

A Mall Full of Night Visitors



A Play in Two Acts

By

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Table of Contents

Act 1	4
Scene 1	4
Scene 2	19
Scene 3	30
Intermission	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Act 2	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Scene 4	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Scene 5	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Cast of Characters

<u>Cast of Characters</u>	
<u>Adrian Hart:</u>	A child aged 11-13 who has lived his/her entire life on crutches or in a wheelchair. Is troubled as tries to discover the true meaning of Christmas.
<u>Nancy Hart:</u>	Adrian's mother, in her early thirties to early forties. Overworked and somewhat overwhelmed by her special needs child.
<u>Dominic Del Monico:</u>	A widowed man in his early fifties who owns a successful department store, Del Monico's, in a fancy suburban mall. His major goal in life is to die rich so he can provide for his family.
<u>Robin (Rob) Hood- aka Santa:</u>	A man of indeterminate age who hates his job as a mall Santa. And hasn't forgiven his parents for his name.
<u>Fairuz (fare ooz) Dahabi:</u>	A wealthy foreign woman of indeterminate age. Becomes confused as to the meaning of Christmas while visiting her daughter who has moved to America.
<u>Jeremy Spiegel:</u>	A Christian man in his late twenties or thirties. Discouraged by the lack of meaning created by the secularization of Christmas.
<u>Victoria Beaumont:</u>	A nice looking, politically correct woman in her late twenties to mid-thirties. Doesn't understand the fuss about Christmas and wants everyone to 'just get along'
<u>Extras:</u>	Shoppers, Santa's helpers, etc, as many or few as desired.

Setting

The courtyard of a suburban large shopping mall.

Time

Present day, a few days before Christmas, near mall closing time.

Staging Notes

The mall setting should include at least one storefront with a usable door, a bench, an elaborate Santa throne on a platform with surrounding area for children's visits, and a neglected nativity scene (the crèche should be the anachronistic wooden barn type stable) plus the symbols of other religions, menorah, crescent, etc. could even have an atheist's protest sign. The star over the nativity initially doesn't light up.

The Baby Jesus thief can be played by an extra, or another cast member in dark, nondescript clothing.

Should any of the references to 'current' events seem stale, more recent events can be substituted.

Obviously, if Adrian is played by a girl, all of the 'he's become 'she's, 'his's become 'her's and the 'son's become 'daughter's, etc.

Act 1

Scene 1

SETTING: Mall courtyard. December 21st near Mall closing time.

AT RISE: A child and mother facing a raggedy Santa sitting on a stylized throne.

ADRIAN Mom, I really need to see Santa this year.	
NANCY I know, Honey. But, as you can see, they don't have a wheelchair ramp and you've gotten so big, I just can't lift you anymore.	
ADRIAN It's important to me.	
NANCY What's so important? You haven't been to see Santa since you were six.	
ADRIAN It's sorta complicated. I know this isn't the real Santa, and that Santa Claus only symbolically represents the Christmas spirit. But, with the ever increasing media influence towards blatant consumer capitalism, I'm just not sure what to make of the whole Christmas thing. I'm really confused about it all. I was hoping Santa, (skeptically) even a skinny one with a lousy fake beard, would help make it all clear to me.	
NANCY You've got a pretty lofty conflict you have brewing there.	
ADRIAN I know. Sometimes I even surprise myself.	

<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>All I can do is try... (moves to a point where she can chat with Santa) Hey, Santa, do you think there's a way we can get my son up to see you? I can't lift him any more and you didn't provide a wheelchair ramp.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>Yeah, sorry about that. But, I'm not sure there's anything we can do for you.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>And why is that?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>You see, it's like this... The Santa (makes quote marks in the air) "clause" in the mall insurance policy doesn't allow me or any of my "elves" to lift, carry or otherwise convey any child with an, obvious or notable, impairment, disability, or handicap for any reason or purpose whatsoever. Besides, the Santa and Elf union contracts won't allow it either. I guess they had too many workers comp claims over the past few years... It's all spelled out on the rules sign, right there, (points to sign) Where is says, "Your special time with Santa". And...according to Santa's watch, my shift's been over for five minutes. I know you'll understand.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>Oh, I understand. I'm just not sure my son will. (becoming more peeved) And what I also know is you're just a Scrooge in a cheap Santa suit. I guess my child's happiness is not nearly as important to you as getting home to watch reruns of Gilligan's Island and having a few shots of liberally spiked egg nog.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>Look lady, you have no idea what it takes to be "Santa" for a thousand screaming brats every day for a month, so get off my back. (starts to leave)</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>Now wait just a second there, Bub.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>(holding up a hand in her face) Talk to the mitten... I'm outta here. (mock cheerfully) Ho, ho, ho. Merry Christmas. (Santa exits)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I hope a reindeer bites you on your big, fat a... Sorry, Honey, looks like Santa has left the building.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>Yeah, he wasn't very nice... But then, neither were you, at least at the end there.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I suppose I wasn't. Perhaps a bit more diplomacy would have been better. I'll see if I can have a more civilized word with him tomorrow. You never know, he may come around.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>That might help. I'll try not to get my hopes up. I'm kinda tired of being disappointed.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>What do you mean?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>Well, things haven't gone very smoothly for quite a while. I mean, I used to get around pretty well on my crutches. That was ok. But now I'm stuck in this chair... The other kids used to at least pretend to include me in games and stuff, but not anymore... You keep telling me that money is tight, so we have to be careful with every penny... And it's no secret that you haven't been very happy since dad left. And I keep thinking that most of the problems we have are because of me. That it's all my fault.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>You listen to me young man, none of those things are your fault. It's certainly not your fault that arthritis keeps you in your wheelchair... And if the other kids don't include you, that's just their own selfishness showing. ..And FYI, mister, money is tight because your father left. Even with my job and his child support, we don't make as much we were used to. Our expenses are about the same, so things are just a bit tighter than they were. That's all. We're really doing ok. We just have to be careful... And don't you think for a minute that your father leaving had anything to do with you. That was <u>our</u> problem. He and I just couldn't get along anymore. So we decided it would be better to live apart rather than live together.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>That's easy for you to say. But from where I live, it's hard not to feel responsible, at least a little bit.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I know, Honey, I know. Even though it's hard, I'm going to ask you to try to keep a positive attitude about things. I'm sure next year will be better.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>Yeah. I'm sure it will be, but right now I'm still struggling with getting through my conflicts about Christmas.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">(DOMINIC enters through store door with a bank deposit bag)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(noticing him)</p> <p>Hello, Mr. Del Monico.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Good evening, Nancy. I thought you left an hour ago.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I did. After I got off work, I went home to get Adrian. He wanted to see Santa.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Hello, Adrian, nice to see you again. And what did Santa have to say to you?.. Wait a minute, aren't you a little old to be seeing Santa?</p>	

ADRIAN	
Well, Mr. Del Monico, it's like this. I really like the idea of Santa as a symbol for Christmas, but I haven't really come to grips with the true nature of the holiday. Everyone seems to be totally focused on presents and trees and ornaments and stuff. But, nobody seems to be very happy about it.	
DOMINIC	
Let's sit for a second. Maybe I can help.	
NANCY	
We don't mean to keep you, Mr. Del Monico.	
DOMINIC	
It's ok. Ever since Mrs. Del Monico died, there's not much to go home to. I was going to drop this at the bank and then come back at take a look at the inventory numbers. You know, just another day at the office.	
NANCY	
I'm sorry about your wife. What will you be doing for Christmas this year?	
DOMINIC	
Same as every year it seems. My daughter and her family are flying in from Tampa on Christmas Eve. You know she married a nice Jewish boy. He's a doctor and has a pretty good practice going in St. Pete.	
NANCY	
I didn't think you were Jewish.	
DOMINIC	
You're right, I'm not. (ponders) Now that I think about it, I'm not really anything. My parents went to the Orthodox Church, very faithfully... While I, on the other hand, haven't stepped into a church, except for weddings and funerals, since I was about thirteen.	
ADRIAN	
So you don't believe in God?	

<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>I didn't say that, Adrian. I believe that something is out there that's bigger than all of us. But with everybody fighting over who's right and who's wrong, I just didn't see the point. I figure if God wanted us to find Him, He'd have made it easier. At least given us a map to show us where to look.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>Then what's Christmas to you?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Oh, Christmas to me is <u>family</u>. When Celeste, that's my wife, was alive, she used to spend weeks getting the house ready. We always had a great big tree with a light up star on top. She would make sure there were loads of presents for everyone. She even made cookies for the postman and the delivery driver and just about everyone else in the neighborhood. It seems like every week between Thanksgiving and New Years we were off to a party here or some sort of a function there. Some weeks we'd have three or four.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>Sounds like fun.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Fun if you like parties, I guess. I always went because she loved parties. I would have been just as happy to sit by the fire and read my book. But I could never deny her happiness, so we always went. I'm not saying it was all bad. Along the way, I met some interesting and influential people, including three mayors, six city council members, two Congressmen, and a Senator. Why, some of them even came into the store for presents of their own. Of course, that was before we moved the store out here to the big, fancy mall.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>It sounds like you don't like the mall.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>It's ok. There's certainly more traffic. But, I miss the downtown shopping district, where people would come in because they meant to, not because they just happened to be walking by on their way to the mega-discount store. Back then, I knew my customers by name and they knew me. I knew their kids, when they had first communion and, of course, every prom and when they were getting married. Most of them were like my own nieces and nephews. I felt like I had the biggest family in the world. That was nice, especially during the holidays. Sometimes they even brought <u>me</u> presents.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>That sounds really nice.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>So why did you move the store?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>I had to. Nobody shops downtown any more. My first week here I had three times as many customers as my entire last month downtown. But with so many more customers, the hard economic times make it harder and harder to make a living.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I thought the store was doing pretty well.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Thanks to salespeople like you, Nancy, we're getting by. (to ADRIAN)</p> <p>Your mom is always one of the top two or three in sales every month. Like clockwork. I can always count on her. (back to both)</p> <p>Most people don't really know what goes into keeping a big store like this in the black. Merchandise and shipping costs are going up and margins are coming down. That coupled with more and more customers wanting big discounts, even well ahead of our gigantic after-Christmas sale. It's getting harder to show a profit. That wasn't such a big deal before, but with Celeste gone, my focus is making sure my kids and grandkids have a little something after I'm gone. Now my main goal in life is creating enough money so they are all taken care of. But, retail is a very difficult line of work; you know, trying to anticipate the ever-changing wants of a fickle public.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I didn't realize things were so bad. I'll just have work harder from now on.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>I have no complaints about your work, Nancy. If all of my employees tried as hard as you do, I'd could just sit in my office and grow fat...er. And I hope I didn't sound like I was complaining at all. I just have to work smarter to prepare, that's all. I enjoy the challenge, but as I get older, I wouldn't mind being able to smell the roses a bit, you know, every now and again.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I think I know what you mean. Well, we shouldn't keep you any longer.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>Thanks for sharing your perspective, Mr. Del Monico. I'm not sure I have a better handle on the essence of Christmas, but I appreciate your thoughts. Thank you.</p>	

DOMINIC	
You're welcome, Adrian. Now take your mom home and make sure she gets plenty of rest. We have to do a spot inventory check after closing tomorrow. So we'll be up a bit later than usual. (as he's getting up to leave) Oh, Nancy, do you think the Safeway will have a goose? My daughter asked me to get one for Christmas dinner. I sure hope she's cooking it, 'cause I don't know a goose from a hole in the ground.	
NANCY	
I would think they'd have a goose or two, but you might want to call first, just to be sure.	
DOMINIC	
Thanks. Good night you two.	
NANCY and ADRIAN	
Good night, Mr. Del Monico.	
(DOMINIC exits to one side, NANCY and ADRIAN to the other. The stage is empty for a few seconds before two uniformed security guards enter. They approach from opposite directions, checking in store windows etc. as they come in.)	
JEREMY	
Looks like another evening in Paradise. I'll sure be glad when we get back to regular hours next week.	
VICTORIA	
Are we cramping your social life? Do you have a date or something?	
JEREMY	
I think you know me better than that.	
VICTORIA	
Yeah, but it is fun to tease you, Jeremy. Besides, the overtime certainly doesn't hurt my bank account.	

<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>A bit of extra cash does help (feigning sadness) ease the pain of my shattered love life.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>You're not fooling anyone you know. Look, Santa's chair. (starts up platform) Come on. I'll be Santa and you tell me what you want for Christmas. (once in the chair) Sit in my lap, little boy, and tell Santa everything that's on your Christmas list.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY (hesitating)</p> <p>I don't know. I haven't believed in Santa for a long time. And besides, I don't want to squish you.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>Hey...I can take it. Now hurry up, 'cause then it's my turn. (pats her knee) Come on...Santa's waiting.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>If you're sure I won't crush you. (he sits on her lap)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>So, Jeremy, have you been naughty or nice this year.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>Check your list, <u>Santa</u>; I've tried to be nice. And besides, there's really not too much that I want this year... What I <u>would</u> like is, enough cash coming in to make good on my church building project pledge. But, then again, my job pretty much takes care of that... I'd like continued good health for my family and friends. I'm not sure how you can affect that, but, see what you can do. I could use a new cell phone to replace this one that crapped out... Oh, and a couple of new books.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>That's it?</p>	

JEREMY There is one more thing. But this last one's a little embarrassing to talk about and it's been on my list for several years now, so...Santa, I'm sure you already know what it is.	
VICTORIA You know it doesn't work that way, little boy. If you don't tell Santa, I can't make it happen. So fess up. What is it?	
JEREMY Ok Santa, but remember, you asked for it... I'd... I'd like to meet the girl of my dreams.	
VICTORIA (chuckles a moment) So you think Santa is running a dating service here? Perhaps I can find you an oversized Barbie. I'm sure there's one in my workshop somewhere.	
JEREMY I told you it was embarrassing. And now you're making fun of me.	
VICTORIA I'm just teasing you a bit, Jer... So, tell me about this girl of your dreams.	
JEREMY Why, so you can tease me some more?	
VICTORIA No, I'd really like to know and I promise, I won't make fun.	
JEREMY Well, let's see. She shouldn't be that hard to find, or in your case, build. She has to be highly intelligent, have a nice sense of humor, care about others, be able to handle herself with poise no matter what, and it wouldn't hurt if...	
VICTORIA If what? Come on, Spill it. Santa can't produce without the details.	

JEREMY It wouldn't hurt if she was drop dead gorgeous with a figure to match, and the best for last, she has to be a committed Christian.	
VICTORIA Now, was that so hard? I'll see what I can do... (excited) Ok, my turn.	
(They switch places.)	
JEREMY Ho, ho, ho. Ok Victoria, since you've been rather naughty this year, what do you think Santa should bring you? A lump of coal or... a bag of sand.	
VICTORIA A bag of sand? Santa doesn't bring sand.	
JEREMY Hey, I've never been Santa before. I'm making this up as I go.	
VICTORIA Ok Mr. Santa-newbie, here's where you ask me what I want for Christmas.	
JEREMY Alright, little girl, what do you want for Christmas this year?	
VICTORIA (feigning sincerity) All I want for Christmas this year is World Peace. (JEREMY chuckles) What's funny about World Peace?	

JEREMY	
Nothing, but the way you said it reminded me of that bumper sticker, “Visualize Whirled Peas”. (makes stirring motion to complete the visual. They both laugh.)	
VICTORIA	
Ok, time to get serious. You better get a pen and paper? This is going to take a while... Ok, first... I'd like a new car. The one I'm driving now is a total piece of –	
JEREMY	
Ahem.	
VICTORIA	
Let's just say, it's on its last wheels. I really like the new Mercedes convertible... in bright red. Next, I've had my eye on a set of pearls in the window at Ray's Jewelers. (points down the Mall) The double strand with matching earrings. And Del Monico's has the cutest little ankle boots, ...in five colors...size six and a half should fit nicely. Oh, then there's the most adorable ski suit at the Sporting Good's store, and a gorgeous little black dress at Jenny's Women's Wear... and, the best for last... I'd you to make sure my friend Jeremy gets everything on his list.	
JEREMY	
Hold on a second there little lady, that's a pretty long list. How am I supposed to fit all of that in my sleigh?	
VICTORIA	
(snuggling up to him a bit) Well, you could make a special trip to my house... (with a seductive tone) whenever you like. I'll have milk and cookies for you.	
JEREMY	
(becoming uncomfortable) I'm not sure Mrs. Claus would approve.	

<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>(getting closer to him throughout this whole line)</p> <p>You just said there wasn't a Mrs. Claus, but that you were looking for her. How did you describe her? Highly intelligent, sense of humor, cares about people, handles herself with grace. It's like looking in a mirror. Now I wouldn't say I'm drop dead gorgeous with a matching figure, but I'm not chopped liver either.</p> <p>(an awkward moment as they seem to be about to kiss)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>(standing and stepping away)</p> <p>Yes, Vicki, you are all of that and more—</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>So what's the problem?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>It's the last part I mentioned. The woman of my dreams is a strong Christian. I would never ask you to change your belief system for a chance of romance. Don't get me wrong, nothing would please me more than to see you come to know Him. And I'd be happy explain it all. But for the right reasons.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>(a bit put off)</p> <p>I see. And I'll try to understand. Which I don't at the moment...We better get back to work. I'll take the south corridor, why don't you take <u>the north</u>.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>I'm sorry, Vicki. I didn't mean to hurt—</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>No, it's my fault. I started it. But it's the story of my life. Every time I meet a great guy. There's always something. I'm not this or I'm too that... You're the sweetest, most caring man I've ever met and I couldn't help but get my hopes up. You know, maybe this time...So far my love life has been one major disappointment after another. I mean, I last boyfriend turned out to be such a jerk...I'm sorry I don't mean to drop all of this into your lap.</p>	

JEREMY It's ok. But, we should make the rounds. You take south and I'll go north. We'll meet back here in an hour or so and talk some more. (they exit in opposite directions)	
(BLACKOUT)	
(END OF SCENE)	

TOC

Scene 2

SETTING: Mall courtyard. December 22nd near Mall closing time.

AT RISE: Santa's relaxing on his throne with no children.

(An attractive, nicely dressed woman, Fairuz, scurries into Del Monico's, carrying one small shopping bag. NANCY enters through store door, dressed as if still working. JEREMY is in scene but not part of the initial conversation.)	
NANCY Santa, can I talk to you for second?	
SANTA (snippy) Oh, it's you again. What do you want?	
NANCY I wanted to apologize for getting huffy with you last night.	
SANTA (comes down to floor level) Ok, go ahead.	
NANCY I thought I just did.	
SANTA Not really.	
NANCY Ok... I'm sorry, Santa, for getting huffy with you last night.	
SANTA Anything else?	

<p>NANCY</p> <p>Uh...I wanted to see if maybe I could bring my son by again to see you.</p>	
<p>SANTA</p> <p>You can bring him by, but I still can't get him up there.</p>	
<p>NANCY</p> <p>I'm sure that will be ok. He just wants to talk to you. Let me explain a little about the situation with my son. You see, he suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and can no longer walk, even with crutches. I've been trying to make sure that he doesn't become bitter about it, so, as an object lesson, I was able to find him a volunteer position at the Good Shepherd Day Care center.</p>	
<p>SANTA</p> <p>I've never heard of it.</p>	
<p>NANCY</p> <p>It's at the end of the west corridor, near the food court. You must have passed it on the way in.</p>	
<p>SANTA</p> <p>Yeah, maybe. I never noticed.</p>	
<p>NANCY</p> <p>Anyway, I wanted him to be able to give to those who have less than we do. So he helps out with games and crafts for the five and six year olds. And now it turns out that their funding has been cut back so far, the center is dropping all of its educational programs and may have to cut back on the meals they provide for the kids and their families.</p>	
<p>SANTA</p> <p>I still don't see what this has to do with me.</p>	
<p>NANCY</p> <p>With all of this and the personal struggles our family has gone through, Adrian, That's my son, has become disillusioned with Christmas. He was hoping that you, as the premiere symbol of the holiday season, might be able to give him a new perspective. That's all.</p>	

SANTA	
That's all? I'm supposed to <u>reinvent</u> Christmas for your son. And where's that supposed to come from. I'm a mall Santa, making eight fifty an hour, and I'm somehow gifted with the ability to solve the holiday crisis for some crippled kid. I don't think so. Find somebody else.	
NANCY	
(getting huffy again) And who might you suggest. You're supposed to be Christmas for kids.	
SANTA	
(getting huffy right back) Oh no, you don't. Don't lay that on me. Jolly old Saint Nick is Christmas, and he ain't real. Christmas ain't real. It's all about the stuff. You should know that. They don't pay me enough to fabricate some hocus-pocus nonsense so kids can feel good about made up holidays. I listen to their greedy wish lists, pose for pictures, and hand out candy canes. That's it. Anything else is not in my job description. (he starts to walk away from her)	
NANCY	
Alright Scrooge-a Claus, have it your way. I really do hope a reindeer bites you on the butt. And this time, I mean it. (she storms out)	
(SANTA stews for a minute. JEREMY makes his way over.)	
JEREMY	
I couldn't help but overhear your <u>discussion</u> there, Santa.	
SANTA	
(still hot) You want some of it, too, Rambo.	
JEREMY	
Oh, no. Just wanted to make sure you were ok.	

<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>(cooling off a bit)</p> <p>Yeah, I'm ok. She really pushed my button, if you know what I mean. I'm just a guy trying to pay the mortgage and put a few groceries on the table. I'm not the savior of the world.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>I can see that.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>I mean, come on. How can I help some handicapped kid in a wheelchair understand what Christmas is all about, when I don't have a clue myself? Right now, it's bratty kids, crappy keepsake photos, and cheap candy canes.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>I heard that part. Surely it's not that bad.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>Don't get me wrong, I'm all for family and tradition and giving, but when these spoiled brats crawl into my lap with a six page spreadsheet full of crap that they won't even play with two days after Christmas, it makes me want to puke... I remember this one little monster. He told me he was going to believe in me one more year so I would be allowed to bring him the new PlayStation. He even had the audacity to tell me where I could get the best price. I pinched his butt so hard, he was crying when they took his Santa picture. Raising a kid like that, I think his mother deserved a crappy photo.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>You're sounding more and more cynical by the minute. And Christmas is nothing more to you?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SANTA</p> <p>Not this year. You see, I got laid off in May and haven't even had a decent interview since. Do you know what it's like going from a six-figure income to being a Rent-a-Claus? I mean, my... (makes quote marks in the air) "Supervisor" can barley even shave and he's telling me how to do my job. And you wonder why I'm cynical. Give me a break.</p>	

JEREMY	
Sounds like things are tough.	
SANTA	
You don't know the half of it. Last week my sixteen year old comes home claiming there's been another "immaculate" conception, if you know what I mean. Well, I'm certainly not buying it. And then to top it all off, the bank is threatening foreclosure on my house.	
JEREMY	
Ouch, things <u>are</u> tough. You know, Santa—	
SANTA	
Rob.	
JEREMY	
Rob?	
SANTA	
That's my real name.	
JEREMY	
Rob what?	
SANTA	
I'd really rather not say.	
JEREMY	
Why not? Are you a spy or something?	
SANTA	
No, nothing like that. It's just kind of embarrassing.	
JEREMY	
Come on. How bad can it be? I'm Jeremy Spiegel, by the way. (extends hand to shake)	

SANTA	
Oh, alright...Rob Hood.	
JEREMY	
What's so bad about Robert Hood?	
SANTA	
It's not Robert, it's...Robin...I've never really forgiven my parents for that. Can you imagine the teasing I got as a kid?	
JEREMY	
Kids can be pretty mean.	
SANTA	
Not just kids. One of my teachers used to open every class with some snide comment. Like "Who'd you steal from today, Robin?" or "Hey Robin, I'm poor; can you steal me a new car?" Some days I wished was the real Robin Hood, so I could send an arrow right up his...Anyway, he eventually got fired. Happiest day of third grade for me.	
JEREMY	
I get the picture. You know, Rob, I believe in the power of prayer, especially in tough times. I would be happy to pray with you about all of the stuff going on in your life.	
SANTA	
Uh...Gee... I don't know about that. I'm not very religious.	
JEREMY	
Well, how about this. For the time being, I'll pray <u>for</u> you. But the offer still stands. Anytime you change your mind, just let me know. Ok?	
(SANTA heads back up to throne)	
SANTA	
I guess that'd be ok. By the way, Jeremy, what can Santa bring for you this year?	

JEREMY Same as every year, Santa, the girl of my dreams.	
(VICTORIA rushes in, looking for JEREMY.)	
VICTORIA Jeremy, we have a situation.	
JEREMY What's up?	
VICTORIA Someone reported that a lot of cars on the top level of the parking garage have been vandalized.	
JEREMY What happened?	
VICTORIA They're saying most of the cars just have that window snow stuff sprayed on their windshields. But a couple had their valve stems loosened and their tires are flat. The cops are on the way, but management wants you to do crowd control and sort out who has what kind of damage. I'll keep an eye on things down here.	
JEREMY No problem. On the way, I'll call John at the auto center and see if he can bring up some new stems and a compressor to get those folks on their way as soon as possible.	
(As he's leaving, JEREMY pulls out a cell phone and starts dialing. VICTORIA blends into the background and overhears the following dialogue. If extras are part of the cast, they can mill about for a few seconds until FAIRUZ enters through store door with DOMINIC in tow. He's is heavily laden with Del Monico bags filled with wrapped presents.)	
DOMINIC (fawning over her) I can't tell you how much I appreciate you shopping at Del Monico's, Ms. Dahabi.	

<p style="text-align: center;">FAIRUZ</p> <p>I'm not sure I have much choice. It seems yours is the only decent shop in town anymore. Ever since my daughter moved here from Beverly Hills, I have had trouble finding suitable gifts for her and my grandchildren.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>I'm very glad you were able to find suitable gifts for your family.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">FAIRUZ</p> <p>I'm sure you are. <p style="text-align: center;">(ponders for a moment)</p> <p>Tell me something Mr. Del Monico. What has happened to Christmas in America?</p> </p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>What do you mean?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">FAIRUZ</p> <p>Many years ago, when I started coming to your country, things were much simpler. Christmas centered around a child in the manger, the holy family, angels, shepherds and kings. Santa Claus was a saintly man who gave necessary things and perhaps a simple treat to poor children in need. Now these things seem to be completely overlooked in favor of endless piles of useless trinkets.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Yes, you're right; priorities have shifted to the more commercial side. Many people use the holidays to express their love and appreciation through the giving of material things.</p>	
<p>(VICTORIA works her way closer during the following)</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">FAIRUZ</p> <p>Does it not seem odd to you, that in America, the child of Christmas has become nearly nothing in the process? My granddaughter tells me that they no longer have Christmas Holiday. Now it's called Winter Break. They can't sing traditional carols in the school pageant. They are forced to perform songs like "Jingle Bells" and "Frosty the Snowman" at the school assemblies instead, lest someone be offended by the mere mention of the name Jesus. Even Christian children are forbidden from saying "Merry Christmas" Only "Happy Holidays" is acceptable. It's as if, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, the Winter Solstice and, who knows what else, have become one giant jumbled-up mess. Are none of your traditions sacred to you anymore?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Well... it's just...It's really not my doing, so, I'm not sure I have an answer to that.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">FAIRUZ</p> <p>But you seem to have fallen prey to it. Your store is festively decorated with snowflakes and glittering trees, but not stars or crosses... See, what I mean?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(inserting herself into the conversation)</p> <p>Maybe I can help you understand. Here in America, we strive to make sure that everyone is included in all things. Our schools teach the children to be tolerant of other religions and all people, no matter what they believe. In this way, everyone is equal, and no one has to feel bad about who they are, regardless of their heritage. We believe that no one should be offended by another's religious beliefs or personal creed. So, all become one in spirit. And in this way we create a better society for all.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">FAIRUZ</p> <p>But how can the children learn to be tolerant of others, when the others are forbidden to show or even speak about the customs and traditions that make them different? And, what about the religious and cultural differences which define each individual person within his family, his neighborhood, and society? Do they count for nothing?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>Certainly they count for something, just not everywhere. Here, we live in a society free from religious persecution. The "separation of church and state" requires that our government show no favoritism concerning religious matters. That's why all</p>	

religions are equally represented in all areas.	
<p style="text-align: center;">FAIRUZ</p> <p>I think there are two problems with what you just said. First, there is great confusion about the phrase, the “separation of church and state”, it is my understanding that it is not even in your Constitution and second, by allowing anything at all to be part of your <u>inclusion</u>, you lose the distinction of each individual within the “everything”, and all becomes nothing. It is very sad to me that you have lost your heritage. Come, Mr. Del Monico, help me get these to my car, won’t you?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>Of course, Ms. Dahabi. It will be my pleasure.</p>	
<p>(They exit. VICTORIA wanders over to the nativity area and ponders. She speaks to the assembled symbols. If one or more is not present, eliminate the relevant portion of her dialogue.)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>Can she possibly be right? Have we lost our heritage? By putting you all together, do we really lose what makes each of you different and special?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(to the menorah)</p> <p>You tell me the coming Messiah is yet to appear. But, He’s the hope of the future</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(to the crescent)</p> <p>And you tell me, salvation comes through Allah and obedience. But then we struggle just to get along with each other.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(to the atheist sign)</p> <p>While you tell me, there is no Messiah; there is no God at all. I’m pretty sure that’s not right.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(to the nativity)</p> <p>And in the middle is you, baby Jesus. You claimed to <u>be</u> the Messiah, the Savior of all. How can that be? You can’t all be true? Oh, how can any of you be true?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">(DOMINIC enters and heads toward the store.)</p>	

DOMINIC	
Victoria.	
VICTORIA (roused from her pondering)	
Yes, Mr. Del Monico.	
DOMINIC	
Jeremy, asked me to send you to the garage. He said, apparently, there were more cars damaged than originally thought. He'd like you to bring some more incident forms.	
VICTORIA	
Alright, I'll get some more and head up there right now.	
(VICTORIA exits where DOMINIC came from. He exits into store. The stage lights dim and the stage is empty for a few seconds. A nondescript figure enters, dressed like a thug. He knocks over the nativity figures. Leaves the other symbols standing and steals the baby Jesus from the crèche.)	
BLACKOUT)	
(END OF SCENE)	

Scene 3

SETTING: That same evening, later.

AT RISE: Lights still dim. NANCY and DOMINIC enter through the store door.

NANCY	
I'll be back to work on the inventory as soon as I pick up Adrian from the center.	
(she exits)	
DOMINIC	
(heading the other direction with paper bag)	
No hurry. It'll be here when you get back.	
(discovers vandalism of nativity)	
What's this?	
(pulls out cell phone and dials, waits a couple of seconds)	
Hi, Jeremy, it's Dominic Del Monico...Yes, yes, very busy... Anyway, the reason I'm calling is, there's been some vandalism in front of my store...No, no, not to the store itself. It looks like somebody trashed the nativity in the holiday display...I can't tell...There are pieces everywhere. It looks like everything could be still here. I can't be sure...Ok, you'll be right down? Good...Alright. I'm going to start setting it back up...Bye.	
(sets paper bag in the nativity and begins collecting the pieces. JEREMY and VICTORIA enter as he starts. To himself)	
What's wrong with these people? This kind of stuff makes me so angry.	
JEREMY	
Good evening, Dominic. You didn't happen to see who did this, did you?	
DOMINIC	
(a bit miffed)	
No, I didn't. Correct me if I'm wrong, but, I'm pretty sure it's your job to watch what goes on around here. This is crazy. Tonight the nativity. Tomorrow, who knows, my store... or my employees. You're supposed to be here to protect us from this kind of thing.	

<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(miffed right back)</p> <p>Now wait just a second, we were doing our job—</p>	
<p>(NANCY rolls ADRIAN into area to see what's happened)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>It's ok, Vicki, Dominic has a right to be upset. We weren't here to take care of the situation. And even though those other folks needed our attention just as much, we still let him down. I'm sorry, Dominic. We will certainly to be more vigilant in the future. After we get this cleaned up, I'll go take a look at the video and see if we can determine who did this.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>That's better.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(cooling off)</p> <p>I'm sorry I blew up at you. It just makes me so mad. Who would do this?</p>	
<p>(VICTORIA picks up a shepherd)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>What's this guy? Man, he's dirty. Yuck.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(drops the figure)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>That appears to be a shepherd. Most people don't know much about shepherds. More often than not they <u>were</u> quite dirty and <u>smelly</u>. They were the social outcasts of their day. They lived all day, every day with their sheep, so it's no wonder they were a mess. But the sheep couldn't survive without them. See, domestic sheep aren't very smart and they were totally dependent on the shepherds to take them everywhere; to the watering holes, to green pastures. Without the shepherd, the sheep would literally just lay down and die. Now the Bible says, on that first Christmas night, the shepherds, men scorned by "decent" people, were the first to hear the good news of Jesus' birth. On this night of miracles, an angel appeared to them and told them what to look for and where to find the baby. So, off they went in search of Him, He who would be called "Immanuel, God with Us".</p>	

ADRIAN	
They just left their sheep and went looking for the baby Jesus?	
JEREMY	
Most likely not. The sheep were so vulnerable, that leaving them alone for even a short time meant risk from wolves. So most likely, the shepherds would have led their sheep right into the heart of Bethlehem. Can you see it? A bunch of ragtag shepherds leading hundreds of sheep through the middle of town. I can even hear the people of Bethlehem, waking up in the middle of the night going, "Oh man, what's that smell?"	
VICTORIA	
Oooo, sounds nasty.	
JEREMY	
I bet it was. Following the instructions of the angel, the shepherds found the baby, with Mary and Joseph in a <u>stable</u> , for, as the story goes, there was no room for them in the inn.	
ADRIAN	
Does that mean they were poor? Was that all they could afford, a stable?	
JEREMY	
Probably not. You see, at that time, the government required everyone to travel to their home cities for a census and a special tax.	
DOMINIC	
That sounds like the government.	
JEREMY	
Yes it does. And even though Joseph could have afforded a nice room, there were so many travelers in town, there just weren't any rooms left. So the only place they could stay was out back, with the animals.	
VICTORIA	
A barn like this is certainly not the Ritz.	

<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>And chances are good it wasn't even this nice. Wood was so precious back then, they didn't make buildings out of it, especially buildings for animals. The manger was probably kept inside a hollowed out cave on a hillside. A space just big enough to get a few animals out of the weather for the night.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>And this is where God let His Son be born?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>Not let, chose.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>What do you mean, chose? Who would choose such a place?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>When you read the Old Testament, you see that the coming Messiah was a very special Child. Hundreds of prophesies foretell who He is and how He would come. God was very aware of this special Child. It was not by accident that Mary and Joseph arrived after all the hotels were full. God orchestrated the events exactly how he wanted them.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">DOMINIC</p> <p>It sounds kind of cruel to me to have the Child be born among the animals.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>Yes, to us it does seem sort of cold and heartless. But God has His reasons... for everything. Even today when things seem dark and crazy, often it's Him trying to get our attention.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>Wait a sec. You mean God uses day to day circumstances to see if we're paying attention?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>Sometimes He does.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p>That's too weird... A minute ago didn't you say this was a night of miracles? Plural. You only talked about the angels appearing. What other miracles were there?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>I mentioned a few others. The fact that Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem is one. They lived long way from that little town. But the Bible foretold the place of the Messiah's birth, Bethlehem. Again, this was no accident. He was also to be of the house of David. Both Mary and Joseph trace their ancestry back to King David. And even though Joseph wasn't Jesus' biological father, the lineage of both parents fulfill the prophesy. The chances of this are very slim. Another miracle.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>What do you mean Joseph wasn't Jesus' father?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>According to scripture, Mary was a virgin. The Holy Spirit came upon her and created the Child within her womb. The virgin birth is another of the miracles.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>I'm not sure I get it.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I'll explain it to you later.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">JEREMY</p> <p>In addition to that, even the heavens showed God's miracles. Whether a newly formed, very bright star or the coming together of several celestial bodies, the way to the manger was shown by a bright heavenly light. The shepherds followed it. As did the Magi.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(holds up a figure)</p> <p>You mean these guys?</p>	

JEREMY Yes, but they weren't actually at the manger on that first night.	
DOMINIC Wait, we always see them in the nativity. I thought they followed the star and arrived that night.	
JEREMY A lot of people think that. And it too would have been another miracle for them to show up on the very night Jesus was born. But, the Bible seems to indicate that they saw the special star and started their journey, arriving many months or a couple of years later. And it was during this time that God's Divine protection allowed Jesus to survive King Herod's wrath.	
NANCY I remember something about Herod trying to kill all the children.	
JEREMY That's close. He ordered the death of all <u>male</u> children age two and younger. He wanted to eliminate the Child King before He could become a threat to Herod's own power. But, God told Joseph in a dream to take his family to Egypt for a while. Which he did.	
ADRIAN Until the coast was clear.	
JEREMY Exactly, until the coast was clear. Once Herod died, they were able to go back to Israel. This was a miraculous night. Do you remember the line from, "O, Little Town of Bethlehem", "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight"? That's why Jesus came as he did. How he did it is really more of the Easter story.	
(by this point the nativity should be reset by the cast)	
VICTORIA Wait a sec. The baby Jesus is missing.	

NANCY	
Are you sure?	
VICTORIA	
Yeah, pretty sure. We've got Mary and Joseph, some dirty shepherds, some sheep, a cow, a camel... You must be with the Wise Men. You guys shouldn't be even here yet, and that's it. No baby Jesus.	
DOMINIC	
Who would steal Jesus from a nativity?	
JEREMY	
I don't know, but I've heard it's becoming an epidemic. One lady in Wisconsin has had her Jesus stolen every Christmas five years running. One year she replaced Him with a bag of dog doo and they stole that, too. Some churches have even gone so far as to install video cameras and GPS tracking devices to try to catch the thieves.	
NANCY	
What's the world coming to?	
DOMINIC	
(miffed again) A very good question. I just can't believe people anymore.	
JEREMY	
Like I said before, I'll check the surveillance tapes and see what we can see concerning our culprit. But now we need to get back to our rounds. With everything going on tonight, we'll all need to be extra cautious. Ready, Vicki.	
VICTORIA	
Yeah, Jer. Let's go. (they exit)	
NANCY	
I'll get back to the inventory, Mr. Del Monico.	

DOMINIC	
Thanks, Nancy. This whole incident has really upset me. I think I'm just going to go on home.	
NANCY	
That sounds like a good idea. I'll lock up when I'm done. (she rolls ADRIAN toward the store door)	
DOMINIC	
No, wait. Why don't you go home, too? It's not that important and will certainly keep 'til morning. Just lock up for me after you get your stuff.	
NANCY	
Are you sure?	
DOMINIC	
I'm sure. Good night, Nancy. Good night, Adrian.	
NANCY and ADRIAN	
Good night, Mr. Del Monico.	
NANCY	
I'll just be a second, Honey. I need to get my coat.	
ADRIAN	
Sure, mom. I'll be fine.	
(NANCY exits into store. ADRIAN wheels over to nativity.)	
ADRIAN	
So little Jesus, wherever you are, you're supposed to be the miracle child. The coming Messiah. The Son of God. So why aren't you taking better care of us today. In case you haven't noticed, things are a mess around here. I bet you could fix it if you wanted to. But now, you're not even here to see it... (notices bag)	
What's that? (can't quite reach that which has drawn his attention)	

(NANCY enters, locks the door)	
NANCY Are you ready to go?	
ADRIAN Almost. Come here a second. There's something strange in the nativity and I can't reach it.	
NANCY (approaching) What are you trying to get?	
ADRIAN There's a paper bag, right there. See? Under the little building.	
NANCY So there is. I wonder what it's doing there. (gets the bag and opens it in wonder) Whoa.	
ADRIAN What is it, mom?	
NANCY It's full of money.	
ADRIAN Money? Really? Who does it belongs to?	
NANCY (looking for identifying marks) I don't know. It doesn't say. And it looks like several thousand dollars.	
ADRIAN Wow. Do you think it's a gift from God? I mean, it was in His house.	

<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>I don't know about a gift from God. But it sure seems like a gift from somebody. And we sure could use it right about now.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>Merry Christmas to us... Wait. Maybe it's a test.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>What?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>You know, a test. To see if we're <u>worthy</u>. On the one hand, we could just keep it and no one would ever know. But since it's not really ours, we'd just waste it or something bad would happen. On the other hand, it might be the life savings of some little old lady who needs it for groceries or cat food or something. And she'd be so happy to get it back, she'd give us a big reward.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>Where do you get this stuff?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p>From TV. Stuff like this is always on the news.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>Well, gift or test, we're not going to do anything about it tonight. We'll just sleep on it and see what tomorrow brings. Are you ready to go home?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ADRIAN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(as they're going)</p> <p>Yeah, if we're going to have some egg nog.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NANCY</p> <p>Now there's a good idea. (they exit)</p>	
(BLACKOUT)	