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SF PERUSALS

4 X'MAS

An Evening of Four One Act Plays

THE OFFICE PARTY
SANTA'S CLARA
BALLS
SANTA COMES TO THE KING DAVID
and
THE FIRST NOEL
a monologue

by George Cameron Grant

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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4 X'MAS first appeared in its entirety at the Jewel Box Stage of The Workshop Theatre, New York City, in December 2007 with the following cast:

*__THE OFFICE PARTY__
MAN . . . John Borras
WOMAN . . . Jerrah Kohn
RICHARD . . . Dylan Riley Snyder

+__SANTA'S CLARA__
SANTA . . . Philip J. Cutrone
KID . . . Dylan Riley Snyder
DAWN . . . Heidi Voight

+__THE FIRST NOEL__
NOEL . . . Mary Orzano

*__BALLS__
SILVER BALL . . . Joyce Lynn
RED BALL . . . Jessica Mazo
GOLD BALL . . .Linnea Peery
BLUE BALL . . . Kevin Rehill
GREEN BALL . . . Margo Singaliese

+__SANTA COMES TO THE KING DAVID__
TIM . . . John Borras
STELLA . . . Eileen Massmann
NURSE . . . Jessica Mazo
MARSHA . . . Margo Singaliese

Production's Movement Director: Bella Malinka

Directed by: *John Borras +George Cameron Grant

SANTA COMES TO THE KING DAVID was a finalist in the 26th Samuel French Off-off Broadway Short Play Festival, thanks to the following:

STELLA . . . Marlene Asher
TIM . . . John Borras
MARSHA . . . Cynthia Granville
NURSE . . . Suzy Harbulak

Directed by: Tom Avitabile

BALLS was a finalist in the 33rd Samuel French Off-off Broadway Short Play Festival, thanks to the following:

BLUE BALL . . . Vinny Duwe
SILVER BALL . . . Ann Parker
GOLD BALL . . . Sarah-Ann Rodgers
GREEN BALL . . . Margo Singaliese
RED BALL . . . Heidi Voight

Costumes: Michael Schloegl
Curtain Crew: Julie Abramowitz, Mary Orzano

Directed by: Vincent Bandille

THE OFFICE PARTY

(Christmas music plays as lights come up on…)

*(**SCENE:** A living room with a decorated Christmas tree upstage, sofa downstage facing it. Clothes are scattered around sofa.)*

*(**TIME:** 10pm.)*

*(**AT RISE:** sofa begins to rock as music fades behind passionate moans…)*

WOMAN. Ohhhh yes!

MAN. Mmmm…dear God, nooooooooo…

WOMAN. …ohhhh, yes, oh God, yes…ohhh…

MAN. …ohhh, nooooooo. Ah…ah…ahhhhh…

(…a woman's bare leg rises, then drapes over back of sofa…)

WOMAN. …yes…oh yes…oh yeeeesssss!

(…top of a Santa cap bobs in and out of sight…)

MAN. Nooooooooo!

(…leg quickly disappears…)

MAN & WOMAN. Oh…oh…oh…ohhhhhhh!

(…a car passes by outside as bare-chested **MAN** *bolts up, wearing long, red Santa's cap and fake white beard…)*

MAN. What was that?

WOMAN. What was what?

MAN. That noise.

WOMAN. I didn't hear any noise.

MAN. Sounded like a car.

WOMAN. There's a street outside…on streets there are cars…mmm, come back here.

(…as unseen **WOMAN** *pulls him closer, he blocks her hands…)*

MAN. Think we'd better stop.

WOMAN. For God's sake, why?

MAN. It's just so…dangerous.

WOMAN. I don't understand?

MAN. You know damn well what I mean…*(whispers)*…Richard.

WOMAN. I told you, there's nothing to worry about.

MAN. How can you be so sure?

WOMAN. I just am.

MAN. But what if he…

*(…***WOMAN** *bolts up from other side, wearing Santa suit top…)*

WOMAN. *(puts finger over his lips)* …shhh…don't worry about it and come back down here.

MAN. How can you be so calm?

WOMAN. Calm? You call this calm? I'm freakin' dizzy from you.

MAN. Please don't make it so hard.

WOMAN. *(looking down)* Mmm…too late.

MAN. Ohhh, I love it when you talk dirty.

WOMAN. I have to have you now…it's been so long.

MAN. But what if he comes home? Walks in on us?

WOMAN. Ahhhhhhh! All night long you've been saying how much you need me, want me, so do you want to make love to me or not?

MAN. More than anything and in every possible way, but…

WOMAN. …but?

MAN. But I don't want to start if there's even the *slightest* chance that Rich…

WOMAN. …I'm telling you, it's OK. He won't be home before eleven, that gives us a whole hour…a wonderful, fabulous, dirty, delicious hour *alone*.

MAN. Half hour.

WOMAN. Fifty minutes.

MAN. Forty.

WOMAN. Forty-five.

MAN. Sold!

WOMAN. Come here!

MAN. Oh, baby!

*(…***WOMAN** *grabs* **MAN** *by neck and drags him out of view. Couch begins rocking back and forth…)*

WOMAN. Ohhhhhh, yeeeesssss…

MAN. …mmm…

WOMAN. …ahhh…

MAN. …mmm…I don't know.

WOMAN. *I* do…now, baby, *now.*

MAN. Ohhh, yeeeessss.

WOMAN. Oh…oh…

MAN & WOMAN. …ohhhhhhhhhh!

(…couch suddenly tips over, covering their clothes, as **MAN** *and* **WOMAN** *spill out, rolling downstage, still locked in an embrace.* **MAN** *wears Santa suit pants,* **WOMAN***'s bare legs peek out from beneath baggy Santa suit top…)*

MAN. You're unbelievable!

WOMAN. I can't believe this is happening.

MAN. Would anyone?

WOMAN. Just another ridiculous office party I wasn't even going to.

MAN. Neither was I…cramped, smoky rooms…

WOMAN. …packed with loud, obnoxious people…

MAN. …with absolutely nothing to say…

WOMAN. …and every one of them with only one thing on their minds…

MAN & WOMAN. …sex!

(…they tear at each other…)

MAN. I walked in expecting nothing and there you were, as if you'd dropped from a cloud and gently landed before me.

WOMAN. Hundreds of screaming, drinking, dancing lunatics packed in like sardines when suddenly, as if some unseen hand had swept them all away, the air became absolutely still and the room completely empty, *except* for you.

MAN. And you.

MAN & WOMAN. Us.

MAN. I never dreamed you could be this romantic.

WOMAN. I never was.

MAN. Or maybe you *always* were and I just never noticed.

WOMAN. How did I get so lucky?

MAN. *I'm* the one who's lucky.

MAN & WOMAN. We're *both* lucky.

(…they laugh and embrace…)

WOMAN. And the most unbelievable thing of all? It's happening with you! Of *all* people, *you*…no one will believe a single word of this.

MAN. Maybe you should wait until you're sure what *this* really is.

WOMAN. I know what this is and I want to *shout it from the rooftop*.

MAN. There's a lot of snow up there, hope you don't get cold feet.

WOMAN. Not in your lifetime, mister, I've dreamed about this for too long.

MAN. You have?

WOMAN. You bet I have.

MAN. Me too.

WOMAN. I can tell.

MAN. Speaking of telling, when do we? Tell him, that is.

WOMAN. Tonight…right away.

MAN. Gee, I don't know…

WOMAN. …I can't bear the thought of spending one more lonely night without you.

MAN. But what about…

WOMAN. …Richard?

MAN. Richard.

WOMAN. He's a big boy, he can take care of himself.

MAN. What if he can't handle it…freaks out…what'll we do?

WOMAN. However he reacts, whatever happens, we'll work it out …together.

MAN. You really are sure about all this, aren't you?

WOMAN. Completely, and I'm not going to hide it from anyone, *especially* Richard!

MAN. Then there's no other way.

WOMAN. None.

MAN. We face the music.

WOMAN. Face to face.

MAN. I'm scared.

WOMAN. Shitless.

MAN. Me too.

WOMAN. Two shitless, lovestruck, reckless lunatics.

MAN. God, how I love this lunatic.

WOMAN. And I you.

(…they embrace as car suddenly approaches and stops… **WOMAN** *pulls away…)*

Shit!

MAN. What's wrong?

WOMAN. It's Richard!

MAN. What?

WOMAN. He's early!

MAN. I knew it!

(…they scramble for their clothes…)

WOMAN. Damn, where's my skirt?

MAN. Probably with my shirt…wherever that is…hold it…

WOMAN & MAN. …here it is!

(…seeing her skirt peeking out from beneath sofa, **MAN** *grabs and tosses it to her just as she tosses him his shirt, they put each on just as car door slams…it drives off.)*

MAN. Holy mackeral, I forgot to put on my…

WOMAN. …got 'em!

(…disappearing behind sofa, she pops back up with his briefs and skyhooks them to his waiting hands, which stuff them into his pants…)

Mmm, nice bulge, Santa.

MAN. Please, no jokes while I'm in cardiac arrest.

WOMAN. I'll get you a bypass for Christmas.

(…they nervously clasp hands…)

MAN. You sure you're sure about this?

WOMAN. Positive…and you?

(…he grabs and kisses her, when suddenly each realizes they still wear part of Santa suit…)

MAN & WOMAN. Shit!

(…lock turns…they turn toward opening door…a teen-age **BOY** *enters, dropping a duffel bag onto floor and stomping his snow-covered sneakers onto floor mat…)*

BOY. Brrr…yo, Mom, I'm home! Coach cut us loose early… sure could use something nice and hot to…

(…seeing **MAN***, he's stunned…)*

MAN. Hey, buddy.

(…the **BOY** *turns toward his mom…)*

BOY. Mom, what's he…*(turns toward* **MAN***)*…what are *you* doing here?

MAN. Would you believe *both* our companies had their Christmas parties at the same place tonight and…

WOMAN. …we sorta', kinda' bumped into each other, honey, and um…uh…what we're trying to tell you is…

MAN. …your Mom and I have decided that…

WOMAN. …go ahead Bill, tell him.

MAN. I'm moving back in, Rich…I'm…coming back home…

(…after a long pause, he runs to **MAN***…they embrace…)*

…Merry Christmas, son.

SON. I love you, Dad, Merry Christmas.

*(…***WOMAN** *embraces them both as lights fade into...)*

(BLACKOUT)

SANTA'S CLARA

*(**SCENE:** The shadows of Port Authority. A recycling machine, words REDEMPTION CENTER printed across it, stands upstage right, a garbage can stuffed to overflow with trash and boxes of old clothes stand downstage before it. A broken wooden bench sits upstage left.)*

*(**TIME:** Dusk, on an unnaturally hot Christmas Eve.)*

*(**AT RISE:** A* **STREET KID** *in t-shirt and shorts fishes through the garbage can, stuffing a plastic bag with empties, as* **MAN** *dressed in a tattered Santa outfit enters stage left, bulging red sack slung over his shoulder. Sweat-stained Santa cap, faded Santa pants rolled up over his knees,* **MAN** *wears unlaced red Sneakers, his equally faded, opened Santa coat revealing the soaked red bandana tied around his neck above a dingy T-Shirt through which he sweats profusely. Draped around his neck are numerous pairs of worn-out, mismatched, laced together sneakers, as well as a pair of cracked and faded patent leather Santa boots looped over his wide, cracked, once shiny belt…)*

MAN. Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry…

(…he approaches **KID***…)*

…Christmas. Hey kid…*KID!*

(…looking up, the **KID** *waves him off, resuming his search through the can…)*

This is Santa Claus you're passin' by here kid – *the real deal.* Don't you wanna' tell me what you want for Christmas? Last chance. Poor kid, how the hell can anybody get the Christmas Spirit in 90 degree weather? It's unnatural, I tell ya'.

(…he again approaches **KID***…)*

MAN. *(cont.)* Whatta' ya' say little man? Tell old Santa what's on your Christmas list.

(…the **KID** *turns and kicks the* **MAN** *in the shin…)*

Ow!

KID. Buzz off, creep!

(…the **KID** *takes off as the* **MAN** *grabs his leg, hobbling around…)*

MAN. Holy Christmas, what's the matter with that kid, not like I stink or any…

(…he sniffs his armpits and winces…)

…jeez, that *is* pretty bad, guess I could use a little freshening up.

(…he moves downstage to an imaginary hotel clerk…)

…accommodations for one, my good man, and don't forget, I want that special single night Holiday rate – I'll be checking out first thing and…the name? You must be new here, name's Claus, S. Claus…*(somewhat irked)*…pardon me, there's no 'E' at the end of that!… Yes, that's it …Oh, why yes, thank you, I'd like that very much…

(…he slowly removes sack from his shoulder, wincing in pain…)

…*does* get a little heavy after a day like today…

(…lowering sack to floor, he removes a half-filled pint of whiskey from his coat…)

…a toast! To the orphaned memories of Father Christmas!…*(takes a long pull)*…Ahhh, that's sooooo good.

(…wiping his lips on his sleeve, he yawns, stretches, then carefully lowers himself, face first, onto the bench, where he quickly falls asleep and begins to snore. A **TEENAGE GIRL** *enters stage right, dressed from head to toe in black. A face with pierced nose and eyebrows, shredded tank t-shirt and arm tattoos are mostly covered by her long, straight black and purple hair. She wears worn-out sneakers and black tights torn at both knees. Lugging a*

stuffed backpack, she totes a filled plastic bag toward the machine, jolting the Man out of his deep slumber…)

MAN. *(cont.)* What the…? Who…who's there?…

(…struggling off the bench to his feet, he clears his throat and brushes himself off…)

Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas, Merry…

GIRL. …great! Another drunken Santa Claus!

MAN. Your good will is overwhelming.

GIRL. You want good will, their dumpster's across the street, bad will?…*(rolling up her sleeves, she stomps toward him)* …Take another step closer and I'll give you all you can handle.

MAN. Whoa! Back off there, little girl.

GIRL. Little girl?

MAN. My intentions are completely honorable.

GIRL. The last "honorable" guy I met tied me to a bedpost all night and tossed me to the gutter in the morning.

MAN. That's horrible!

GIRL. No, that's just the way it is. Most guys are about as hard to read as a stop sign, it's the ones who *pretend* they're something else, *those* are the ones I have to worry about. Unfortunately, they're also the ones I keep running into.

MAN. All this pessimism from such a little…*young lady*… now how about showin' Santa some Christmas Spirit.

GIRL. You mean like the kind I'm smelling on your breath?

MAN. Uh, um…I admit that with all the running around I do, sometimes a little "spirit-ual" motivation is required…

(…he tries to see whiskey level in bottle…)

…damn eyes, they're useless.

(…removing a pair of small, round wire-rim glasses from his inside coat pocket, he puts them on, then closely examines the bottle…)

GIRL. And what's with all the shoes, you some kinda' travelin' salesman or somethin'?

MAN. Salesman, no…travelin'? Let's just say it helps to rotate the footwear…never know when you're going to pop a hole.

GIRL. I didn't realize hiking was in the fake Santa handbook.

MAN. Fake? Such an unkind word, so judgmental…would you believe…

(…looking up, he sees her and gasps, dropping bottle…)

…dear God!

(…he frantically rubs his eyes beneath glasses…)

GIRL. What's wrong?

MAN. It can't be!

GIRL. Hey mister, you OK? You're not gettin' a stroke or heart attack or nothin', are ya'?

MAN. Same eyes…same mouth…and the mole…there's the mole.

(…the **GIRL** *quickly covers the cheek he almost reaches…)*

GIRL. Don't touch me – and stop staring at me like that!

MAN. It's you, it really is you!

GIRL. Me? Me who? And who are you?

MAN. All these years, all those shoes, and poof! I lift my head and there you are, standing right before these tired, bloodshot eyes.

GIRL. Better keep that hat off in this heat, old man, your brain's starting to broil.

MAN. My brain's never been better.

GIRL. Then tell me what's going on here.

MAN. I'm not so sure you're ready for the answer.

GIRL. Try me.

(…with a heavy sigh, he sits on the bench…)

MAN. I'm Santa Claus.

GIRL. Yeah, right.

(…she returns to the garbage…)

MAN. What I mean is, I'm *your* Santa Claus.

GIRL. And I guess your sack's just chock full of wonderful toys and goodies just for me.

(…he removes plastic bottle from sack and holds it up…)

MAN. I wish it were.

GIRL. Sure you do.

(…she fishes a bag of half-eaten burgers from the trash and begins devouring them…)

MAN. You're hungry.

GIRL. Mind your own business.

(…standing, he removes several bags of cellophane-wrapped table crackers from his coat pocket, offering them to her…)

MAN. Here, take these.

GIRL. Go away!

MAN. Please.

(…she hesitates, turns, then quickly grabs crackers…)

GIRL. Thanks…now why don't you get lost before I scream for the cops, alright?

MAN. I already am lost, dear girl…and so are you.

GIRL. Me? Lost?

MAN. Until right now.

GIRL. Really? Oh, I feel *much* better…*(looks around)*…sure picked a great place to find somebody.

MAN. Can't think of a better one…*findings* can happen anywhere.

GIRL. *Findings?*

MAN. When a lost one's been found.

GIRL. Lost ones, *findings*…why am I listening to this?

MAN. I know you think I'm crazy, but…

GIRL. …think?

MAN. I found *all* my lost kids very quickly, but you, *you* were the toughest.

GIRL. *Me?* One of *your* lost kids? Look, mister, you are *not* my father, my father left me a long time ago.

MAN. I know.

GIRL. *No you don't!* You don't know *anything* about me, how could you?

(…she begins frantically feeding bottles into machine…)

I'm tired, I'm hungry and I'm getting real angry, so why don't you just take your wino Fairy Tales and…

MAN. …you weren't *always* like this.

GIRL. Don't keep saying that! How would *you* know what I was like?

MAN. Because I remember one time when you were all bright eyes and a smile.

(…turning toward him, she jabs an empty plastic bottle under his chin…)

GIRL. You don't remember anything about me because you've never been part of my life and you never will be part of my life – EVER! Why am I even talking to you?

(…she resumes feeding machine…)

All I want is my deposit so I can get a little "Christmas Spirit" of my own, a safe place for the night…

MAN. …anything you say, Dawn…

DAWN. ..and I'm not wasting another second with some crazy, burnt out…*(she turns to him)*…what did you call me?

MAN. I said…Merry Christmas, Dawn.

DAWN. How do you know my name?

MAN. You told it to me.

DAWN. I never met you before in my life.

MAN. Sure you have, you just don't remember.

DAWN. That's crap, complete crap!

MAN. And what a beautiful little girl you were…long, dark brown pigtails, cheeks full of freckles…here, see for

yourself.

(…reaching inside his Santa coat, he removes a crinkly, yellowed photo…)

DAWN. Give me that!

(…she reaches for photo, but he pulls it back, retreats to the bench and sits…)

MAN. You can look, but you can't touch – not yet.

DAWN. Why not?

MAN. It's the rules.

DAWN. Rules? What rules? You're not making any…*(connecting with the image)*…hey, that's…that's me…on Santa's lap when I was…

(…she studies photo closely, the **MAN***, then photo…)*

…holy…is that…really you?

MAN. Handsome devil, wasn't I?

DAWN. OK, so what if that is you…what are you doing *here* the day before Christmas?

(…he pulls photo away…)

MAN. I was fired.

DAWN. Fired?

(…tucking photo inside his coat, he stands…)

MAN. That's right, fired…bounced…canned…Mister Ho-ho-ho given the old heave-ho! I ended thirty-two Thanksgiving Day parades – began thirty two Christmas Seasons – thirty two! Then at the end of parade number thirty-two, seven years ago, I was taking the freight elevator to the North Pole when I was intercepted by a security guard who escorted me to the office of some angry little man who informed me that my Clausial services would no longer be required that Christmas Season, or any other for that matter. Someone else would be sitting on my gold and red throne… to be precise, the nephew of the parent company's new CEO. Ironic, isn't it, Santa getting fired by a parent

company. But there it was, just like that…tossed to the gutter, just…

DAWN. …*(just)* like me.

MAN. Yes…just like you.

DAWN. That sucks.

MAN. As a matter of fact, you're right, it did suck. It sucked so bad that I took the elevator to the top floor, climbed the stairs to the roof and flung myself, suit and all, onto the big red star at Seventh & 34th. It was, I'm happy to report, a direct hit.

DAWN. But you're here, how did you survive?

MAN. I didn't.

DAWN. You di…wait a second, are you trying to tell me you're…

MAN. …yep, as a doornail.

DAWN. Jeez, does that mean I'm…

MAN. …no, Dawn, you're alive…a little lost maybe, but very much alive.

DAWN. Thank God.

MAN. Happy to hear it still matters.

DAWN. So does this make you some kind of Angel or Ghost or…

MAN. …let's say I'm just one lost soul reaching out to another…kind of a "Lost Claus for Lost Causes."

DAWN. That what you think *I* am, a Lost Cause?

MAN. Look around you, Dawn, there are more of you out there now than ever before.

DAWN. Why are you doing this to me?

MAN. Are you happy?

DAWN. I survive.

MAN. How sad…so young to just "survive."

DAWN. At least I didn't kill myse…*(looks away from him)*… sorry, that was mean.

MAN. No, it's the truth…*(he holds up the photo)*…do you remember what you asked me for?

DAWN. No!

MAN. No, you don't remember, or no, you don't want to remember?

DAWN. I don't know…can I have that picture now, please?

MAN. Are you ready to go back, back to who you were *before* you were lost? Back to this picture?

DAWN. Why do I have to go anywhere? All I want to do is get a closer look at…

MAN. …the rules?

DAWN. *(Stomping her feet)* Fine!

(…she suddenly grabs picture from his hand and bolts cross stage…staring into the yellowed image for several seconds, her eyes glaze over, her legs wobble, then suddenly stiffen, as she scales the photo in his direction…)

This is stupid! You're just an old drunk in a disgusting, smelly Santa suit and I'm not listening to another…

MAN. …Dawn…

(…he picks photo up as she drops to her knees and covers her ears…)

DAWN. …ridiculous word…

MAN. …Dawn…

DAWN. …not…one…

MAN. …*Dawn!*

DAWN. *(Softening, almost childlike)* …yes?

MAN. Who am I, Dawn?

DAWN. Who are you?

MAN. That's right, who am I?

(…she slowly looks up at the now beaming **MAN***…)*

DAWN. *(Now like an 8-year-old)* You're Santa…who else would you be?

MAN. Come with me, Dawn.

(…she accepts his extended hand, stands, and follows him to the bench, where he sits and motions for her to sit on his lap…)

Sit, sit, come tell Santa what you'd like for Christmas.

(…she sits on his lap…)

DAWN. Please Santa, don't bring me any toys, I don't want any dolls, and I really don't need any more tea sets.

MAN. What *do* you want, Dawn?

DAWN. Don't you know?

MAN. Not unless you tell me.

DAWN. What I want – *all* that I want – is to be Clara in the Nutcracker, so I can dance for my Daddy and make him proud of me. Can you make that wish come true for me, Santa?

MAN. I'm sure your Daddy would be proud of you no matter what, Dawn, but if it's really *that* important to you…

DAWN. …it is, Santa, it *really* is!

MAN. More than anything?

DAWN. More than anything in the whole wide world!

MAN. Have you been a good little girl, Dawn?

DAWN. Oh, yes, Santa, very, *very* good.

MAN. Then so be it! You'll get your wish, my dear.

DAWN. Oh thank you, Santa, thank you!

(…she leaves **MAN***'s lap and runs down stage into a spotlight as he withdraws into shadows…)*

Daddy! Daddy! Santa's giving me my wish, I'm going to be Clara…*(her voice now dreamier and more trance-like)*… really! I'm going to be Clara…I'm going to be…I'm going…to my opening night…on this perfect day… standing…standing in my beautiful blue dress, tip of my nose barely touching the closed curtain…when will it open? Will it ever open? Oh God, everyone I love in the whole world is on the other side of it – Auntie Gen, Uncle Jack, Grammy Violet, Grampa Walter and…*(peeking through the imaginary curtain for a brief second)*…Daddy…oh, I love you so much, Daddy…I'm not even nervous…I want you to be proud of me…oh, thank you, Santa, thank you so much for…*(Nutcracker music begins)*…listen, there it is, there's the music – the

curtain's opening…it's time…*I'm ready!*

(…lights go down as **DAWN/CLARA** *begins her Nutcracker solo in spotlight…)*

MAN. *(offstage)* Your performance is flawless. And as the music fades and the curtains close, incredible applause fills the theatre…

*(…***DAWN** *walks downstage to await curtain's reopening…)*

…curtains re-open! Smiling, cheering faces everywhere…and in the center of it all, at the foot of the stage before you, your Father reaches up and hands you *the most beautiful bouquet of Roses you've ever seen!*

(…accepting a bouquet of roses from the shadows before her, she gracefully bows…)

DAWN. I'm in heaven…the curtain closes and re-opens… applause …so much applause…applause so loud it almost sounds like thunder…maybe too much…thunder…the curtain closes one more time and…

(…she looks out, squinting, as music fades…)

…what was that? Thought I saw something…something wrong …there's something wrong…WHAT'S WRONG? The thunder's gone…it's suddenly quiet… spooky quiet…deathly quiet…I feel sick, so sick… sinking feeling…no…don't do that…please don't do that…keep it closed! PLEASE DON'T OPEN IT! DON'T OPEN THAT CURTAIN! DON'T OPEN IT! NOOOOOO!

(…she collapses to the ground and lies motionless…after several moments, she stirs and slowly stands, brushing herself off while still clutching the bouquet…)

DAWN. *(continued)* Everyone tells me…they never saw Daddy happier than right before he handed me the Roses until the moment he fell to the floor…

(…extending the roses, she gently lofts them into the darkness…)

…and as I tossed them into the hole that held him, I promised myself that I would never come back or look back – that I would never wish for anything *ever* again – that I would never dance again, dream again, and never believe in anything – or *anyone* – ever, ever, *ever* again, *especially*…

(…lights up as she angrily turns to find herself standing before the **MAN**, *now the greeting card Santa of every child's dreams – perfectly dressed, snowy white fluffy beard, and a brand new pair of laced together sparkling red sneakers draped about his neck…she immediately begins pounding on his chest…unflinching, he absorbs every blow calmly, her fury eventually fading as, exhausted, she falls to her knees against him. He places a comforting hand upon her head…)*

SANTA. My journey is over
but yours just begins
The child that was lost
has been found once again
With pigtails and freckles
a quarter-moon grin
To find who you are
you must know where you've been

(…he removes the sparkling red sneakers from his neck and drapes them around hers…)

So slip on these sneaks
run as fast as you can
Make a wish, find a friend
build a house that will stand
But don't ever forget
every gem has its flaws
And one crack in the jewel
doesn't make a Lost Cause

(…removing the old photo of them from beneath his red coat, he offers it to her…she takes it…)

SANTA. *(cont.)* Merry Christmas, Dawn.

DAWN. Merry Christmas…Santa.

(…they embrace…Nutcracker finale begins as **SANTA** *guides her toward a waiting spotlight, then vanishes into the now darkening stage…a smiling* **DAWN** *grasps the sparkling sneakers to her chest, then gracefully pirouettes forward, as lights fade into…)*

(BLACKOUT)

THE FIRST NOEL

(A **YOUNG WOMAN** *enters wearing threadbare coat, hat, scarf, pants and sneakers, a hood from a sweatshirt pulled over her head. The china-white fingers peeking through the digit-less gloves she wears grip a corrugated board with HOMELESS FOR THE HOLIDAYS scribbled across it in one hand, a coffee cup filled with crinkled dollar bills and change in the other…she stares skyward, smiles, then suddenly, with a cautious start, turns forward…)*

YOUNG WOMAN. Sorry. Didn't see you there…*(she extends cup, then, with a disappointed grimace, quickly withdraws it)*…thanks. Brrr, it's so damn cold. Funny how it always seems to *just happen* – the cold that is – just sneaks up on you. You know it's coming, it always does, but one day you're walking around in a t-shirt and shorts, then the next…go ahead, say it. I see it, I see what you're thinking. What's a young girl like me doing out all alone on the streets so late at night in front of a Chinese take-out on Christmas Eve? Well I'm sure not here for the moo goo gai pan, which I'm sure is very tasty and, come to think of it, I *am* pretty hungry, but no, I'm here because of a name. Whose name? *My* name. My name is Noel. I know, I know, you think I'm saying that just because it's Christmas Eve and I'm trying to squeeze an extra dollar or two out of you, and that my real name is Peggy or Jessica or Marge, but if that's what I really wanted, this probably wouldn't be the best place to be doing that, would it? I swear, Noel is my *real* name. It was my mother's idea. Her name was Sally and she always hated it, so she wanted *my* name to mean something, to be significant, to matter, and since I was a Christmas baby – well, almost – 11:58 to

be exact, she had the last scream of Christmas Eve and mine was the first on Christmas day – that's right, it's my birthday, or the end of it – kind of stinks being born two minutes before midnight, seems like it's over before it even begins – so how come I'm not gathered around a fireplace surrounded by family and friends singing happy birthday and Christmas carols, while stringing popcorn around the Christmas tree? Well, first of all, I'm not really a family and friends kind of girl, and second of all, because I'm here. I *always* come here…right here…same spot, same time, same day, every year. Most would call it a tradition, I just call it a *must* – I *must* be here. Why? For her…*(looking up)*…the woman who gave me my name, and the woman who couldn't wait until just before midnight – *two minutes before midnight* – every single Christmas Eve when, no matter where we were or who we were with – would scoop me up into her arms, rock me back and forth, and begin singing…*(smiling down on imaginary baby she rocks. Sings:)*…

> The First Noel,
> the Angels did say,
> Was to certain poor shepherds
> in fields as they…

…*(looking up)*…and the Joke of it all? I was supposed to be a New Year's baby, but – *SURPRISE!* – I popped out a week early, only my father wasn't one for surprises, not this kind, at least. "Doesn't matter when you were born," he would always say when she was done singing, "we made you on April Fools Day and you've been living up to it ever since." That's called a *zinger*, in case you didn't know. This had become their main form of communication. Cruel, little verbal attacks that at some point replaced the sweet nothings that must have been whispered in each other's ear at some point in their lives together, but never during mine. Unfortunately for mother, he was a master of the zinger, and eventually,

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