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Cast of Characters

BASILIOS	DIOCLETIAN
RAMONA	EARNEST
REBECCA	FRANK
RUBELLA	PILGRIMS
NOBLEMAN	JAQUES
SCOTTY	JEAN
CAPTAIN	JULE
PASSENGER	INNKEEPER
BRAVE SAILOR	MIKHAIL
NICHOLAS	ANNA
ANGEL	PIRATE ONE
MUGSY	PIRATE TWO
BUGSY	IMAGINATION ONE
SATURN	IMAGINATION TWO
MERCURY	IMAGINATION THREE
MARS	IMAGINATION FOUR
GABEY	IMAGINATION FIVE
CHIP	IMAGINATION SIX
OZZIE	IMAGINATION SEVEN
WOMAN	CETHRON
MAN	EUFROSINA
MALE IDEA	EMIR
FEMALE IDEA	NAST
ARTEMIS	PINTARD
LILY	IRVING
HUNTER	MOORE
GUARDS	

Acknowledgements

The Miraculous Journey of Nicholas was originally produced by The Penn State Thespians in 1995, featuring:

Barbara Childress

Scott Flohr

Tara Hertzog

Curtis Knapp

John McCarthy

Jerry Sawyer

Melissa Wallner

Lindsay Alter BASILIOS

Tammi Hurrelbrink Stage Manager

Jonathan Dunski Director

It was rediscovered in 2002 by the Rio Rancho High School Thespians. The new production featured:

Jill Deniston

Shannon Flynn

Kemp Lyons

Nestor Peña, Jr.

Jessie Randle

Nathan Simpson

Becky Vogsland

Austin Hansell BASILIOS

Jayne Aicher Stage Manager

Trenton Clark Assistant Director

Jonathan Dunski Director

THE MIRACULOUS JOURNEY OF NICHOLAS

by Jonathan Dunski

Prologue

(The setting is a sacred place, like a musty cellar, a cluttered attic, or a vacant church. A ruin, perhaps. A place of memory. The action takes place in the imagination of BASILIOS, a kidnapped youth who lives during the Renaissance. BASILIOS enters hurriedly.)

BASILIOS. Yes, sir! I'll be right there! Now where did I put that cup? There it is. *(Noticing the audience:)* Gosh! Hello. My name is Basilios. I'm the cupbearer for His Royal Highness the Emir of Crete. Know what that means? It means I hold the cup for the Emir, and whenever he's thirsty, I hand it to him. Doesn't that sound exciting? It's not. But what else is a kid my age qualified to do? I'm really good at it, though. All except when I daydream. Sometimes I just start thinking about something, and I forget where I put the cup. The cup. Where's the cup? Oh, there it is. My mother used to tell me I have an overactive imagination.

(Seven IMAGINATION players creep on.)

I guess she was right. I used to live at home with her and my father and my dog. That was before I came here. You see, I was brought here by pirates... Kidnapped, actually...almost exactly a year ago, on the Feast Day of Saint Nicholas. You do know who Saint Nicholas is, don't you?

IMAGINATION ONE. Of course they do.

I. TWO. At least they think they do.

I. THREE. I'll bet they really don't.

I. FOUR. And even if they do, I'll bet they'd love for us to tell them.

I. FIVE. Yeah, let's tell 'em!

BASILIOS. Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, please excuse the interruption, but this is my overactive imagination. Imagination, this is everybody...

IMAGINATION. Hi, everybody!

BASILIOS. And I think I'm about to get carried away with it.

I. SIX. Tell them the story.

BASILIOS. An imagination is the most peculiar thing. (*IMAGINATION playfully punctuates BASILIOS' discourse.*) It's alive! It's part of you, yet it can have a mind all its own. You can't really see it, but you know it's there. You don't have to use it if you don't want to. When you do use it, the most wonderful things can happen. If you have a problem, you can imagine a way to solve it. If you're bored, you can imagine an exciting world all your own. And if you're lonely or sad, you can imagine a time when things will be better. An imagination is a gift. Use it, and you can work wonders.

I. THREE. Work wonders, Basilios. Tell the story...

I. SEVEN. ...of Nicholas and his journey.

I. ONE. Please!

(The IMAGINATION all agree.)

BASILIOS. What about the cup?

I. TWO. Forget the cup.

I. SEVEN. Imagine the story.

I. FOUR. A miraculous story...

I. FIVE. Of a remarkable man...

I. SIX. And his journey over time and place...

I. ONE. Full of wonder...

I. TWO. And kindness...

I. THREE. And pirates! Argghhh!

BASILIOS. It is a wonderful tale, isn't it?

IMAGINATION. Yes.

BASILIOS. Okay. But I'll need everyone's help. (*To audience:*) Including you. Would you like to help? (*BASILIOS instructs the audi-*

ence how to portray the roaring thunder, the howling wind, and the gushing waves of a storm.) Okay, then. Let's begin the creation of...

IMAGINATION. The Miraculous Journey of Nicholas!

Scene 1

(Lycia in Asia Minor, end of the 3rd century.)

BASILIOS. Nicholas was born in a town called Patara in the land of Lycia long ago in the year two hundred eighty.

(NICHOLAS enters.)

Young Nicholas showed from the very beginning that he wanted to please God. A child prodigy, he grew up quickly to become a diligent student and courteous young man. He honored his parents and cared for all of his neighbors in Patara. For example, a widowed nobleman lived down the road from Nicholas. Once quite rich, but now penniless and desperate, the man found himself unable to take care of his three teenage daughters.

(The NOBLEMAN and his daughters go about their chores, a picture of poverty.)

NOBLEMAN. Ramona...the rat traps need emptying. Rebecca...the fire needs more wood. Rubella...we need some dinner. Make us some soup.

RUBELLA. But Papa, we have nothing to put in the soup.

NOBLEMAN. Wait until Ramona empties the rat traps. *(DAUGHTERS react in disgust.)* Look, I'm doing the best I can. One more complaint and to the marketplace you go!

(As REBECCA collects firewood, she sings to herself. NICHOLAS, who is secretly in love with her, enters.)

NICHOLAS. Hello, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Hello, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS. Sorry, I don't mean to interrupt your work.

REBECCA. You're not interrupting.

NICHOLAS. I brought you some bread. For the family. We had extra at the church.

REBECCA. How very kind.

NICHOLAS. What were you singing?

REBECCA. Just a song I made up.

NICHOLAS. Really? What about?

REBECCA. I haven't decided what it's about yet. Maybe it will be about you.

NICHOLAS. Me?

REBECCA. Yes, you. And all of the things you are going to do with your life. Many wonderful things. And how people need you...and love you.

NICHOLAS. What are you talking about?

REBECCA. Never mind. Someday you'll understand.

NICHOLAS. I don't think I'll ever understand your ways.

REBECCA. Nicholas, I've been meaning to tell you...I have some bad news. I'm afraid you won't be able to visit me anymore. Well, it's not that you won't be able to visit me, but that I won't be able to be visited. I'm going away. I don't know where to. I don't even know when. I just know I'll be going.

NICHOLAS. Rebecca, you're not making any sense.

REBECCA. Well, you see, we have no more money, and Papa has said he'll have to take us to the marketplace...to sell us.

NICHOLAS. That's unthinkable.

REBECCA. I'm afraid it's the truth. Before we sleep each night my sisters pray that God will send us all husbands to take us away from our poverty. But to get a husband, one needs a dowry.

NICHOLAS. A man would marry a woman without a dowry if he loved her.

REBECCA. Please. We're talking about my sisters.

NICHOLAS. True. To cozy with Rubella would require some incentive.

REBECCA. We're too poor to buy bread, so how can Papa possibly come up with enough money for three dowries. I fear we're doomed to an unthinkable life. Nicholas, I'm so afraid.

NICHOLAS. Don't be. Have faith, my friend, and your prayers will be answered.

BASILIOS. That night the sisters prayed as usual...and went fast to sleep. Little did they know that on this particular night their prayers would be answered.

(NICHOLAS sneaks up to the house. He crows like a rooster, and pitches a bag of gold coins through the window. It lands squarely on RAMONA's head.)

RAMONA. Ugghhh!

REBECCA. What's the matter?

RUBELLA. Morning already?

RAMONA. What's this? Gold?!

RUBELLA. Did you hear a rooster?

BASILIOS. Nicholas had given the family a bag of three hundred florins.

RAMONA. Papa! A chicken from God crowned me with gold!

BASILIOS. That morning the nobleman took Ramona to town. And in the evening he returned without her.

REBECCA. Nicholas, did you hear? Papa found a husband for Ramona!

NICHOLAS. You don't say...

REBECCA. Yes! The most wonderful thing happened last night. A rooster crowed before daybreak, and a bag of gold fell through our bedroom window.

NICHOLAS. Gold?

REBECCA. Yes! Three hundred florins! Father used it as a dowry for Ramona. She is engaged to marry the mayor's son. He wasn't so sure at first, but three hundred florins helped convince him.

NICHOLAS. He took all the money then?

REBECCA. Yes. Pity he didn't leave any for Rubella.

NICHOLAS. And for you.

REBECCA. I worry about my sisters first.

NICHOLAS. I wouldn't worry. I'm sure whatever happened was all part of God's plan. Who knows...maybe the rooster will come again.

BASILIOS. Sure enough, just before sunrise the next day...

(Two sisters are asleep. NICHOLAS sneaks up to the house. He crows like a rooster, and pitches a bag of gold coins through the window. This time it lands on RUBELLA's head.)

RUBELLA. Acckkk! Whoah. Wha... ? Look, sister! It's my very own bag of—

(She falls down unconscious.)

REBECCA. Papa...

BASILIOS. That morning the nobleman took Rubella to town. And in the evening he returned without her.

NICHOLAS. Rooster?

REBECCA. Rooster.

NICHOLAS. Gold?

REBECCA. A bagful.

NICHOLAS. Dowry?

REBECCA. And a husband.

NICHOLAS. Blind?

REBECCA. As a bat.

BASILIOS. Nicholas' plan was almost complete...

(REBECCA is asleep in her bed. NICHOLAS once again crows and throws, but this time he is apprehended by the NOBLEMAN who has been keeping watch for the rooster.)

NOBLEMAN. *(Attacking NICHOLAS from behind:)* Gotcha! Trying to steal my rooster are you? *(He wrestles NICHOLAS to the ground and sees his face.)* Say...aren't you my daughter's friend...the deacon? Did you give us the gold?

NICHOLAS. *(Modestly:)* Yes.

NOBLEMAN. *(Releasing NICHOLAS:)* Goodness, gracious, young man. Where did you get that kind of money?

NICHOLAS. I and my family have more than enough. *(Giving the NOBLEMAN the third bag of gold:)* It was our wish to share it.

NOBLEMAN. Thank you, my boy. Thank you indeed! Oh, I can't wait to tell my daughters that you are the benefactor.

NICHOLAS. No. You mustn't. You mustn't tell.

NOBLEMAN. But without your gifts, my daughters would not have husbands. Our family would have been destroyed.

NICHOLAS. Please. I wish to remain anonymous.

NOBLEMAN. But—

NICHOLAS. Please!

NOBLEMAN. Of course, my boy. Anything for you.

NICHOLAS. Then there is one thing I would ask...

NOBLEMAN. Of course, my boy. Anything. Just name it.

NICHOLAS. *(Shyly:)* It's Rebecca. In the morning, would you let me visit Rebecca?

NOBLEMAN. Certainly.

BASILIOS. Later that morning...

(NICHOLAS arrives with a bouquet of wild flowers. NOBLEMAN and REBECCA are leaving the house.)

NOBLEMAN. Good morning, my boy. And good-bye.

NICHOLAS. Where are you going?

NOBLEMAN. To town. I just got word. Urgent business.

NICHOLAS. But...Rebecca?

NOBLEMAN. She is my business. Sorry, my boy, but we really must be going.

NICHOLAS. No.

REBECCA. It's okay, Nicholas. I have a dowry now.

NICHOLAS. Yes. I mean, yes? Wow. That's...wonderful. But, you needn't go.

REBECCA. I must.

NICHOLAS. What I mean to say is...

REBECCA. Wait. Papa, would you excuse us for a moment?

(NOBLEMAN goes into the house.)

Nicholas, listen. There is a most extraordinary situation. Last night there was a third miracle. Another bag of gold. For me. I didn't know it, but my father actually arranged two husbands for Rubella, just in case one would back out. Don't you see? Both of them accepted, so Papa will have to honor both deals. Rubella gets one, and I the other. I am to be married.

NICHOLAS. Married.

REBECCA. Hard to believe isn't it? He's a merchant. He has his very own ship. Just imagine, I'll get to travel the high seas, and see parts of the world of which I'd never dreamed.

(NOBLEMAN comes out of house.)

Papa, don't forget the money.

(NOBLEMAN goes back inside.)

I must thank you, Father Deacon, for your generous gift. Just one of many you have to offer. So many people will come to respect you for those loving gifts. You'll be a fine priest, Nicholas, and someday a wonderful bishop, I'm sure.

NOBLEMAN. *(Carrying the bag of gold:)* We must be going.

REBECCA. God bless my wonder worker. *(She kisses him on the cheek.)* Good-bye.

BASILIOS. The giver of gifts began his journey...

Scene 2

(MALE IDEA and FEMALE IDEA, two figures wearing halos, dress NICHOLAS in clerical robe.)

BASILIOS. Nicholas was ordained into the priesthood when he was nineteen years old. Soon after, he went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. To travel in peace, he booked passage on an Egyptian boat where no one would know him.

(NICHOLAS sits down next to PASSENGER, an earthy woman and a bit of a busybody. Captain and SCOTTY are piloting nearby.)

PASSENGER. Hi.

NICHOLAS. Hello.

PASSENGER. Is this your first pilgrimage?

NICHOLAS. Yes.

PASSENGER. Mine, too. I been saving money for three years to go on this trip. Here I am. Come all the way from Mesopotamia. My father, he was a fisherman. What do you do?

NICHOLAS. I'm a priest.

PASSENGER. No kidding? And so young. Are you married?

NICHOLAS. No.

PASSENGER. Well, I bet you broke some hearts on your ordination day. So are you planning to be bishop?

NICHOLAS. No. I plan to be a monk.

PASSENGER. Really?

NICHOLAS. There's a monastery in Patara, where I'm from. I visit it frequently. It's the most beautiful place I know. It lives apart from

the trappings and commotion of the workaday world. Somehow, the sun and the moon shine brighter there. And there is a garden, watered by springs that do not fail. There I will live, and pray, in peace.

PASSENGER. All this and he's a poet, too. Well, if I were you I wouldn't hide that light of yours under a bushel, if you know what I mean. Granted, there's so much work that comes with being a bishop—

NICHOLAS. Monks work. They work very hard. They grow all their own food.

PASSENGER. So they do. I can see where you wouldn't prefer such a high-profile job. Especially in times like this. It's not exactly fashionable to be a Christian. But it's like my mother always said—

NICHOLAS. Excuse me. (*Sensing danger, he goes over to CAPTAIN.*) Pardon me, Captain. I must warn you that there's a bit of trouble ahead.

CAPTAIN. What kind of trouble? I say...what kind of trouble?!

BASILIOS. Suddenly, dark storm clouds covered the sky, (*Cueing the audience*) roaring thunder rattled the deck, howling winds tore at the sails, and gushing waves rocked the ship.

SCOTTY. We've lost control of her Captain!

NICHOLAS. (*Calmly, over the howling wind and gushing waves:*) Is there anything I can do?

CAPTAIN. Are you a priest?

NICHOLAS. Yes, actually, I am.

CAPTAIN. Then I would suggest you pray we get through this.

NICHOLAS. My pleasure.

PASSENGER. (*Flying off the ship into the ocean:*) Waaahhh!

CAPTAIN. What's that?

SCOTTY. Passenger overboard!

PASSENGER. Help!

CAPTAIN. Quick, sailor! Throw her a rope!

SCOTTY. Yes, sir! *(He picks up a coil of rope and throws it overboard.)*

CAPTAIN. Blast it, man. I meant a rope tied to something!

PASSENGER. *(Drowning:)* Help!!

SCOTTY. Sorry, sir.

BRAVE SAILOR. *(Having overheard everything:)* I'll fetch her, captain! *(Heroically, he dives overboard.)*

SCOTTY. Atta' boy!

BASILIOS. The brave sailor jumped into the raging waters, grabbed the drowning passenger, and swam back to the ship.

PASSENGER. You saved my life.

BRAVE SAILOR. It was nothing, really.

BASILIOS. Suddenly, gushing waves crashed over the ship, striking the brave sailor down. Then, the storm subsided.

CAPTAIN. *(Looking at the sailor lying lifeless on the deck:)* Is he... ?

SCOTTY. I'm afraid he's— *(SCOTTY touches BRAVE SAILOR.)*

BRAVE SAILOR. Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!

SCOTTY. I'm afraid he's hurt really bad, sir.

CAPTAIN. Sailor...Sailor, can you hear me?

(BRAVE SAILOR nods.)

Can you tell me where it hurts?

(BRAVE SAILOR shakes "no.")

Okay, take my hand. Now when we get to where it hurts, squeeze my hand. *(To SCOTTY:)* Proceed.

SCOTTY. Does it hurt here? *(No response.)* Here? *(No response.)* Here?

(BRAVE SAILOR squeezes.)

CAPTAIN. Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!

SCOTTY. I think I found it, Captain.

(SCOTTY eases up from BRAVE SAILOR. The CAPTAIN, still holding BRAVE SAILOR's hand, looks dazed from the squeeze.)

PASSENGER. Oh, Captain, *(Taking his free hand)* are you okay?

SCOTTY. It ain't him. It's me mate here.

PASSENGER. Really? Well, where does it hurt?

SCOTTY. *(Touches BRAVE SAILOR:)* Right here. Or was it here? Maybe here...

CAPTAIN / PASSENGER. Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!

SCOTTY. *(Letting go of BRAVE SAILOR and taking PASSENGER's free hand:)* There, there now.

NICHOLAS. Pardon, me. Could be of any assistance?

SCOTTY. Oh, he ain't that far gone yet, Father.

NICHOLAS. Nevertheless, may I? Now where does it hurt? Here? *(No response.)* Here? *(No response.)* Here? *(To everyone's surprise, no response.)*

CAPTAIN. Well it hurt there a minute ago.

NICHOLAS. How do you feel?

BRAVE SAILOR. Much better. Thank you.

SCOTTY. How's it possible?

PASSENGER. It's a miracle!

CAPTAIN. He's cured. *(To NICHOLAS:)* You healed him.

BRAVE SAILOR. Thank you, sir.

NICHOLAS. *(Incredulous at first:)* Oh, I... You're welcome. *(He shakes the BRAVE SAILOR's hand, sending the zany squeeze current to the others.)*

BASILIOS. Before long, they reached their destination. *(To NICHOLAS as he disembarks:)* Welcome to Jerusalem, and have a nice day...

Scene 3

BASILIOS. Nicholas visited the places Jesus had lived and died and after several weeks, as the story goes, an angel of the Lord appeared to him...

ANGEL. *(In a regional accent:)* Hey, you. You Nicholas of Patara?

NICHOLAS. Yes. Who are you?

ANGEL. An angel of the Lord. These orders are for you. *(ANGEL hands telegram to NICHOLAS who begins to read it.)* They say you should return to your homeland immediately.

NICHOLAS. Thanks.

ANGEL. Don't mention it.

BASILIOS. Nicholas hurried to the harbor, looking for the quickest passage back home.

(MUGSY is loading cargo while BUGSY looks on.)

NICHOLAS. *(Urgently:)* Ahoy there!

BUGSY. Afternoon, Padre.

NICHOLAS. Is your ship sailing?

BUGSY. Dat it is.

NICHOLAS. Where are you going?

MUGSY. Weez goin' to—

BUGSY. Dat is negotiable.

NICHOLAS. Are you the captain?

BUGSY. Dat I am.

NICHOLAS. I need to go directly to Patara in Lycia. Will you take me there?

BUGSY. Patara, huh? Well—

NICHOLAS. I will pay you handsomely. *(NICHOLAS produces a purse.)*

MUGSY. Hey, who you callin' handsomely?

BUGSY. *(Sotto voce:)* Pipe down, mug. *(To NICHOLAS:)* How much we talkin', Padre?

NICHOLAS. Here's half. You'll get the rest when we arrive in Patara.

BUGSY. *(Pleased with the sizable sum:)* Sure thing!

(NICHOLAS boards the ship.)

MUGSY. Hey, boss, where're we goin'?

BUGSY. Sicily.

MUGSY. Oh. Then how come you told him weez goin' to Patara?

BUGSY. Pipe down. What he don't know won't hurt him. Get the idea?

MUGSY. Yeah. Geez, boss, you're smart.

BASILIOS. There was a fair wind, and they set sail due west. It didn't take Nicholas long to figure out their course was not bound for Patara.

NICHOLAS. Pardon me, Captain. I must warn you that there's a bit of trouble ahead.

BUGSY. What kind of trouble?

BASILIOS. *(With audience:)* Thunder roared! Winds howled! Waves gushed!

(As the storm rages, BUGSY and MUGSY scream and jump about, fearing for their lives. NICHOLAS is calm, standing up through the whole storm. Eventually the storm subsides.)

Soon, the storm subsided.

MUGSY. *(Gasping:)* You okay, boss?

BUGSY. Yeah, you okay?

MUGSY. Yeah.

BUGSY. *(Indicating NICHOLAS:)* Is he okay?

MUGSY. Yeah, he's okay. (*Looking over the stern:*) But the ship ain't okay. Our rudder's broke...broke bad.

BUGSY. Dat's it, mug. We're S.O.L.

MUGSY. S.O.L.?

BUGSY. Yeah. Ship out'a luck.

MUGSY. We're luckier than you think, boss. It's a miracle we even survived.

BUGSY. You can say dat again.

MUGSY. We're luckier than you think, bo—

BUGSY. Enough already!

BASILIOS. The boat drifted rudderless at the mercy of the prevailing wind. The sailors had no idea where it was taking them. They feared they would run out of food and water. Then, after two days, in the dark of night...

MUGSY. Land ho!

BUGSY. What? Where are we?

BASILIOS. They had drifted to the capital city of Myra.

BUGSY. We drifted to the capital city of Myra. Dat means twenty miles due east lies Patara. Just where he (*Indicating NICHOLAS*) wanted to go. Two miracles in one trip. Dis guy's obviously got connections. Pardon us, Padre...we reckon dat we ought'a apologize for being not exactly on the level.

MUGSY. Can you ever forgive us?

NICHOLAS. Of course. (*Paying BUGSY the other half of the fare:*) Only do us all a favor, from now on don't make it your business to deceive people, okay?

BUGSY. Sure thing! (*He hands the money to MUGSY.*)

MUGSY. Wow. But we ain't even ashore yet.

NICHOLAS. By daybreak we will be. Then you deposit me and fix your rudder. In a few days time my journey will end back home in

Patara. Then no more traveling for me. I plan to live at the monastery for rest of my life. In peace and quiet.

BASILIOS. Nicholas had been gone for months, so he did not know that the bishop of Myra had retired. The other bishops were meeting to select a new leader.

SATURN. The election of a bishop is not up to the decision of the people. Rather it is a matter of God's direction.

MARS. We could get Theodoros.

MERCURY. He's too old. What about Caleb?

MARS. He's too mean. How 'bout Jesse?

MERCURY. He's too proud. And Simon?

MARS. Too weak.

SATURN. Brethren—I had the most wonderful dream last night. We three were standing in the narthex of the cathedral, and it was four o'clock in the morning. "Holy, holy, holy!" The foundations shook with the voice of the one who cried out, and the place filled up with smoke. We sat in our wretched state, gasping. Then in flies the seraph, grasping in his hand a fiery coal, which he touched to our mouths and said, "See now... !" We sat charred and bewildered, thinking, "Whom shall He send?" Then he walks in, saying, "Here I am. Send me."

MARS. What about Methodios?

MERCURY. Too controversial.

MARS. Then James.

MERCURY. Too bland.

MARS. Samson?

MERCURY. Too ~ . *(Makes a sound and gesture more expressive than words.)*

SATURN. Brethren! Listen to your elder. I'm trying to explain something. In this dream we were waiting in the narthex for the next bishop to reveal himself. My revelation said that whoever en-

ters the cathedral at the first light of morning would be a man worthy of the office.

MERCURY. Let's get Mikey.

MARS. He won't do it. He hates everything.

SATURN. Brethren!

MARS. Sorry.

MERCURY. What do you suggest we do?

SATURN. We go. And we wait.

BASILIOS. And they went. And they waited. And waited. And waited.

(The bishops fall asleep against each other. Snoring. NICHOLAS stumbles onto them snoozing. He respectfully goes about his prayers.)

SATURN. *(Awakening:)* Ha... What time is— Who? *(Poking his counterparts:)* Brethren! *(To NICHOLAS:)* Good morning. Who might you be?

NICHOLAS. *(Kneeling:)* I am Nicholas of Patara, your respectful servant.

MERCURY. He's a bit bedraggled.

MARS. He's a bit young.

NICHOLAS. He's a bit confused.

SATURN. *(Grasping NICHOLAS by his shoulders and raising him to his feet:)* He's Nicholas, Bishop of Myra!

NICHOLAS. No!

SATURN. No?

NICHOLAS. I mean...are you sure?

BASILIOS. I'm pretty sure.

NICHOLAS. With all due respect, I have no ambition to be a bishop. I'm going to the monastery to study scripture and grow

vegetables. In peace. And quiet. Besides, you're right. I am too young. Really.

SATURN. You are a rare jewel Nicholas. A diamond in the rough, perhaps. A treasure of virtue that ought to enrich the world, not remain cloistered—locked like a strongbox buried deep in the earth. But open and overflowing with gold. You must spend your gifts among your people, where the wonders may be compounded with interest.

NICHOLAS. You make it sound so commercial.

BASILIOS. They called him the Boy Bishop of Myra. Generosity, forgiveness, and miraculous works he gave them. In return, everyone believed in Nicholas. Maybe that's why we still do.

(MALE IDEA gives NICHOLAS the Holy Scripture. FEMALE IDEA gives him a stole, embroidered with a cross. Bishop NICHOLAS is seated in his cathedral.)

Scene 4

BASILIOS. Throughout the land, word spread about the wonderful works of Boy Bishop Nicholas. Whenever people were in danger, they would seek his help.

(GABEY, CHIP, and OZZIE are three sailors crossing the Mediterranean, singing and dancing to a salty rendition of the Hymn.)

GABEY. Funny.

CHIP. What?

GABEY. I feel like there's a bit of trouble ahead.

OZZIE. What kind of trouble?

BASILIOS. *(With audience:)* Thunder roared! Winds howled! Waves gushed!

(The storm rages.)

GABEY. Batten down the hatches! We're headed for shallow water. We're going to run aground!

CHIP. We're finished!

OZZIE. If only the Bishop were here.

CHIP. Well, he ain't.

CHIP. Still, he might help us.

OZZIE. What? How?

CHIP. Let's pray.

GABEY. Are you crazy? Hold your stations!

OZZIE. What have we got to lose?

(All three bow their heads and pray. In plain clothes NICHOLAS appears on the deck of the ship.)

NICHOLAS. Get me a pole, would you?

GABEY. Where did you come from?!

CHIP. Who are you?

NICHOLAS. No time for introductions. Get me a pole. Hurry, please.

GABEY. What are you going to do?

NICHOLAS. You'll see.

(CHIP gives him a wooden pole.)

Thanks.

CHIP. He's going to push us out of the shallow waters into the open sea.

GABEY. No man is strong enough to...

OZZIE. We're moving!

BASILIOS. Soon, the storm subsided.

(NICHOLAS disappears.)

The ship took refuge in a cove, and the sailors went ashore looking for a church to thank God for their safety. They had landed at Myra,

and they would soon find the church where Bishop Nicholas presided.

(NICHOLAS appears in his cathedral.)

WOMAN. Your Grace, Bishop Nicholas, I have come to ask something of you.

NICHOLAS. Of course. What is it?

WOMAN. They say that with your blessing, a young woman will surely find a husband. Well, I'm a young woman, and I surely need a husband.

NICHOLAS. Of course. May God bless you with a peaceful life in the company of a caring man.

WOMAN. Thank you, Your Grace.

MAN. Your grace, I hope not to b-bother you, but I am a lonely man afflicted with the j-j-jitters. Oohh, what was that?! All my life people have laughed at me. Is there anything you can do?

NICHOLAS. The jitters? Hmm. May God grant you steady nerves, and that someday people will come to admire you.

MAN. Thank you, Your Grace. *(MAN notices WOMAN, and they walk off together. Chimes.)*

GABEY. This way fellas. Bishop, sir, we are three nearly shipwrecked sailors come to offer thanks to God for—

CHIP. It's you! Hey fellas, it's him!

(All three genuflect in awe.)

GABEY. Oh, sir...

CHIP. Your Grace...

GABEY. Most gracious Grace...

CHIP. Your Most Powerful Gracious Grace, Sir, I... We want... We are thankful...

GABEY. Most thankful...

CHIP. Most thankful for your help...

GABEY. Your most gracious help...

OZZIE. You saved our lives!

NICHOLAS. It was my pleasure.

GABEY. May I ask you something, Your Awesomeness, sir?

NICHOLAS. Certainly.

GABEY. How did you manage to do it?

NICHOLAS. It is a gift. I see clearly others who are in danger, and I hear their calls for help. I also, tend to be strong in times of crisis. You can be too, with prayer and practice. Be thankful for your lives, and go in peace.

BASILIOS. Strong and clear-sighted Bishop Nicholas had taken a new job as the patron of sailors. Soon even the saltiest of seafaring men were seeking the Bishop's blessings for safe and prosperous journeys. The sailors repaid Nicholas by increasing his popularity in story and song. Soon Nicholas and his miracles were traveling all over the world.

(They sing and dance a Hymn of praise—the same song REBECCA invented long ago.)

Scene 5

I. ONE. Are we there yet?

BASILIOS. Where?

I. TWO. Wherever it is we're going.

BASILIOS. Miraculous journeys take time.

I. FOUR. Tell them about the pirates!

I. THREE. Yeah! Pirates! Argghhh!

BASILIOS. Not yet.

I. SEVEN. Tell them the story of Artemis.

I. FIVE. Yeah!

(Somewhere in Asia Minor, 4th century.)

BASILIOS. Okay. Let's see... The Temple of the Greek Goddess Artemis was a magnificent structure. High on a hill it rested. Outside, tall trees protected the veranda, which wound around the massive columns laced with fragrant vines. Inside, shafts of sunlight broke through to the glistening marble courtyard. And up on an altar in the middle of it all stood the fearsome statue of Artemis.

ARTEMIS. Ta-da! Worshipers, I will now hear your pleas.

LILY. Marvelous Artemis, my name is Lily, and I have come a long way to worship you.

ARTEMIS. From where did you come, Lily?

LILY. All the way from the Valley of Ephesus.

ARTEMIS. And what can I do for you, Lily of the Valley?

LILY. I have come to ask your permission to join the group of young women who will dance at the festival in your honor.

ARTEMIS. You want to be one of my nymphs.

LILY. Yes, Goddess.

ARTEMIS. You like to dance, do you?

LILY. Yes, Goddess! And besides, my friends say it's a good opportunity to meet young men.

ARTEMIS. Yes, it is. What is your sacrifice?

LILY. Hmm?

ARTEMIS. Your sacrifice. What have you brought me?

LILY. Oh, I almost forgot. I brought you this necklace of wildflowers. I picked them myself in the meadow near my house.

ARTEMIS. How modest. *(Smelling the flowers:)* Delicate, yet wild. I love it. Of course you can be one of my dancers.

LILY. Oh, thank you, Goddess. *(She goes dancing about the temple.)*

ARTEMIS. Who's next?

HUNTER. Oh, Marvelous Artemis, Daughter of Zeus and Queen of the Wild Beasts...

ARTEMIS. Yes.

HUNTER. Goddess of Untouched Nature...

ARTEMIS. That's me.

HUNTER. Invincible Virgin, fierce and beautiful...

ARTEMIS. Okay, I get the point. Get on with it.

HUNTER. I am a lame hunter, come to ask for your almighty powers of healing.

ARTEMIS. And what is your sacrifice?

HUNTER. I have brought you this wild boar skin.

ARTEMIS. Ooh.

HUNTER. Yes. One of the most ferocious animals of the forest. I slaughtered it with my bare hands.

ARTEMIS. You? A lame hunter?

HUNTER. That's how I became lame.

ARTEMIS. You're a person after my own heart. May you hunt like a strapping lad of fifteen and grow stronger with every kill.

HUNTER. *(Transforming:)* Oh. Oh, thank you Goddess. You are awesome and kind.

ARTEMIS. Yes, well... Being a popular cult figure is a tough job. But somebody has to do it.

(Chimes. The HUNTER dances with LILY.)

BASILIOS. Enter Bishop Nicholas.

(NICHOLAS enters in travel clothes, reading directions.)

ARTEMIS. *(Admiring her own work:)* Now look at that. See, Lily, it's working already.

NICHOLAS. *(Interrupting:)* Pardon me, but can you tell me how to get to the Temple of Artemis?

ARTEMIS. This is the Temple of Artemis.

NICHOLAS. It is? Thank you. Can you tell me where I might find Artemis, Mistress of the Animals?

ARTEMIS. I am she.

NICHOLAS. You are? *(Noticing the boar skin:)* Yes, of course you are. Thank you.

ARTEMIS. May I help you?

NICHOLAS. No no no. Don't mind me. Continue with what you were doing, please.

ARTEMIS. All right lovelies, let's cut a temple rug shall we? *(She begins dancing with LILY and HUNTER. The three SAILORS enter reading directions.)*

GABEY. *(Interrupting:)* Pardon me, but can you tell us how to get to the Temple of Artemis?

ARTEMIS. This is the Temple of Artemis.

GABEY. This is it, fellas. Can you tell us where I might find Artemis, Mistress of the Animals?

ARTEMIS. I am she.

GABEY. You're just the Goddess we're looking for. You see, we—my sailor friends and I—have just been shipwrecked, and... Well, you see...there was this storm with howling winds, and roaring thunder, and gushing waves...

OZZIE. Even worse than the first storm we were in.

GABEY. We've had bad luck with storms lately. Anyway, we washed up on your shore. We are lost in a foreign land, and have no way home.

ARTEMIS. And so why come to me?

GABEY. The folks in town said you could help.

CHIP. I told you we should'a asked the Bishop.

OZZIE. Again?

CHIP. Yes, again!

GABEY. Shhh.

OZZIE. Perhaps you could guide us to a seaworthy ship, and grant us fair winds so that we could sail home.

ARTEMIS. Yes, I suppose I could do that. What is your sacrifice?

OZZIE. What?

ARTEMIS. Your sacrifice. What have you brought me? Nobody gets anything without a sacrifice.

GABEY. Well, Artemis, Goddess, ma'am...we haven't any sacrifice.

OZZIE. Naw, all we got is each other.

ARTEMIS. Well there you go.

GABEY. What?

ARTEMIS. Which one of you wants to be sacrificed?

GABEY. Look, lady, I'm not sure this was such a good idea. We'll just be leaving now, and—

ARTEMIS. It's all right. Sacrifices are my specialty. Here, I'll even help you. *(She draws her bow and arrow. SAILORS panic.)*

NICHOLAS. Stop! Hold it right there. *(He picks the arrow from her bow.)* You gentlemen are free to go.

ARTEMIS. Excuse me?!

CHIP. It's you!

GABEY. It couldn't be.

OZZIE. Yeah, it's his most Gracious Gracefulness...

NICHOLAS. Please. Just take this. *(He hands them his staff.)* It will help you and protect you on your long journey home. You'd better hurry, for I sense that there's a bit of trouble ahead.

BASILIOS. Winds howled.

ARTEMIS. Just a minute... !

BASILIOS. Thunder roared.

ARTEMIS. What was that?

(Raging storm blows away worshipers. The SAILORS exit girded by the staff.)

BASILIOS. And as the storm raged, the altar collapsed...the columns fell...the trees and flowers and worshipers all blew away. What had been at the highest pinnacle of the temple was now embedded in the earth, and what was in the earth was impelled into the air.

ARTEMIS. *(Stepping down from her pedestal, appraising the wreckage:)* Ooh! You have driven away my worshipers! My temple is ruined! What cruel god are you?

NICHOLAS. I'm not a god.

ARTEMIS. If you're not a god, then who are you?

NICHOLAS. I'm Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, Defender of The Church. I have come to declare this place officially closed.

ARTEMIS. You're mortal?

NICHOLAS. Yes.

ARTEMIS. You're mortal, and you say you're closing me down? *(Laughing:)* Ooh. That's precious. I'll turn you into a deer and have you taken down by hunting hounds.

NICHOLAS. Try it.

(She tries, but nothing happens. She tries again. And again.)

Won't work. You see, you haven't any power because you haven't any worshippers. I am sorry, Artemis. Well, I must go about my work. *(Exit.)*

ARTEMIS. This can't be happening to me. Me! Artemis. Mistress of the Animals. I'll show you, you mortal.

(ARTEMIS brings NICHOLAS and DIOCLETIAN together. After a trial, two GUARDS drag NICHOLAS away to prison.)

BASILIOS. In the year 303, the Emperor of the Roman Empire was Diocletian, a ruthless man, who persecuted Christians for their beliefs. Diocletian found Nicholas to be very popular with the people and unshakable in his beliefs. So Nicholas was thrown in jail. And the plot was only thickening...

ARTEMIS. A curse! Yes. A plague of insects on the land of Lycia. Ooh, yes! They will eat the crops for the next five years there will be no harvest, and no grain for the people of Nicholas. Then the worshipers will come back to my temple, praying to me, begging me to restore their crops. And this goddess will be back in business. Yes, Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, you go about your work. And I'll go about mine.

Scene 6

BASILIOS. For three long years, the people of Lycia suffered through the great famine conjured by Artemis, as Bishop Nicholas sat imprisoned...in peace and quiet. One day, three merchant ships were sailing the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Constantinople. The captain of the fleet had the most disturbing dream...

NICHOLAS. (*Disguised as a merchant, he appears to a sleeping EARNEST:*) I have come to buy grain. I need three hundred bushels. In return, here's three gold pieces. Deliver the grain to Myra. Thanks.

BASILIOS. When he woke up the next morning, he didn't believe what had happened.

EARNEST. Morning, Frank.

FRANK. Morning, Earnest.

EARNEST. I don't believe what happened.

FRANK. What happened?

EARNEST. (*Discovering the three coins in his pocket:*) Zounds! You won't believe what happened!

FRANK. What happened?!

EARNEST. We're changing our course. Chart a course for Myra.

FRANK. Myra? Hey, we have to get this shipment to Emperor Constantine—

EARNEST. Just do as I say. Constantine is a fair man, not like that old Diocletian was. He will wait.

BASILIOS. At the harbor, the captain greeted the people of Myra...

EARNEST. Good people, we have come with a gift. Our vessels are loaded with grain. I give you one hundred bushels of grain from each of my three ships.

FRANK. Are you out of your mind? You're giving away three hundred bushels?!

EARNEST. No, I'm not giving them away. I've been paid.

FRANK. How much?

EARNEST. Enough.

FRANK. How much?!

(EARNEST holds out the three coins.)

FRANK. You are out of your mind. We have been promised five times the market price for the grain, and you're selling three hundred bushels for three measly florins? I've got more gold in my teeth.

EARNEST. Then you should smile more.

FRANK. Earnest, I'm serious. These payloads have been carefully weighed. Constantine is gonna notice three hundred bushels are missing. And we'll be responsible for the shortage!

EARNEST. Constantine is a good man. If we tell him it was for the Bishop, he'll understand.

BASILIOS. At that moment, Nicholas arrived at the harbor, having been set free by and order from the Emperor.

(NICHOLAS enters and the crowd adores him.)

NICHOLAS. Thank you for the gift. May God bless you and grant you many years of health and happiness. *(He shakes hands with EARNEST who recognizes him from the dream. NICHOLAS winks.)*

BASILIOS. Miraculously, when the ships arrived in Constantinople, the grain weighed exactly what it had before. And when Nicholas distributed the grain in Lycia, it lasted for two years, enough to last until the crops yielded another harvest.

ARTEMIS. (*Bursting in:*) What?!

BASILIOS. Hey, I don't write the legends, lady. I just tell 'em.

ARTEMIS. Blast! (*To NICHOLAS:*) Hey, wait a minute. You can't foil my famine and just walk away. You really are something. C'mon. What's your secret?

NICHOLAS. No secrets.

ARTEMIS. Then tell me. Why do they love you more than me?

NICHOLAS. Perhaps because I love them.

ARTEMIS. And I don't?

NICHOLAS. Yours is a different kind of love. You see, I ask nothing of them.

ARTEMIS. So I have expectations. Why give them something without something in return?

NICHOLAS. Because I love them. The Greeks have saying: Kindness begets kindness.

ARTEMIS. Precious mortal. If you're so loving, do you love me?

NICHOLAS. No, Artemis. I cannot. Not like I love them. They are my people. You are an idea. An idea that is— Well...different.

ARTEMIS. Oh, yeah? Well, maybe someday you'll be an idea, too! A very different idea. Ooh. Nicholas, I have had about enough of you. You and your miracles. (*Exit.*)

BASILIOS. In time Nicholas became very old and very wise. In fact, he grew so wise and so old that eventually he became an idea...

(*MALE IDEA and FEMALE IDEA bestow a halo upon NICHOLAS, making him resemble one of them.*)

BASILIOS. It seemed that as an idea he had become even more popular than he had ever been before.

IMAGINATION. All hail Saint Nicholas! (*Reprise: the Hymn, this time as a dirge. One of them hangs a portrait of NICHOLAS, a Byzantine-style icon, at his tomb.*)

Scene 7

(During BASILIOS' narration, the IMAGINATION portrays a feisty clan of marauding Italians. They acrobatically abscond with the tomb and icon. The new tomb is decorated quite lavishly with flowers.)

BASILIOS. Soon the faithful everywhere sought his help. Because of the Holy Myro, the fragrant, healing liquid that flowed from Nicholas' tomb, Myra became a place for people seeking miracles. But by the year 1087, certain people had taken over the city, making it difficult for pilgrims to visit the tomb. Meanwhile in Italy, lots of people believed in Nicholas' sainthood, and so in spring of that year, a fleet of Italian merchants sailing to Turkey decided to rescue Nicholas' relics and bring them to Italy, where a new tomb was built. The arrival of the very precious bones in Bari, Italy, on May ninth, was cause for a great celebration. Centuries later, it still is.

(A harbor on the Aegean Sea, 11th century.)

BASILIOS. One day, a group of faithful pilgrims were making preparations for their journey to the new tomb of Saint Nicholas...

ARTEMIS. (*Disguised as a gnarled old woman, approaches a pilgrim:*) Excuse me. Kind person, where are you going?

PILGRIM. We are going to pay homage to the resting place of Saint Nicholas.

ARTEMIS. Ah, good. I wanted to go on your journey, too, but as you can see I am old, and in poor health, so may I ask a favor?

PILGRIM. What is it?

ARTEMIS. Once you have reached the tomb of Nicholas, would you please put this oil into the lamps that burn there. It's not much I know, but it's the best I can do for the precious Bishop.

PILGRIM. *(Correcting her:)* The precious Saint.

ARTEMIS. Saint. How quaint.

PILGRIM. Yes, of course we will. And thank you for your gift.

ARTEMIS. Thank you, my dear. *(To audience:)* Little do they know that it isn't really oil at all. It's a potion of doom. Once it burns in the lamps, it will destroy the tomb of Nicholas.

BASILIOS. The pilgrims set sail towards Myra, unknowingly carrying with them the potion of doom. They spent all of the first day at sea. That night, Saint Nicholas visited one of them in a dream and told him of the diabolical plan.

NICHOLAS. Quickly go and hurl this potion into the sea!

PILGRIM. Oh my, yes. *(He throws potion overboard.)*

BASILIOS. *(With audience:)* Instantly, roaring thunder! A huge flame rose from the sea and hovered above the ocean, spewing smoke and odors. Gushing waves! The sea boiled with a roar, and spit out scalding drops of water like flaming sparks. Howling wind! The passengers were tossed to and fro. The ship, buffeted by huge waves, began to sink.

PILGRIMS. *(Coughing and flailing about:)* What's happening? We're doomed! Saint Nicholas, save us! *(Ad lib.)*

NICHOLAS. *(Appearing as a majestic specter:)* Raging storm, sink back into to the sea!

BASILIOS. The storm subsided. A gentle and fragrant breeze wafted them. Their hearts were filled with joy.

(The tempest sinks into the sea, and all becomes still.)

ARTEMIS. Nooo! Nothing stops the potion of doom. *(To BASILIOS:)* What's the big idea?

NICHOLAS. I am.

ARTEMIS. You.

NICHOLAS. You should be ashamed of yourself.

ARTEMIS. Nicholas, you didn't like my gift?

NICHOLAS. No. All you offer is destruction.

ARTEMIS. You destroyed me.

NICHOLAS. I did not destroy you, Artemis. I merely put you in a different perspective. As proof you are still here. You are free to act as you please, but I will not let you harm innocent people. Not now, not ever.

ARTEMIS. Fine! Take the mortals. They're yours! I'm tired of them anyway. This Goddess is going back to the wild. Back to the forests and the fields, back to the beasts and the birds...where I can hunt and kill as I please. But live by your rules? Never. I'd rather be a dog! Good-bye, precious saint.

Scene 8

BASILIOS. Although Artemis had gone to her place in history, Nicholas still had a great deal of work to do. As the protector of the innocent, Nicholas helped those in danger of wicked weather, diabolical plans, and—

I. TWO. And pirates!

I. THREE. Yeah! Pirates! Arrgggh!

BASILIOS. Not yet!

(Northern France, sometime during the Middle Ages.)

BASILIOS. Many years later, three students were traveling through the country one dark and stormy night...

JEAN. What wicked weather!

BASILIOS. ...when they came across an inn.

JAQUES. It's good we found this inn. We never would have made it to the monastery in this storm.

BASILIOS. They were carrying with them a large sum of money.

JULE. Do you think it's safe? I mean with all the money we're carrying.

JEAN. Shhh. Keep it down about the money, or someone will hear. You can be sure it's a lot safer in here, than it is out there.

(Dreadful looking INNKEEPER appears, wielding a meat cleaver. Thunder and lightning.)

INNKEEPER. Good evening.

JAQUES. Oh, yeah?

JEAN. Good evening, madam. We're three students on our way to the monastery in Clairvaux.

INNKEEPER. Students. How nice.

JEAN. Anyway, we got caught in this dreadful storm.

INNKEEPER. Dreadful, indeed.

JEAN. And we'd like lodgings for the night.

INNKEEPER. Nightie night. Yes, of course. Come right zis way my lads. You must be frozen and famished. Here's a nice cozy room for ze szree of you. Now why don't you take off your wet gear. *(Taking hold of their moneybag:)* My! Zis is heavy. What's inside?

JAQUES. Books.

JULE. Rocks.

JAQUES. Books about rocks, actually.

JULE. Encyclopedias of rocks.

JAQUES. The Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Rocks and Minerals of the Early Renaissance...Illustrated.

INNKEEPER. Let zem dry here by ze fire. Now take off ze rest of your gear. While it dries you can go down ze hall to have hot bahzs.

JULE. Hot bahzs?

INNKEEPER. *(Waving the cleaver:)* Yes, in ze bahzsroom. We have only ze finest here at ze Hotel de Macabre. In ze meanwhile I'll go into ze cellar and crack someszing open...to drink. Do you like

wine? You're students. Of course you do. And I will make ze dinner party, no?

JEAN. Madam Innkeeper...

INNKEEPER. Yes?

JEAN. How much do we owe you for the room?

INNKEEPER. No bizness now. I'm sure you will pay dearly later. Enjoy your bahzs. *(Turning to go:)* How delightful! Never before have I had szree handsome students for dinner. *(She exits cackling.)*

JAQUES. I'm taking my chances in the storm.

JEAN. C'mon, she's harmless.

JAQUES. Uh huh. Did you see that chopper? I'll bet it's for cracking open heads of lettuce. I'm out'a here. You with me?

JULE. I dunno. It is kind'a nice here.

JAQUES. Are you serious? She's a lunatic!

JEAN. She's fine. You're the one acting nuts. We're warm and safe here.

JULE. She's even making dinner.

JAQUES. Okay. Okay. But if I wake up dead tomorrow, I'm never speaking to either of you again.

JEAN. Relax. We've got each other, don't we? Besides... *(Taking off his coat)* when's the last time you had a hot bahzs? C'mon.

(Students exit into ze bahzsroom. INNKEEPER enters, snoops around, and finds the bag full of money. She thinks for a moment and cackles to herself. There is a knock at the inn's front door. INNKEEPER opens it. There stands NICHOLAS, dressed as a traveler.)

NICHOLAS. Good evening, I—

INNKEEPER. We have no room. *(She slams the door. She scurries off with the money, cackling to herself.)*

BASILIOS. The lunatic innkeeper took the students' money to her kitchen where she cooked up a diabolical plan. She snuck up on the students while they were enjoying their hot bahsz, and...

(INNKEEPER pushes on a large barrel.)

BASILIOS. ...she cut them up into pieces and put them in a barrel.

(INNKEEPER cackles.)

NICHOLAS. *(Appearing from nowhere:)* Do you really think you can get away with this?

INNKEEPER. Eek! How did you get in? Who are you?

NICHOLAS. Just a hungry traveler in search of some fresh meat. Have you any?

INNKEEPER. I am guilty of noszing.

NICHOLAS. Then show me what's in the barrel.

INNKEEPER. Ze barrel is none of your bizness.

NICHOLAS. Just like the money was none of yours.

INNKEEPER. Please, forgive me. I will do anyszing... Do not harm me!

NICHOLAS. Flee for your life, and I will forgive you.

BASILIOS. And that's exactly what she did.

(INNKEEPER flees for her life.)

Then the giver of gifts bestowed the greatest gift of all...

(NICHOLAS inspects the carnage in the barrel. He prays over it.)

The gift of life.

(In a flourish NICHOLAS is gone.)

When the students woke up... *(STUDENTS do not appear.)* Ahem!
(Louder.) When the students woke up...

(STUDENTS' heads pop up from the barrel.)

they praised Saint Nicholas for putting them back together again.

JULE. Holy humpty dumpties!

JEAN. Blessed Saint!

JAQUES. Protector of students!

JEAN. May he always travel with us!

JAQUES. We should all go and give thanks in prayer.

JEAN. Agreed.

JULE. Say, guys... *(Looking at himself, realizing he is naked:)* Aren't we forgetting something?

JEAN / JAQUES. *(Looking at themselves:)* Yes.

JEAN. Let's go.

JAQUES. On the count of three.

JEAN. One.

JAQUES. Two.

JULE. Three.

(They all stand together raising the barrel around themselves. They exit.)

BASILIOS. Like the three sisters, Nicholas saved the three students, and to this day young people everywhere look to him for guidance. I know I do... *(He finds the icon of Saint Nicholas among the props, and hangs it in a place of reverence.)*

Scene 9

(Twilight, the plains of Russia, 12th century.)

I. SIX. Where are we now?

BASILIOS. Somewhere in Russia.

I. FOUR. Brrr, it's cold.

I. SIX. And dark.

I. FOUR. I'm scared!

BASILIOS. Shhh. This next one is my favorite.

(As BASILIOS settles in to watch, a baby cries. MIKHAIL and ANNA appear walking down a dirt road. She carries their infant.)

ANNA. Mikhail, wasn't Ivan well behaved at church?

MIKHAIL. Yes. The priest even said so.

(ANNA stops.)

MIKHAIL. Do you want me to hold him?

ANNA. No. I want to wrap him in my shawl before we go over the bridge. It's much colder up there. *(The babe fidgets.)* He's so strong.

MIKHAIL. Little Ivan, you are so anxious to walk. What's your hurry? Once you learn, you must walk the rest of your life.

(They walk some more. The IMAGINATION creates a bridge over a river. MIKHAIL and ANNA begin to cross. She is still adjusting her shawl.)

MIKHAIL. The river runs especially quickly today.

(The babe cries loudly. He slips from her arms. ANNA screams.)

MIKHAIL. Anna!

(There is nothing MIKHAIL can do to stop it. The babe plummets into the rushing water and gets carried downstream. MIKHAIL chases along the riverbank. ANNA is crippled in shock.)

MIKHAIL. No! Ivan! No!

ANNA. Ivan! My baby! My baby!

MIKHAIL. Help! Someone—

(The river carries the babe out of sight.)

ANNA. *(Crying:)* Oh, dear God, help my baby.

(Slowly, MIKHAIL gives in to defeat, and goes to comfort ANNA.)

MIKHAIL. *(After a while:)* Let's go home.

(He helps her up. ANNA picks up her shawl and casts it into the river. It fleetly floats away.)

(ANNA and MIKHAIL enter their house. He sits and begins to pray. She lights a candle near him. Then a flame ignites elsewhere, in the church where the priest is closing down for the night. He hears a faint cry. He follows the sound over to the icon of Saint Nicholas, beneath which lies Ivan bundled in ANNA's wet shawl.)

PRIEST. What's this? Little one, what are you doing here? And you are soaking wet! Come. Let's get you dry and get you home. Mikhail and Anna must be worried to death.

I. SIX. Now what, Basilios?

BASILIOS. Look.

(ANNA is offering her husband a bowl of soup, which he refuses, when the PRIEST enters with the babe.)

BASILIOS. Late that night, the priest returned little Ivan to his home. He told Mikhail and Anna where he found the baby, and they couldn't believe it. They were all so happy.

(The reunion tableau fades with one light shining on the Saint Nicholas icon; then it fades.)

Scene 10

I. FOUR. Basilios, you look sad.

BASILIOS. I guess I'm a bit homesick. I have been, ever since they took me away.

I. TWO. They?

BASILIOS. They.

I. FOUR. You mean them?

BASILIOS. Them's the ones.

I. Two and Four: You mean it's time for the... ?

I. THREE. *(Rejoicing:)* Pirates! Argghhh!

(Florence, Italy, the Renaissance.)

BASILIOS. Many years later, the Medici family was celebrating the memory of Saint Nicholas on his name day, December the sixth. I was there with my mother and father in the banquet hall where there was eating, drinking, and a generally festive air.

CETHRON. Basilios, would you please fetch me some more wine?

BASILIOS. Yes, Father. I went into the cellar to fetch some more wine...

(He goes into the cellar, where two PIRATES gag and bind him.)

PIRATE ONE. Hold it right there. Well, what a fine youth. Feisty, eh? Should earn us a pretty sum as a slave.

BASILIOS. Mphmbmphlrmp.

PIRATE TWO. What's he saying?

(PIRATE ONE ungags BASILIOS.)

BASILIOS. *(To audience:)* There I was abducted by two pirates from Crete, come to loot and ransack my town of its treasures.

PIRATE TWO. Who's he talking to?

PIRATE ONE. I dunno. *(Gags BASILIOS.)* Well, you ready to loot and ransack?

PIRATE TWO. Yep.

(PIRATES loot and ransack the party. They knock CETHRON unconscious, and gag EUFROSINA. Among the booty, they steal an icon of St. Nicholas.)

PIRATE ONE. Come along young servant. You're gonna be the best treasure of all! *(Pirates exit with BASILIOS.)*

EUFROSINA. Father! My dear, are you all right?

CETHRON. I'm still here, just shaken.

EUFROSINA. Basilios. Where's Basilios?

CETHRON. *(Searching the hall:)* Basilios! Basilios! Basilios! I'm sorry dear. He's gone.

EUFROSINA. My child. They've taken my child!

(The Isle of Crete, in the EMIR OF CRETE's throne room.)

EMIR. *(Entering:)* Right this way, my crafty pirates. Let's see what you've brought me. Uh huh. Mmm, oh, yes. Very nice. And what's this?

BASILIOS. Mphrngnphmmmlp.

EMIR. What's he saying?

(PIRATE ONE removes gag.)

BASILIOS. *(To audience:)* The pirates took me to their home island and presented me to the Emir of Crete who made me his cupbearer.

EMIR. What a peculiar child. You will be my cupbearer. You do know how to bear cups don't you? Never mind, I'll show you. Bring me my cup!

(PIRATE TWO hands him cup, and EMIR hands it to BASILIOS.)

Hah! You're a natural! What's your name?

BASILIOS. Basilios.

EMIR. Basilios, deftly bear my cup as you do, and you will have anything that you wish.

BASILIOS. I wish to go home to my parents.

EMIR. Anything but that. I admire your honesty. A person must never forget where he's come from. But more important, he must never forget his mission on Earth. Your mission is to bear my cup. And that, you understand, requires that you live relatively close to me.

BASILIOS. And that's where I have lived for one whole year, as part of the Emir's elaborate household, bearing his cup and the cups of his honored guests.

EMIR. Basilios! Where is that daydreamer? Basilios, bring me my cup!

BASILIOS. *(Realizing the time)* The cup! Oh...blast my overactive imagination! Anyway, now you know the story. I've got to get going...

(Florence, Italy, in the house of CETHRON.)

CETHRON. My dear, tomorrow is Saint Nicholas Day. You have not gone out of the house or received any of our friends for a whole year. Why don't we go to the festivities?

BASILIOS. *(Confused:)* Wait a minute... What's going on?

EUFROSINA. I'm sorry, Cethron, but my heart will never be festive again. From now on Saint Nicholas Day cannot be anything but a day of tragedy.

BASILIOS. Hey, I've never seen this part!

CETHRON. Could we at least have a supper of our own at home, in honor of our son?

EUFROSINA. I suppose.

CETHRON. Fine. I'll arrange it.

*(EUFROSINA sings to herself the hymn to Saint Nicholas.
NICHOLAS enters.)*

BASILIOS. *(Bewildered by his own imagination:)* I don't understand...

NICHOLAS. Shhh. Listen.

BASILIOS. It's so beautiful.

NICHOLAS. She is imagining that you will come home to her. Basilios, what is it that you want most of all?

BASILIOS. I want to go home to my mother and father.

NICHOLAS. Then let's go.

BASILIOS. What?

NICHOLAS. Let's go.

BASILIOS. You mean you'll take me?

NICHOLAS. Yes.

BASILIOS. I mean really take me?

NICHOLAS. An imagination is a gift. Use it, and you can work wonders. Imagine a miracle, Basilios.

BASILIOS. But you're just an idea.

NICHOLAS. Yes. And a very good idea, at that.

EMIR. Basilios, bring me my cup this instant!

NICHOLAS. We've no time to waste. Come along, my friend.

(NICHOLAS and BASILIOS exit hand in hand.)

(Dog barks offstage.)

CETHRON. What's all that noise about? *(Goes to courtyard door.)*
Now, now, Artemis, quiet down out there... No. What a cruel trick
my eyes play on me.

EUFROSINA. What is it, Father?

CETHRON. An apparition. A ghost. It couldn't possibly be...

EMIR. For the last time, where is my cup?! Where is—

CETHRON. Basilios!

BASILIOS. *(Entering:)* Father! Mother!

EUFROSINA. *(Hugging him tightly:)* Is it really you? Oh, my child,
you're home!

CETHRON. Where have you been?

BASILIOS. Far away, in the court of His Royal Highness the Emir
of Crete!

EUFROSINA. What were you doing there?

BASILIOS. I was the royal cupbearer.

EUFROSINA. I see you haven't lost that imagination.

BASILIOS. Nor will I ever. Imagination is the thing that brought
me back. That and some help from a friend.

EUFROSINA. It's a miracle.

PIRATE TWO. Sorry, Your Highness, but the youth seems to have
disappeared.

EMIR. Drat! Good help is so hard to find. *(Exits with PIRATES.)*

EUFROSINA. Cethron, summon our friends, and tell them of our good news. We must celebrate our reunion. Tomorrow will be the most festive Saint Nicholas Day ever!

CETHRON. Praise be to God.

EUFROSINA. Praise be to Saint Nicholas, Patron Saint of Children!

Epilogue

BASILIOS. Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, my overactive imagination and I would like to thank you for your company on our miraculous journey. We hope you enjoyed the ride. We also hope you have seen just how powerful imaginations can be. Although my story ended long ago, the story of Nicholas continues to this very day. You may ask, how is it that he has he come so far? The answer isn't easy. Look closely, and you'll see that even more powerful than my imagination...is yours.

(New York City, 1810.)

PINTARD. Gentleman, here he is. Welcome to America, Saint Nicholas. I'm John Pintard of the New York Historical Society. My welcoming committee... This is Mr. Irving, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Nast.

NICHOLAS. It's a pleasure, gentlemen.

IRVING. How do you do?

MOORE. The pleasure is ours.

NAST. Charmed. *(He hands NICHOLAS a bouquet of red roses tied up in stars and stripes ribbon.)*

PINTARD. We have been anxious for your arrival. What do you think, boys?

(They look him over.)

The committee is going to help you with your public image.

NICHOLAS. Do I need help?

IRVING. Irving's the name. I'm your biographer. The public wants to know more about you. Do you do interviews?

NICHOLAS. *(Modestly:)* Not regularly. I'm not inclined to talk about myself.

(Silence. Then...)

IRVING. Quite common. I find most celebrities are rather boring as people. Don't you worry. I'll think of something. *(He goes about his writing.)*

NAST. Now, about your clothes...

NICHOLAS. What about them?

NAST. Is this how you normally dress?

NICHOLAS. I've worn Bishop's garments for centuries.

NAST. And they look it. Am I right, Mr. Moore?

(MOORE agrees.)

And the color is so... Know what I mean? We'll work on it. Look, Saint Nick, have a seat will you. I'll get my sketchbook.

NICHOLAS. What did you call me?

PINTARD. Please, Saint Nicholas, do sit down. These gentlemen are professionals.

NAST. Let's see. *(Sketching as he speaks:)* I see...fur. Yes. I'm seeing fur.

MOORE. From his head to his foot.

NAST. I'm also seeing red. Red velvet. Try this. *(He puts a red suit on NICHOLAS.)* Oh yes. Definitely a red velvety kind'a guy. Eyes...

MOORE. How they twinkle.

NAST. Dimples...

MOORE. How merry.

NAST. Cheeks...

MOORE. Like roses.

NAST. Nose... (*NAST and MOORE both examine NICHOLAS' nose.*)

NAST / MOORE. We'll work on it.

MOORE. Droll little mouth...

NAST. Drawn up like a bow.

MOORE. And the beard on his chin...

NAST. As white as the snow.

MOORE. And the cross that he wears?

NAST. Well, that's got to go. (*Finishing the sketch:*) What do you think?

MOORE. Oh, Mr. Nast, Coca-Cola will love it!

NICHOLAS. May I see that drawing?

NAST. Sure thing, Saint Nick.

NICHOLAS. Stop calling me that.

NAST. Sorry, but the Saint Nicholas thing is so formal.

PINTARD. Perhaps we need a new name?

MOORE. "Saint" is rather restrictive.

PINTARD. Something fresher.

NAST. More romantic. How about...Santa?

MOORE. That's it! Santa Nicholas.

NAST. No, no, no. Santa Nick.

NAST / MOORE / PINTARD. We'll work on it.

IRVING. Okay, here's what I have so far.

NICHOLAS. May I see that, please? (*Reading aloud:*) Jolly Old Saint Nicholas?...recently arrived...patron of good will...from the North Pole?...responsible for having single-handedly guided Dutch settlers to found New Amsterdam... Hold on. It says here that I deliver presents to all good boys and girls.

IRVING. Yes.

NICHOLAS. Just how many boys and girls are there in New York?

IRVING. Not just New York. You deliver them to every good boy and girl.

NICHOLAS. In the world? That's a lot of presents.

PINTARD. We have in the works a deal for an offshore manufacturing plant. Turns out labor is rather cheap up north. Have you ever worked with sprites?

NICHOLAS. Sprites? You mean elves?

IRVING. There's no need to be vulgar.

NICHOLAS. A first time for everything, I suppose.

(NICHOLAS reads some more.)

NICHOLAS. You also say that I slide down chimneys.

IRVING. Yes.

NICHOLAS. At my age? What's wrong with using the front door?

IRVING. That lacks imagination, don't you think?

NICHOLAS. I beg your pardon. But I've never done any of these things. I've never been to the North Pole. *(Indicating Nast's drawing:)* I don't weigh nearly this much. The person you have conceived is incredible...but it's just not me.

PINTARD. Gentlemen.

(Offended, NAST, MOORE, and IRVING exit.)

PINTARD. Please, forgive my colleagues. Being in the media tends to make their work sensational at times. Here is your itinerary. Don't forget there's a banquet tonight in your honor, eight o'clock sharp. Your sleigh is waiting outside.

NICHOLAS. Sleigh?

PINTARD. Yes.

NICHOLAS. But there's no snow.

PINTARD. That's okay. It flies.

NICHOLAS. It what?

PINTARD. It's pulled by twelve flying goats.

NICHOLAS. Flying goats?!

PINTARD. We're trying to get you reindeer, but finding them in the city is nothing short of a miracle. Just give them a good "Ho-ho-ho," and you should be fine. I'd love to stay and chat, but I've got a meeting with Mr. Macy about putting you in the Thanksgiving Parade. You don't mind working on a holiday do you? Well, you'll get used to it. See you at the banquet, eight o'clock sharp. *(Exit.)*

(NICHOLAS sits to collect his thoughts.)

ARTEMIS. *(Enters with sack of artifacts, looking very Hollywood:)* Pardon me can you tell me where I might find the subway? I—Nicholas is that you?

NICHOLAS. *(Recognizing her; his day just got worse:)* I'm not sure.

ARTEMIS. You've come a long way, baby! Nice duds. Who died and left you Jolly Old Elf King?

NICHOLAS. What are you doing here, Artemis?

ARTEMIS. Needed a vacation. Figured I'd check out this New World everyone's talking about. Brought a few artifacts with me for the art historians. But that's not news. Tell me all about the new you! Do you mind?

(She sits on his lap and admires his coat.)

Is this what every universally loved saint is wearing, or are you getting ready for when they build Las Vegas?

NICHOLAS. Artemis—

ARTEMIS. Never mind that. Now then, I'd like an Etch A Sketch, a Cabbage Patch doll, and a Mighty Morphin Power Ranger.

NICHOLAS. What? Are you mad? Why are you asking me for those things?

ARTEMIS. *(Baffled:)* I don't know.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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