed to incorporate a positive response, so we'll proceed as if you had said 'yes'—Let's have a

big round of supportive, if somewhat pathetic applause for Cindy! Thanks so much for playing!...

(Prompt them off the stage and back to their seat.)

Have a safe trip back to the second row, drive careful—

JIM. The weather report calls for snow and frost and thick frogs—

MICHAEL. Call us when you get there so we know you're OK—

JIM. Hey, and good luck with that dancing career—

JOHN. Watch out for flying reindeer! (*"Thumbs up" gesture.*)

MICHAEL. Now, Jim, as I was saying, Santa Claus, or Saint Nicholas, *was* an actual person, born in Turkey, about 271 A.D. He was the Bishop of Myra, and became the patron saint of, well, just about everything: sailors, merchants, paupers, murderers, scholars...

JIM. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of *murderers*?

MICHAEL. Sure, and thieves, and pawnbrokers, and bakers...

JIM. Murderers have a patron *saint*?

MICHAEL. Well, generally he's the patron saint of anybody in trouble, and there are many legends about how he brought gifts to those in need, usually at night, so no one could see him, hence the idea of Santa *Claus* delivering presents on Christmas Eve...

JIM. Sure, to all the good little murderers and pawnbrokers and thieves...

MICHAEL. Jim, you're missing the point here...the point is, the *spirit* of Christmas and the *spirit* of giving has spread pretty much worldwide, and millions of people have Santa Claus traditions, and millions and millions of children *do* believe in him—In Brazil he's *Vovo Indo*, in China he's *Dun Che Lao Ren*, on Easter Island he's...

JOHN. Rapahago! Mata Ki Te Rangi!

MICHAEL. Mata Ki Te Rangi, indeed, John. So ya see, Jim, when you stop believing in Santa Claus...that's when you start getting clothes for Christmas. What did you get last year, Jim?

JIM. Socks. And a sweater. And a \$5 gift certificate to Denny's...

MICHAEL. Have you ever worn that sweater, Jim? I mean, after Christmas morning?

JIM. No.

MICHAEL. Didn't think so. So when little Johnny here writes to the newspaper, and says, "Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?," he needs an answer, and I think *you* should be the one to give him that answer. Whaddya say? Jim? John?

(He gestures for them to have a seat. JIM resignedly sits in the chair and begrudgingly beckons JOHN over to sit next to him. JOHN is delighted, but at the last moment sits on JIM's lap. This does not work well, as JIM is obviously crushed. They re-arrange, with JIM on JOHN's lap. JOHN looks expectantly at JIM.)

JIM. *(With a sigh—can't believe he's doing this:)* Yes, VerJohmia¹, there is a Santa Claus. He lives in the hearts of children and advertising executives everywhere. He lives in shopping malls and TV specials. He lives in Coca-Cola commercials and those frightening little mechanical dancing dolls that people put on their front lawns, and in bell-ringing, moth-eaten corner drunks. But you know where he lives most of all, Johnny?

JOHN. The North Pole!

JIM. The North Pole! That's right, John! Where it's 70 below zero, and water freezes before it hits the ground, where there's no vegetation to support life, let alone eight reindeer...

JOHN. *Nine* reindeer,

JIM. *Nine* reindeer, and a couple a hundred thousand slave labor elves who crank out hundreds of millions of toys... 'course they're doing it with no raw materials, or modern power tools, or supply lines, but he lives there, Johnny, oh he lives there all the same...

JOHN. Tell me about how fast the sleigh goes again! And the cookies! And the cookies!

¹ Actually, even without John's name this works—try it: VerBobia, VerMarkia, VerPhilia.

JIM. *(To MICHAEL:)* Are you satisfied?

MICHAEL. Very.

JIM. *(Getting off JOHN's lap:)* Can we move on now?

JOHN. Hey, Jim?

JIM. Yeah?

JOHN. *(Crushing him in a big bear hug:)* I love you, man!

MICHAEL. All right, what's next...?

Macy's Day Parade

(Warm and nostalgic...)

JIM. Ah! The beginning of that *special* time of year. There's a nip in the air...

MICHAEL. Frost is on the pumpkin...

JOHN. The sweaters come out of mothballs...

JIM. And who can forget those cozy evenings around the fire ...

MICHAEL. The family gathered by its warm glow...

JOHN. Mother in her 'kerchief and I in my cap...

JIM. The children gathered at his knees as Dad opens a well-loved holiday tale and begins to read,...

(Very abrupt change in tone—and fast!)

MICHAEL. Well that never happened in My house, pal, 'cause we had—

ALL. *TELEVISION!!!!*

(MICHAEL exits.)

JIM. All of us gathered with eyes like saucers looking up at that warm, friendly, blue, cathode tube glow;

JOHN. The soft crackle of static snow, and we were bathed in the warmth of the pre-recorded magic of X-Mas!!!

(JOHN *exits.*)

JIM. Of course, Christmas officially began with that well-known harbinger of the holidays...

JOHN. The Norelco Santa!!!!

(JOHN *enters as the Norelco Santa, in silver box painted like a razor, gliding happily about the stage.*)

JIM. Well, yeah, maybe that too...But the true chanticler of the season is *The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade!!!*

(*Appropriate Music intro. JIM and MICHAEL are all bundled up—MICHAEL in a woman's wig. JIM is right in the swing of this—MICHAEL not so much. There is the distinct whiff of alcohol about.*)

JIM. Good morning and welcome to Herald Square on a Lovely day of the (harumph)-eenth annual Macy's Day Parade! I'm Fred Barbasol here with the lovely JoHanna Chanel, your co-hosts for this beautiful, lovely, spectacular event!!!

MICHAEL. Yes, Fred, it's a spectacular and lovely day for the parade in New York City. It's a brisk 28 degrees today, some snow showers and a light breeze out of the East, winds about, oh, 60 mph...

JIM. Which I hope doesn't cause too much trouble with those lovely, spectacular characters we've come to know (and love) over the years. And here comes the Grand Marshall of this year's parade, the irrepressible Sean "Puffy" Combs...

MICHAEL. Also known as "Puff Daddy"

JIM. "P-Diddy"

MICHAEL. Hoity—toity...

JIM. Pop-tarty...

MICHAEL. Howdy-doodly Booty-cally...

JIM. Well it's all for the kids, and kids of all ages—and who do we have here coming down ol' Broadway? Sponsored by the Halliburton Corporation...

MICHAEL. In a no-bid contract...

JIM. ...it's Britney Spears high atop the first float of the day—

MICHAEL. Yes, it looks like a giant ice castle made entirely of...ice. And I must say—her rather large belly piercing has *got* to be feeling the chill...

JIM. Well I know I speak for a lot of our viewers when I say I wouldn't mind getting my tongue stuck to that...

MICHAEL. And next up we have the All-Star Marching Band from Anaheim, California playing a medley of their hit...

JIM. “When It's Springtime in the Rockies, It's 40 Below”?

MICHAEL. (*Sotto voce:*) My God, I'm a serious journalist, Fred...

JIM. And it looks like they're having the time of their lives...

MICHAEL. I am a serious journalist freezing off my tookas...

JIM. And look who's next! Justin Timberlake singing that Holiday classic “*Mele Kali-kimaka*” ...

MICHAEL. A serious journalist standing next to the Wolf Blitzer of the holidays...

JIM. That's Hawaii's way of saying “Shalom” to Christmas. Justin is looking pretty tropical today, Johanna, and yet I can't quite make out what he's wearing under that grass skirt—

MICHAEL. It's not what you think, it's still pretty cold out here—

JIM. And up next we've got the cast of that smash hit Broadway show “*Urinetown*” performing a number from their show... Oh my God...

(They watch in pained fascination for a few moments.)

MICHAEL. And here come the clowns with the sawdust—that'll take a few moments to clean up...

JIM. (*Aside, to himself:*) I could be Wolf Blitzer!

MICHAEL. And now (Finally) here comes the moment we've all been waiting for—

JIM. I could grow a beard...

MICHAEL. One of those characters that make Thanksgiving day so special. He's a fellow that's been in the parade for so many years to the delight of children around the world. Our "pal," Gustav The Green-Nosed Reingoat!!!

(JOHN enters as Gustav with strings attached to his outstretched fingers and hips—GI Joe dolls dangling at the ends. He crosses the stage slowly, a balloon. Take all the time you want. Suddenly he starts to drift.)

JIM. Oh my goodness! It looks like a strong cross wind has blown down 5th Avenue and caught our favorite deer-goat smack in its headlights! It's on a rampage!

MICHAEL. Looks like ol' goatboy's on a real bender! He's dangling those handlers like a reunion of my ex-boyfriends!

JIM. *(Hysterical sobbing:)* Oh My God!! Oh the humanity!!! The children! The children!! *(A pause. Back to normal:)* Wow... Well the parade is almost coming to a close and JoHanna, I'm sure you know what that means!

MICHAEL. Yes I do, Fred. *(Producing a flask:)* Time for some of that Christmas Cheer!!!

JIM. Yes it's time for that jolly old Elf that can only mean one thing!

MICHAEL. My two weeks in Cancun. Cabana boys at my beck and call...

JIM. Santa Claus is Coming to Town!!

MICHAEL. Sun and sand...

JIM. And here he comes!! Oh...

MICHAEL. Fred...doesn't Santa usually ride *in* the sleigh instead of straddling one of the reindeer?

JIM. Uh, yes, well I guess Santa is very excited to be here!

MICHAEL. It looks like Santa's broken into the Christmas eggnog a little early! If you ask me, it'll be a miracle if he makes it to 34th Street! Get it?! Miracle...34th St? Ahh, Natalie would...

JIM. Well that's all from New York! Happy Thanksgiving from all of us—

MICHAEL. (*Quite sloshed by this point:*) To all of us!

JIM. And stay tuned! Coming up next is an encore presentation of that new holiday classic from Turner Broadcasting “A Very Brady Kwanzaa.”

MICHAEL. (*As himself:*) And later tonight Bravo presents an all-new, special for the holidays episode of “Queer Eye for the Sleigh Guy.”

(Theme music.)

JIM. (*With a certain “swish,” and champagne glass:*) He's fat, he lives in an igloo...

MICHAEL. (*Ditto:*) He eats nothing but milk and cookies—we've got to update that kitchen...maybe some sushi...

JIM. Jolly is good but all *red* is out.

MICHAEL. Lose the reindeer, but all those adorable little men in tights—don't change a *thing*...

JIM. You can keep the Good list but *I'm* taking the Naughty!

MICHAEL. We'll take him from Fat...

BOTH. ...to FABULOUS!

(Clink!)

(JOHN waddles on to stage singing “Thumpity, Thump-thump,” etc., plants himself center and tosses a top hat down.)

JIM. What the hell is that?

(This is obviously something that JIM and MICHAEL were not in on.)

MICHAEL. Well, Jim, it, uh...it looks like a snowman...

JIM. A snowman.

MICHAEL. Yeah, you know, a jolly, happy soul. With a corncob pipe...

JIM. A button nose...

BOTH. And all the rest...

JIM. Hey, what's that on the ground?

MICHAEL. Well, I bet it's a...a magician's top hat that didn't work, so he just threw it away...

JIM. Why don't you pick it up...

MICHAEL. Hey, there's something written on the brim. It says, "Whatever you do, do NOT place this hat on Frosty's head. Or he will come to life. And you will rue the day." Maybe we should just leave...

JIM. Are you kidding? Rue the day? That's ridiculous!

MICHAEL. I don't know, Jim. Somebody wrote that warning...

JIM. Yeah, on the brim of a hat. And even if it were true, how tough can he be? I mean, come on, they named him Frosty. Frosty the Snowman. It's a fairy tale...

MICHAEL. They say...

JIM. I don't care what "they" say! (*Places hat on Frosty's head.*) There. You see? Nothing!

(Lights flash and the sound of wind and music...low-budget magic.)

JOHN / FROSTY. Happy Birthday! Wait a minute, is it my birthday? Come on kids, let's dance!

JIM. Holy Hannah, a talking snowman!

MICHAEL. There must have been some magic in that old top hat we found.

JIM. 'Cause when we placed it on his head he began to dance around. Well, sorta danced...actually, he's just shaking and twisting and getting all sweaty. He's kinda freaking me out...

JOHN / FROSTY. Come on, gang! Let's have a parade!

(He enthusiastically hugs JIM, who really doesn't like this.)

JIM. Oh boy, am I beginning to rue this day.

MICHAEL. Aww, Jim, that's cute...in a creepy frozen forbidden snowman love sorta way.

JOHN / FROSTY. I'll lead us down to the village, with a broomstick in my hand. We'll run here and there, all around the square, playing "Catch me if you can!" Come on!

(JOHN / FROSTY heads off stage.)

JIM. Well, that's just great. Tell ya what—why don't you lead us down through the streets of town, right to that traffic cop... farther...just a little bit farther...that's right...and only pause a moment, when you hear me holler...

(The sound of a HUGE car crash, squeal of brakes, etc. Hat flies back onstage...an uncomfortable pause.)

...stop.

MICHAEL. Hey, Jim, that was kinda harsh...

JIM. What?

MICHAEL. There are kids here. This could be very upsetting, very emotionally scarring. It could cause serious problems later in life. This guy in the front row looks really distraught...

JIM. Oh, come on...

MICHAEL. I think you should apologize. *(To guy in front row:)* What's your name, sir?

(Get a response, and regardless of what he says, confirm it as—)

Cindy.

JIM. It's just a story...

MICHAEL. No, I really think you need to apologize to Cindy here... say you're sorry for what you did to Frosty... SAY IT!!

JIM. *(Very solicitous:)* Okay, okay... Cindy, I'm sorry for what I did to Frosty...

MICHAEL. Good, good...and now say you're a control freak with abandonment issues, and that you have a problem with the Holiday season, because your family was never really very close, and you

never got what you wanted, not even that Red Ryder BB gun, which you really *really* wanted, and no, I *wouldn't* have put my eye out with it, and so yeah, maybe I do hide my disappointment and frustrations behind pseudo-intellectualism and lame Christmas around the World trivia, so what...

JIM. Hey, Mike, whoa there, whoa...it's OK, big fella, it's OK...

MICHAEL. Sorry, I always get kinda stressed around the holidays.

JIM. Well, I'm sorry too. I just think it's kinda late for Frosty there, it looks like he's melted. *(Picks up hat.)*

MICHAEL. Are you sure?

(JIM looks offstage, and is hit in the face by a glass of water.)

JIM. Pretty sure.

MICHAEL. Ah, nertz!

JIM. Just when I was beginning to like the big slush ball...

(He tosses the hat offstage, immediate sound FX of wind, music, etc.)

JOHN / FROSTY. *(Entering with hat:)* Happy Birthday! Hey Jim! Hey Mike! It's great to see you guys again, but the sun's kinda hot today, so I've got to be on my way. So I'll say goodbye...

JIM / MICHAEL. Goodbye!

JOHN / FROSTY. And don't you cry, I'll be back again someday!

(He exits, singing thumpity, thump-thump...)

MICHAEL. Ya know, Jim, I've learned something here tonight. I've learned that there are some Christmas stories that can make you feel all warm and fuzzy inside, so you view the holidays in a different light, no matter how deep-seated and scarring the issues you have with your own family really are...

(He exits.)

JIM. And I learned that no matter how nice they are, some guests who visit for the holidays can be a real pain in the ass...

(Realizing that he is alone on stage, he takes advantage.)

Marley was dead...

(Blackout.)

Ah, crap...

Xmas Special List!

(Music.)

VOICE-OVER. Good evening and stay tuned! Next on many of your local NBC/CBS/ABC/WB/MSNBC/CNN stations: “A Very Special Christmas Event.”...Welcome to The Bob Hope / Bing Crosby / Andy Williams / Perry Como Christmas Spectacular!!!

With their special Guests:

Red Skelton, Rudy Vallee, Tex Ritter, Rudolf Nureyev, Robespierre, Pat Boone, Barry Manilow, Barry Bostwick, Billie Bartie, Bartles and James, Jamie Farr, Forrest Tucker, Friar Tuck, Mister T, Mister Ed, Eddie Izzard, Eddie Bracken, Steve and Edie, Rhett Butler, Redd Foxx, Shekey Green, Mister Green Jeans, Claudette Longet, The Lennen Sisters, Art Linkletter, Arthur Godfrey, Lawrence Welk, Wendall Wilke, the Flying Wallendas, Buster Crabbe, Rin-Tin-Tin, Tiny Tim, The Olsen Twins, Marilyn Monroe, Marilyn Manson, The Mamas and The Papas, Peter, Paul and Mary, Matthew Perry, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Johnny Appleseed, Johnny Depp, The Devil with a blue Dress, David Niven, Catherine Deneuve, Dorothy Parker, Peter the Great, The Great Gildersleeve, Greer Garson, Gerald Ford, Harold Lloyd, Leopold and Loeb, Lawrence of Arabia, Simon and Schuster, Chingatchcook, Cokie Roberts, Randolph Scott, John Wayne, Wim Wenders, William the Conqueror, Waylon Jennings, Joan of Arc, Johnson and Johnson, and the irrepressible Gary Coleman!!

Christmas in Australia

(Australian music and lights up on...)

JIM. *(Very “Crocodile Hunter”—bush hat, khakis...carrying a large Foster’s beer can:)* Crikey! Down in Australia, we celebrate Christmas

pretty much the same as you folk, although you lot have some pretty funny names for things...

For a start, Santa doesn't fly over the Great Barrier Reef in a sleigh, he comes in on Christmas eve riding a surfboard—just out of reach of the jaws of the Great White Shark!!! That can swallow a fat man whole!! A one-biter!! Isn't she a beauty?!

Then, when Santa gets to your house, he doesn't slide down the chimney—he *invades* yer home! Like a poisonous black water snake called the wigglybanger bitey-bitey, whose venom can kill a man in 30 seconds!!!

And remember, in Australia if you're bad, Santa doesn't leave you a lump of coal, but a box full of Tasmanian Fire Ants, big as your eyeball, that can sting you over and over again!!! Kioweeee!!!!!!

So, as we say down under—Cunumberra wallamaroo ya billy-bonger!! Australian for Merry X-mas!

(He cracks the Foster's.)

(Blackout.)

W(h)ales

(The sound of seagulls and waves, a concertina sea chantey.)

(JOHN enters, wearing a big pirate hat. He has several inflatable/stuffed whales or fish hanging off his body, possibly an eyepatch.)

JOHN. Ahoy there, matey! Christmas be comin' early this year, arrgghhhh! Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of eggnog! I be looking for the Great White-bearded Whale: Moby Nick! Thar she blows, with boughs of holly, doncha know, arrrgghhh...

JIM. *(Entering and stopping him:)* John, whoa, wait...—what are you doing?

JOHN. What do you mean?

JIM. I mean...THIS, all this... *(Gesturing to fish, etc.:)* ...what Christmas story is this?

JOHN. Oh, it's Bob Dylan's Beloved Holiday Classic, A Child's Christmas with Whales. Shiver me timbers and jingle me bells! Aarrgghhh...

JIM. John...**JOHN**—it's Dylan *Thomas*, not Bob Dylan, and he wrote A Child's Christmas in Wales, W-A-L-E-S, as in the country, Wales, Southwest of England, not Whales, W-H-A-L-E-S, that's a big fish you get blubber from...

JOHN. You're sure?

JIM. Pretty sure.

JOHN. And there's nothing in there about the ocean, or ships, or swabbing the poop deck and stuff...?

JIM. No, John, it's not about that...it's...well, it's a nostalgic look at Christmas time through the eyes of a child and...well, actually, he *does* mention, "the ice-edged and fish-freezing waves...at the rim of the carol-singing sea" and "the cries of the dock birds and the hooting of ships out in the whirling bay...and the silent, one-clouded heavens drifting on to sea..."

JOHN. That's beautiful...

JIM. Yeah...

(A reflective pause.)

JOHN. And there's nothing in there about harpoons or blubber?

JIM. No!

JOHN. Blowspouts or baleen?

JIM. John...

JOHN. Well...I feel kinda foolish now...

JIM. Yeah.

JOHN. Maybe I should just go get ready for the next bit?

JIM. Yeah, why don't you?

JOHN. (*As he exits:*) And you say there's a *whole* country in England filled with whales? Wow, I never knew that...thanks, Jim...that is *so* cool...wow...

JIM. (*He is about to retort, thinks better of it.*) ...Ah, well...not the brightest bulb on the tree, but at least...well, he's not the brightest bulb on the tree.

(*He exits, and MICHAEL enters.*)

Re-Gifting of the Magi

MICHAEL. In 1904, William Sydney Porter, better known as the candy bar, "O.Henry," wrote what was destined to become a holiday classic, "The Gift of the Magi" (*pronounced "Maggie"*), and it begins... Once upon a time there was a young man with an exquisite pocket watch...

(*JIM enters carrying the largest clock we can find.*)

A very large and exquisite pocket watch. And he was married to a woman with the most beautiful and luxurious hair...

(*JOHN enters in a dress and bad, but ridiculously long, wig.*)

JOHN / DELLA. Oh, Jim! What a large watch you have!

JIM / JIM. Della, you hot wench, kiss me now!

(*They kiss with amazing, embarrassing passion.*)

MICHAEL. But poverty forced them to live in penury...

JOHN / DELLA. Ooh, I *hate* penury!

JIM / JIM. Poverty sucks...

MICHAEL. It was Christmas, and both knew there would be no money for presents...

JOHN / DELLA. If I can't find the perfect gift for Jim, I'll die, I'll just die!

JIM / JIM. I wonder if the Sixers will make the playoffs this year!
(*Pick a recent, local sports rivalry.*)

MICHAEL. But dire times call for dire measures...

JOHN / DELLA. I know, I'll sell my hair!

(JOHN grasps wig and tosses it offstage with a flourish.)

JIM / JIM. I know, I'll have a *cheeseburger!*

MICHAEL. Christmas morning arrived, and with it a sense of glee-ful anticipation was in the air...

JOHN / DELLA. Oh, Jim, I just *had* to have a present for you, so I sold my long and beautiful hair to buy a gold chain for your watch...isn't it beautiful?

(JOHN produces a 6' length of gold-painted anchor chain, really big...)

JIM / JIM. Dude, you look like a *dude...*

JOHN / DELLA. Don't be angry with me, Jim, even though I know I've been dropping hints all week long about those tortoise shell combs for my hair, and I know you're the kind of loving man who would make any sacrifice to keep me happy...

JIM / JIM. Dude, you *are* a dude...

JOHN / DELLA. And you probably sold your watch to buy the combs for my hair, didn't you! It's ironic, isn't it Jim? Both of us sac-rificing our most cherished possessions for each other?

JIM / JIM. Del, I got you a \$5 gift certificate for Denny's...

JOHN / DELLA. That sure is irony for ya!

MICHAEL. The Magi (*Maggie*) were wise guys, very wise guys, who brought gifts to the child in the manger, and who held on to receipts in case they needed to exchange...

JIM. I *kissed* you...on the lips...

(The Vince Guaraldi "Peanuts" theme bursts out, and all break into classic peanuts dance, and then...)

JIM. Great, okay, great—we're gonna put on this pageant in the second act, right?! It's gotta be great!

MICHAEL. We'll make it spectacular! Lots of glitz!

JIM. Lots of tinsel, lots of presents...

MICHAEL. LOTS of presents! Ooohh, and mechanical reindeer, maybe...the kind that light up...

JIM. And dancing girls! We'll need to get a celebrity guest—Dick Cheney as Father Christmas... *(A local reference is good here... mayor, popular newscaster, etc.)*

MICHAEL. He is SO Hot!!

JIM. Yeah, and music by *NSYNC...

MICHAEL. Ooh! I know a guy who knows someone who knows the brother of the uncle of the cute one, you know, the one with the dark hair...

JIM. Joey!

MICHAEL. Yeah!

JOHN. But guys, wait a minute...

JIM. Come on, let's go get some glitter, and fake snow...

MICHAEL. Yeah, and a giant aluminum Christmas Tree...with fiber optics...

JIM. Nothing says Christmas like fiber optics!

(They exit through the house, excitedly discussing the plans.)

JOHN. But guys, wait, that's not what Christmas is about...it's about...well...Lights, please—

(JOHN uses the gown he was wearing as Della as a blanket over his shoulder, recreating his best "Linus" pose. This next segment is done as straight and simply as possible, unadorned.)

“And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone 'round about them! And they were sore afraid ... And the angel said unto them, “Fear not! For, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all my people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord.”

“And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth peace, and good will toward men.”

And that’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown...

(A poignant moment, and then...JIM and MICHAEL re-enter, loudly, with some very gaudy decorations. [In the original production, we used an 8-foot, inflatable, light-up Christmas tree, with two attached inflatable snowmen—really tacky, and ungainly as we carried it in over the audience’s heads.]

JIM. OK, bring it on in here...

MICHAEL. Christmas, comin’ through! Watch your heads...whole lotta Christmas comin’ through...

(They wrangle it to the stage and place it center. The audience will pretty much just watch, laughing in disbelief, if you get a big and ungainly enough looking thing.)

MICHAEL. Okay! Now *that* really says Christmas! Lights, please!

(The stage bursts forth in heretofore hidden twinkle lights, flashing stars, etc...[See note on following page.]*

Great! Okay, Jim, I think that just about covers all the stories...

JIM. That means we can *finally* get to Christmas Carol, perfect... Marley was dea...

MICHAEL. But first...Whaddya say we take a brief break here? It’s been a long first act, and we’re gonna need to clear up the stage a bit before we can get to that. I’m sure the audience could use a break, have a little hot cider in the lobby, and not that we want to commercialize Christmas or anything, but there are some *lovely* Cape May Stage T-shirts and coffee mugs for sale out there as well...they make great Christmas gifts...

JIM. And then we do Christmas Carol, right?

MICHAEL. Sure! So Ladies and gentlemen, we’re gonna have a brief intermission here, and in about ten minutes or so, we’ll be

back with Charles Dickens' Beloved Holiday Classic, "A Christmas Carol"! See you in ten!

End of Act I

** At this point, Tchaikovsky blared over the speakers and the boys performed a heart-rendingly lovely ballet version of the Nutcracker Suite: no dialogue to speak of, but men in tutus, lame rat costume, Cossacks, obligatory groin kicks, and quite possibly the most inspired costume piece we've ever come up with—a round Quaker Oats box as the Nutcracker's helmet/hat. If you really want the details, give us a call and we'll explain.*

ACT II

It's a Wonderful Carol

(Stage is dark. The sound of sleigh bells and distant singing of Christmas carols. A spotlight comes up center stage, and JIM strolls into light. He carries a large, leather-bound volume, which he opens and proceeds to read from, in grand style.)

JIM. Marley was dead to begin with. There was no doubt whatever about that...

MICHAEL. *(Entering:)* Dead as a doornail.

JOHN. *(Entering:)* Dead, dead, dead.

JIM. Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise?

JOHN. Reeaaaally dead.

JIM. *(Sotto voce:)* Do you mind?!

Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years...

(JIM begins to dress as Scrooge.)

MICHAEL. Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name after he died...

JOHN. Died, died, died...

MICHAEL. There it stood, years afterwards, on a sign above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, and sometimes for reasons no one could understand, "Binky," but he answered regardless. It was all the same to him. Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Old Scrooge. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!

(JIM acts out the description as MICHAEL continues.)

A wizened, bandy-legged, claw-fingered, evil-eyed, hunch-backed, halitosis-ridden, incontinent old miser...

JIM. Hey!

JOHN. Once upon a time—of all good days in the year upon Christmas eve—Old Scrooge sat busy at his counting house...

JIM. *(As Scrooge:)* Mr. Cratchit! You'll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?

MICHAEL. *(As Cratchit:)* If it's quite convenient, sir! I have the missus, and the 37 little Cratchits to look after, and Tiny Tim, sir, you know sweet and gentle teeny Tiny Tim, and it *is* Christmas after all...

JIM / SCROOGE. Bah, Humbug! Just be sure you're in eight hours early the next day, and then come in for the day after that the night before you leave!

MICHAEL / CRATCHIT. Thank you, sir! And Merry Christmas!

(He says this cheerily to Scrooge's turned back, but accompanies it with an "up yours" gesture, and exits SR.)

JIM / SCROOGE. Bah humbug!

JOHN. Scrooge then received a visit from his incredibly handsome, staggeringly virile, and much beloved by all nephew, Fred...

MICHAEL. *(As Fred, entering SL:)* Hello, Christmas, Merry Uncle!

JIM / SCROOGE. Christmas-schmistmas! What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough!

MICHAEL / FRED. Come then, Uncle, what reason have you to be dismal? You're constipated enough!

JIM / SCROOGE. What's Christmas but a time for paying bills without any money; a time for finding yourself a year older and not one hour richer? If I could work my will, every idiot who went about with "Merry Christmas" upon his lips would be boiled in his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!

MICHAEL / FRED. That's really quite disgusting, but come and dine with us anyway.

JIM / SCROOGE. I'd rather see you in...

JOHN. *(As Gentleman:)* Hell-o, sir! Do I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Binky?

MICHAEL. Scrooge's visit with his nephew was cut short by the arrival of an alms collector...

JIM / SCROOGE. Marley is dead.

JOHN / GENTLEMAN. Dead?

JIM / SCROOGE. Dead. He died seven years ago, this very night...

ALL. *(Spooky:)* Oooohhhhhhhh!

JOHN / GENTLEMAN. At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute...

JIM / SCROOGE. Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

JOHN / GENTLEMAN. Plenty of both, sir, but many can't go there, and many would rather die.

JIM / SCROOGE. Well, if they'd rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

JOHN / GENTLEMAN. Boy, you *are* mean!

(He exits.)

JIM / SCROOGE. Humbug!

MICHAEL. Scrooge then made his way home through the snow and frost and thick frogs to the melancholy chambers which had once belonged to his partner.

JIM. I hate these thick frogs.

MICHAEL. Upon reaching out to unlock the massive door, he was surprised to see upon it, not the brass knocker he remembered, but Bob Marley's face!

(JIM reaches for door and finds JOHN—multicolored Rasta hat and dreadlocks wig on—with a large ring in his mouth, positioned at chest level.)

JOHN. *(As best he can with a ring in his mouth:)* Dead, dead, dead! Oooohhhhh...

JIM / SCROOGE. *(Brushing past:)* Ah, bugger me...

MICHAEL. Scrooge prepared for bed, locking all the doors and trimming all the lamps...

(JIM takes off coat and dresses in robe and nightcap.)

JIM / SCROOGE. Darkness is cheap, and I like it!

MICHAEL. When suddenly, every bell in the house began to ring...

(Sound of a cell phone, joined by a car alarm, joined by the sound of connecting to the internet... "You've got mail!" etc.)

And when they stopped, Scrooge was greeted by a strange and fearsome apparition...

JIM / SCROOGE. Marley's Ghost!!

JOHN / CLARENCE. *(Entering in an antique nightshirt and dark pork-pie hat:)* No, Clarence Oddbody, Angel Third Class. I'm here to help you George Bailey, and you can help me earn my wings!

JIM / SCROOGE. *(Totally confused:)* What?!

JOHN / CLARENCE. No one is born to be a failure, George. I'm here to show you that your life truly *has* been Wonderful.

JIM. *(Sotto voce:)* John, what are you doing! You're supposed to be the ghost of Jacob Marley!

JOHN. *(Whispering back:)* It's a Wonderful Life...we forgot It's a Wonderful Life!

JIM. But we're doing Christmas Carol! We are doing Christmas Carol. And I'm Ebenezer Scrooge... *(Back to Scrooge voice:)* And I don't believe in you one bit, *Jacob Marley*, you're probably just a bit of undigested beef...

JOHN. But it's the *M.B.H.C.!*

JIM. The what?!

JOHN. The *Most Beloved Holiday Classic!*

JIM. No! NO! You are *not* going to do this! We're doing Christmas Carol, and I'm Scrooge, and you're Marley, and you're... you're... *(Back to Scrooge voice:)* ...you're probably here to tell me that Man-

kind was your business, and that after death, we all wear the chains we forged in life...

JOHN / CLARENCE. I'm here to save you George Bailey, and to show you what Bedford Falls would've been like if you'd never been born.

JIM. Stop calling me George!

JOHN / CLARENCE. The Building and Loan has helped a lot of people, George, you should be proud of that.

JIM / SCROOGE. And then you'll probably tell me that I'll be visited by Three Spirits, when the clock strikes one...and that it's my only hope of redemption, right?

JOHN / CLARENCE. You know, I'd really enjoy a flaming rum punch right about now, heavy on the cinnamon, light on the cloves—now off with you my good man, and be lively...

(As he speaks, JIM approaches menacingly.)

Joseph! Joseph!...

(He exits.)

MICHAEL. And so Ebenezer watched the spirit vanish into the darkness, a darkness filled with phantoms wandering hither and thither in restless haste, all dragging chains, some shorter, some longer. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power forever.

JIM / SCROOGE. Humbug!

MICHAEL. ...said Ebenezer Bailey,

JIM. You too?!

MICHAEL. ...and he fell asleep before his head hit the pillow.

(He exits.)

JOHN. *(Entering immediately on the opposite side of the stage:)* Scrooge woke to the sound of the clock striking one...

(The sound of a LARGE gong.)

Which was odd, as it had been past two when he went to bed...

JIM / SCROOGE. That's odd...

JOHN. And he was greeted at once by a strange and fearsome apparition...

JIM. (*Resignedly:*) Clarence...

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. (*Entering:*) No, the Ghost of Christmas Past, your past...

JIM / SCROOGE. The Nice Ghost?

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. The Nice Ghost!

JIM / SCROOGE. That's nice!

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. Rise! and walk with me...I will show you shadows of things that have been...

JOHN. The spirit took Scrooge's hand and they passed through the wall, and stood suddenly upon an open road near the edge of town. The darkness and mist had vanished for it was a clear, cold, winter's day...

(Exits.)

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. Do you know this place?

JIM / SCROOGE. Know it? Why I apprenticed here, and had my first job—Old Fezziwig's warehouse! Oh, the happy hours I spent here learning the trade of warehousing: housing...wares. With young Dick Wilkins. Ahh, I was very fond of Dick in those days...

(JOHN enters in glasses and a shop apron.)

And there's old Fezziwig himself! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!

JOHN / MR. GOWER. It's Mr. Gower, George, and you're late for work in my drugstore! Now I've got to make up these pills for delivery, but I'm so distraught over the telegram about my son, that I'm not sure just what I'm putting into them—I might even make a mistake and put the stuff with the big label that says POISON into them...

(He waits for an interruption, but JIM is refusing to play along.)

...and unless you stop me, something terrible might happen...it's strange how one man's life touches so many others, George, so unless you stop me, you know...it'll be terrible...

(JIM is on the spot, and hates it.)

JIM / GEORGE. Ah, nertz! *(With a sigh, giving in:)* I can't deliver those pills, Mr. Gower, I think ya might've put something bad in em! POISON, maybe.

(JOHN swings lamely at JIM from about five feet away.)

Please, don't hit my bad ear again, don't hit my bad ear...

JOHN / MR. GOWER. Oh, George, George... *(Crushes him in a bear-hug:)* I love you, man! *(As he exits:)* I'm gonna go buy you a BIG suitcase...

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. Come, Ebenezer, let us turn a page, and see more scenes from your past, scenes when you were just a teenager in love...

JIM / SCROOGE. Ah, Belle, how I loved her! What a fool I was, to choose a golden idol of riches over the idol of my heart. How I would love to see her again, perhaps my life would have been different, but I was deaf to her words of love...

JOHN / MARY. *(Entering in dress and wig:)* Is this the ear you can't hear out of? I'll love you till the day I die, George Bailey. And then one day you'll lasso me the moon! *(Singing and skipping:)* Oh, Buffalo gals won't you come out tonight, come out tonight, come out tonight, Oh, Buffalo gals won't you come out tonight...

JIM / JOHN. ...and dance by the light of da moon!

JOHN / MARY. Oh look, I love the old Granville house! I wish we could live there someday...

JIM / GEORGE. W-w-what, as a ghost?

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. These are but the black and white shadows of what has been, and should not be formatted to fit your screen nor colorized for network broadcast.

JOHN / MARY. We could fix that old place up, and have four kids: Tommy, Petey, Janey, and Zuzu!

JIM / GEORGE. Zuzu?

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. Gesundheit!

JOHN / MARY. Oh, George, kiss me!

JIM / GEORGE. Now listen, Mary, I don't want any plastics, and I don't want any ground floors, and this is *not* a Wonderful Life, and I'm definitely not gonna kiss you again, man!

JOHN / MARY. Oh, George, George, George!!!

(He exits.)

JIM / SCROOGE. Spirit, no more of this! Leave me! Take me away from this place! I can bear it no longer!

MICHAEL / GHOST OF PAST. Okee-Dokee. Sleep!

(He gestures magically at JIM, who falls asleep immediately. One good snore, and the loud gong again, he awakes abruptly.)

JOHN. *(Offstage:)* Scrooooooge!!!

JIM / SCROOGE. Spirit—conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it. Are you the Fat Ghost whose coming was foretold to me?

JOHN / UNCLE BILLY. *(Entering:)* No, George, it's your Uncle Billy! And I can't find the eight thousand dollars to pay off the bank! I've looked everywhere for it!

JIM / GEORGE. *(Doing his best Jimmy Stewart:)* Eight thousand dollars! Holy Mackerel! Well, did ya buy anything?

JOHN / UNCLE BILLY. No! Nothing, not even a stick of gum!

JIM / GEORGE. Do ya have any secret hiding places?

JOHN / UNCLE BILLY. No! The last I remember, I had it in the same hand as the newspaper that I gave to Old Man Potter, that B.H.C...

JIM / GEORGE. Beloved Holiday Classic?

JOHN / UNCLE BILLY. No! Bitter Hateful Cheap-ass! And I have no idea what happened to it, George. We'll have to retrace my steps...

JIM / GEORGE. All right, where do ya first remember it being missing? Were ya at the Building and loan? We can start there...

JOHN / UNCLE BILLY. No, I was on the other side of town, visiting my friend, Bob...

(He exits.)

JIM / GEORGE. Bob?

(We hear a ridiculously LOUD offstage crash.)

JOHN / UNCLE BILLY. *(Offstage:)* I'm all right! I'm allll right!

MICHAEL / CRACHIT. *(Entering and addressing the audience:)* Hello, Mrs. Crachit, and all you 137 little Crachits!

JIM / GEORGE. Crachit?!

MICHAEL / CRACHIT. Gesundheit! Ahh, my wife and family...I propose a toast, to Ebenezer Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast...

JIM / SCROOGE. Why that's awful nice of young Bob...

MICHAEL / CRACHIT. ...I know you'll probably say he's a bandy-legged, hunch-backed, halitosis-ridden, flatulent old skinflint. And that no one would really miss him if he were to, oh...say, be crushed by a falling meteorite, or hauled off by a band of renegade Turks and used in unspeakable ways, still...he is the Founder of the Feast, and I say for the sake of the season, and the forward movement of the plot, God bless him!

(He exits.)

JIM / SCROOGE. Spirit, why am I so reviled? Is there no one in this world who understands a simple man of business?

JOHN / POTTER. *(Entering in chair with blanket over lap—Lionel Barrymore in a wheelchair:)* Sit down, George, sit down...

JIM / GEORGE. Mr. Potter! You gotta help me, Mr. Potter, I'm in terrible trouble—I need eight thousand dollars!

JOHN / POTTER. Why, I'm just a simple man of business, George, and I don't understand you. Look at you, a miserable clerk, come crawling to me with a measly hundred-dollar life insurance policy. Why you're worth more dead than alive.

JIM / GEORGE. But Mr. Potter...

JOHN / POTTER. You once called me a warped, frustrated old man...

JIM / GEORGE. No, doggonit, that was my Uncle Billy, and he called you a Bitter Hateful Cheap-ass...

JOHN / POTTER. Tell you what I'm gonna do, George, I'm gonna bulldoze down Bailey Park, and put up Pottersville, and it'll be like you were never born...then I'm gonna evict all them Whos down in Whoville, and maybe start in on those pesky Munchkins, too, yeah...

(He exits.)

JIM / GEORGE. No, no... Clarence, ya gotta help me, Clarence!

(The sound of a Gong striking one.)

(He turns and confronts MICHAEL, dressed in a hooded black robe.)

JIM / SCROOGE. Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come? The Scary Ghost?

(MICHAEL gives him a "thumbs up" signal.)

Spirit, I fear you most of all, though I know your purpose is to do me good. I will learn your lesson with a thankful heart...will you not speak to me?

(MICHAEL gesticulates wildly, Twyla Tharp-y trying to convey something.)

Can you state it clearer, Spirit?

(Again, MICHAEL goes through the wild flailing gestures.)

Mmmm, nope. Still not getting it...

(MICHAEL begins to play traditional charades with JIM, supplying the appropriate cues for JIM to respond with the following...)

Oh, OK...uh...four words...first word, sounds like... rowing... paddle... oar... OAR! OK, OK...second word...flying...FLY! OAR FLY!

(MICHAEL gives him a “kinda close” gesture.)

Third word...very small word...the...or...and...is...IS!... oar fly is! Fourth word...sounds like...waddling guy...Charlie Chaplin...

(MICHAEL pulls out a horn and squeezes it.)

CLOWN! OAR FLY IS CLOWN! Well, that makes no sense whatsoever... Ahh, not clown, sounds like clown...not up, but DOWN! ... OAR FLY IS DOWN! Oar fly is down?... YOUR FLY IS DOWN! Oh...excuse me for a moment, ladies and gentlemen...

(He turns upstage and zips fly up...believe it or not, this lame bit gets HUGE response.)

(The Spirit points across the stage ominously.)

Ohhhh, spirit! Before I draw near that gravestone at which you point, tell me one thing—are these the shadows of things that *must* be, or things that *may* be?

(Pause, and MICHAEL shrugs simply.)

Is that my grave, spirit?

JOHN / CLARENCE. (Entering:) No, George, it's Harry Bailey's. Your younger brother...

JIM / GEORGE. That's a lie! Harry Bailey went to war! He was a hero! He saved the lives of every man on that transport...

JOHN / CLARENCE. Every man on that transport died, George. Harry wasn't there to save them, because you weren't there to save Harry...

(Caught between the two ghosts, confused, JIM shifts back and forth between the two somewhat manically.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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