

THE TRUTH ABOUT SANTA

(an apocalyptic holiday tale)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SANTA.....Spirit of Christmas.

MRS. CLAUS...Santa's wife

Song list, in show order:

TITLE	SUNG BY:	Sc./Pg.
1 Slow	Elves & Company	1/1
2 The Dark of the Winter	Elves & Human Family	2/3
3 Mrs. Claus	Jim-Jim	4/16
3A Santa's Death	-	5/34
4 In Latvia	Luke, Freya, & Co.	6/35
4A In Latvia - Tag	All	7/39
5 Legends Like These	Elves & The Clauses	9/56
6 Happy Christmas	All	10/75

All corresponding musical material are indicated in the script with **(#OX) TITLE OF THE SONG.**

SCENE 1(#01) SLOW

(Jo-Jo, a kindly elf, appears in the house, or perhaps onstage. He plays a gentle, major-key arpeggio on a guitar. Once he has the audience's attention, he sings.)

JO-JO

SLOW,
WE START THE SHOW SLOW,
SLOW AS SNOW
FALLING THROUGH THE SKY,
FALLING THROUGH THE SKY.

(Jim-Jim, a grim elf, appears elsewhere and sings with Jo-Jo. Jim-Jim plays guitar, or maybe mandoline, or maybe some other instrument.)

JIM-JIM

SLOW,
IS THIS SHOW SLOW,
SLOW AS SNOW?

JO-JO

THE ANSWER IS NO.

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

IT'S NOT A SLOW SHOW.

(Ghostly, off-stage voices sing on an "oo" as the elves continue.)

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

PICTURE THE NORTH POLE,
WITH ICE EV'RYWHERE!
WHAT KIND OF-

GHOSTLY VOICES(O.S.)

(Whispered ominously)

CREATURE!

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

WOULD LIVE UP THERE,

JIM-JIM

WITH ICE -

JO-JO

(Spoken)
And icy ocean -

JO-JO & JIM-JIM
EV'VRY WHERE?

(The ghostly voices sing with The Elves as they
finish the song.)

JO-JO & JIM-JIM
SLOW,

GHOSTLY VOICES(O.S.)
SLOW,

JO-JO & JIM-JIM
WE START THE SHOW SLOW.

GHOSTLY VOICES(O.S.)
SLOW.

JO-JO & JIM-JIM
BUT JUST SO YOU KNOW

GHOSTLY VOICES(O.S.)
KNOW.

JO-JO & JIM-JIM
IT'S NOT A SLOW SHOW.

(The elves take a bow, and we transition into...)

SCENE 2(#02) THE DARK OF THE WINTER

(Christmas Eve. Jo-Jo and Jim-Jim, our two guitar/mandoline-playing elves, sing a new song to us. Elsewhere, lights come up on a cozy living room complete with a Christmas tree aglow with lights and ornaments.)

JO-JO

IN THE DARK OF THE WINTER, THE COLD OF THE NIGHT,
A SLEIGH PULLED BY REINDEER IS SAID TO TAKE FLIGHT.

JIM-JIM

THE JOURNEY BEGINS ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY
OF EVERY DECEMBER. IT'S YEARLY, THEY SAY.

(Freya and Luke, two pajama-clad children, sneak into the living room to inspect the presents under the tree. Mary soon enters to try to shoo her children back to bed.)

JO-JO

AND BY THE NEXT MORNING THE JOURNEY IS DONE
FOR THE NUMBER OF NIGHTS OF THE JOURNEY IS ONE.

JIM-JIM

THE SLEIGH IS FIRST LOADED WITH BUNDLES OF TOYS
AND ALL OF THE THINGS THAT A CHILD ENJOYS.

FREYA

(To Luke)
BASEBALLS AND BICYCLES.

LUKE

(To Freya)
TEA-SETS AND DOLLS.

FREYA & LUKE

IT'S PACKED UP QUITE TIGHTLY SO NONE OF IT FALLS.

MARY

(To Luke & Freya)
BILLIONS OF PRESENTS ARE LOADED, IT'S SAID.
EACH DESTINED FOR SOME KID

MARY, FREYA, & LUKE
ASLEEP IN THEIR BED!

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

(Mary and the children exit. Elsewhere,
George enters drinking heavily from a bottle
of booze.)

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

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

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

JO-JO
YOU PROBABLY KNOW HIM.

JIM-JIM
WE'RE QUITE SURE YOU KNOW HIM.

GEORGE
(Spoken, bitterly)
He goes by "Saint Nick". Hey!

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

(The mood turns decidedly dark as the
children sneak back onstage to address us
directly.)

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

LUKE

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

GEORGE

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

MARY

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

JO-JO

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

JIM-JIM

For this is a story you may not have heard.

FREYA

A story of Christmas.

LUKE

And it's true.

FREYA

Mostly!

ALL

(Sung)

EVERY WORD!

(Spoken)

Hey!

(All but George exit "dum-diddy-diddy-dum"-ing. Lights shift, and George is left alone...)

JO-JO & JIM-JIM

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

(...in the cozy living room. He considers the Christmas tree...)

SCENE 3

(The cozy living room. Appalled by the tree, George finishes off his bottle then throws it noisily to the ground.)

GEORGE

(Meanly, to himself)

What the Hell is this?

(From offstage we hear Mary.)

MARY(O.S.)

George?

GEORGE

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

(Mary - formidable, ready for business - enters. She wears slippers and a robe.)

MARY

George?

(Seeing George)

Oh. Oh, no.

GEORGE

What'd I tell you about that tree?

MARY

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

GEORGE

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

(From offstage we hear Freya.)

FREYA(O.S.)

Mama?!

MARY

Go to bed, sweetie!

FREYA(O.S.)

Is that Santa?! Is he here?!

LUKE(O.S.)

Santa's here?!

MARY

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

GEORGE

No, he won't come!

MARY

What did you do to yourself?

GEORGE

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

(George stumbles back as Mary moves to
protect the tree.)

MARY

It's a Christmas tree!

GEORGE

CHRISTMAS?! You take those bangles off of her.

MARY

George-

GEORGE

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

MARY

They're ornaments!

GEORGE

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

MARY

You promised you wouldn't do this.

GEORGE

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

MARY

I have no idea what you're talking about!

GEORGE

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

MARY

I wrapped them, George. They're presents.

GEORGE

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

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

MARY

Oh no, you won't.

GEORGE

(Scornfully)
What's that suppose to be? A pan?!

MARY

I don't want to hurt you.

GEORGE

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

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

GEORGE

Cranium!

MARY

You keep your voice down!

GEORGE

Busted it up!

MARY

You busted it up, George, not me!

GEORGE
I did?!

MARY
Just Stay back!

GEORGE
Lip's all tingly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

GEORGE
Can't feel my face too good.

MARY
Get out.

GEORGE
Shattered my cheekbone. Hurts real bad.

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

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

GEORGE

What's that? Who's there?

MARY

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

GEORGE

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

MARY

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

GEORGE

This is my house!

MARY

This is his night!

GEORGE

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

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

SANTA

(Gravely)
Merry Christmas.

MARY

Merry Christmas, Santa.

SANTA

(To George)
Get up.

MARY

Don't hurt him, Santa. Please.

GEORGE

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

SANTA

Tonight I come and go as I please.

GEORGE

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

SANTA

That's right.

GEORGE

Got your list, do you?

SANTA

I always have my list.

GEORGE

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

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

MARY

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

SANTA

He knows.

(George staggers to his feet.)

GEORGE

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

SANTA

SLEEPING?!!

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

SANTA

You dare speak of my sleeping?! I sleep the sleep of The Gods, for I am of the eternal! And now you shall feel my power!

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

FREYA

Santa?

LUKE

Santa?!

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

SANTA

Ho-ho-hello, children!

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

FREYA

Did you bring us presents?

SANTA

I brought you one present - a kind of present.

MARY

Santa, please, they're not ready.

SANTA

They are ready. They will have to be ready.

(To Freya and Luke)

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

MARY

Stop!

SANTA

Ho ho- ho?!

MARY

For God's sake, the shame!

SANTA

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

FREYA

Father...Christmas?

SANTA

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

MARY

But...Mrs. Claus. I thought-

SANTA

I told her this morning.

GEORGE

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

SANTA

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

FREYA

Oh, boy!

LUKE

Oh, boy!

(Luke and Freya race off.)

GEORGE

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

MARY

Don't you DARE talk about their powers!

GEORGE

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

MARY

I love him, George. And he loves me.

GEORGE

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

(George charges, Santa holds up a finger, George convulses then collapses. Luke and Freya re-enter wearing winter coats and carrying little suitcases.)

SANTA

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

(The children race outside.)

SANTA

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

(Santa exits after Luke and Freya.)

MARY

Well, I suppose this is goodbye.

GEORGE

How long has this been going on?

MARY

George, please-

GEORGE

How long?!

MARY

(Reveling in the Cosmic Mystery)
Since the time of Zagmuth in ancient Mesopotamia.
Since the rise of Saturnalia and the coming of Yule!
For a thousand years - a thousand, thousand years!
Which is a million! A million years!

GEORGE

You're not that old!

MARY

You never really understood me, did you, George.

GEORGE

Not really.

MARY

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

GEORGE

(Accusatorially)

I have no idea what you're talking about!

MARY

(Defiantly)

Merry Christmas, George. Happy New Year.

(Outside, we hear a whip, and then the jingling of sleigh-bells. George calls after Mary as she exits.)

GEORGE

I don't understand you?! You don't understand me! What about my needs?! My medical needs?! CRANIUM!

(#03) MRS. CLAUS

(Music for "Mrs. Claus" begins as Santa calls out to his reindeer team.)

SANTA(O.S.)

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

(George, baffled, is left alone as...)

SCENE 4

(Jim-Jim plays and sings to us as the set transforms from the living room to Santa's compound. Jo-Jo animates a miniature sleigh, illustrating the story. George provides percussion.)

JIM-JIM

SO SANTA AND MARY FLEW UP IN THE SKY
WITH THE KIDS WHO LOOKED DOWN AS THE PLANET ZIPPED BY.
SANTA POPPED INTO EACH HOME ON THE WAY
WHILE THE CHILDREN AND MOM WAITED OUT IN THE SLEIGH.
PRESENTS WERE STUFFED INTO STOCKINGS WITH CARE.
EVERY CHILD ON EARTH RECEIVED HIS OR HER SHARE.
BUT BACK IN THE ARCTIC A FURY WAS STEWING, FOR
SANTA'S TRUE WIFE KNEW JUST WHAT WAS A-BREWING.

JIM-JIM

(Commanding the reindeer, western-style)
Hiyaa! Git along, now! Dancer! Dasher! Prancer!
Vixen! Git along!

(Jim-Jim makes his way into the house to continue the song as Jo-Jo and George exit.)

JIM-JIM

I'VE SEEN HER PORTRAYED BOTH AS KINDLY AND SAGE,
BUT IN TRUTH SHE IS LIKE OTHER WOMEN HER AGE.
AND HERE, WITH THE FACTS, I SHOULD NOT BE SO LOOSE.
MRS. CLAUS WAS BORN BACK BEFORE HERA AND ZEUS!

TO THOSE WHO MIGHT THINK ON THIS NOTION WITH SCORN,
I'D ASK: WHEN DO YOU THINK THE CLAUSES WERE BORN?
(Singing freely to better set the scene)
THE NORTH POLE AT LAST! HERE OUR TALE MUST PROCEED.
A PLACE WHERE BOTH ANGER AND ELVES TEND TO BREED.

(Jim-Jim continues out toward the back of the house.)

JIM-JIM

Hiyaa! Dash away, now! Comet! Cupid! Dancer!
Blixen! Yes, even you, Rudolph! Git along!

(Jim-Jim exits as lights reveal that we've arrived at...)

SCENE 5

(Santa's Compound, the North Pole, later that night. Mrs. Claus pursues Jo-Jo who clutches a leathern pouch to his chest.)

MRS. CLAUS

Surrender it to me!

JO-JO

'Tis The Mister's joy-weed, Missus! 'Tis my charge to keep it safe till he return!

MRS. CLAUS

Surrender me the weed or I shall cast you out!

JO-JO

Missus?!

MRS. CLAUS

I shall send you South to toil among the men-kind, you and all your little ones! Your wives! Would you have it?!

JO-JO

The Mister will protect us!

MRS. CLAUS

HA! The Mister is soon to slumber, eleven months of inaction till Thanksgiving wakes him to join the work again!

JO-JO

Please, Missus, have mercy!

MRS. CLAUS

Mercy?! Surrender me the joy-weed, then you shall know mercy! Otherwise - the agony of the living life!

(From off we hear sleigh-bells)

JO-JO

He comes!

MRS. CLAUS

Make your choice!

JO-JO

The mister approaches!

MRS. CLAUS

Make it!!

JO-JO

Aaaaaaaaaahh- ! You won't evict us if I give?!

MRS. CLAUS

So I say!

JO-JO

SO BE IT!

(Jo-Jo hands over the pouch. Immediately,
he sees his mistake)

JO-JO

What have I done?!

MRS. CLAUS

Now go! Prepare the guest hutch as I instructed! And
say NOTHING to the Mister about this weed.

JO-JO

(Exiting on a run)

I have destroyed us! I HAVE DESTROYED MY ENTIRE
EXTENDED FAMILY!!

(Santa enters, grim, windblown.)

MRS. CLAUS

(Coldly)

Husband.

SANTA

(Bitterly, with suspicion)

Wife.

(Calling off)

Jo-Jo! My joy-weed, I would smoke it now!

(To Mrs. Claus)

What are you doing here?

MRS. CLAUS

'Tis my home, husband, where else would I be?

SANTA

You were to relocate to the guest hutch!

MRS. CLAUS

The guest hutch is for guests. Have we a guest?

SANTA

Don't toy with me, toy-wench! We discussed this!

MRS. CLAUS

"Discussed"?! You made commandments, 'twas no discussion!

SANTA

Then hear my commandment now! Get thee to the guest hutch!

MRS. CLAUS

And surrender my marriage-bed?! Never!

SANTA

Hag! What use would you have for a marriage-bed?!

MRS. CLAUS

Throw your barbs where ye may, husband! I shall repay each insult with an ocean of blood! I shall bring on the End Times!

SANTA

Empty threats!

MRS. CLAUS

Don't be so sure! You're not the only eternal around here, you know!

SANTA

Would that I were! Then I wouldn't have to spend another eternity here with you!

MRS. CLAUS

More barbs?! Would you have a plague of locusts visit your precious mortals?!

SANTA

'Tis winter, wife, what would your bugs eat?! Snow?!

MRS. CLAUS

I would unleash them in summer, imbecile, while you sleep! Dream on THAT!

SANTA

ENOUGH! I'm sick of it, do you hear?! Sick of the jealousy, the Apocalyptic proclamations! "Ocean of blood" this, "lake of fire" that! No more!

(Calling off)

Jo-Jo, damn you! My weed!

(To Mrs. Claus)

And I refuse to end up like Zeus, always sneaking around! He turned the maiden Io into a heifer to escape Hera's wrath, did you know that?!

MRS. CLAUS

Hera had a right to be wrathful!

SANTA

Zeus had a right to Io! I have a right to my maiden! What, the elves can be polygamous, but I can't?!

MRS. CLAUS

Pig!

SANTA

I've got a lot of love to give, wife, a world's worth of love! Who am I going to give it to?! You?!

MRS. CLAUS

Yes!

SANTA

Ha! Don't make me want to laugh!

MRS. CLAUS

You think me a joke?! I AM YOUR WIFE!

SANTA

AYE, AND A BARREN ONE!

(Mrs. Claus stumbles back, shaken.)

MRS. CLAUS

How dare thee.

SANTA

How dare I not?!

