

11/09

# The Man Who Invented Santa Claus

A New Christmas Musical **for all ages**

Book, Songs by Paul M. Jay Additional Music by David Cantor

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This musical is based on the history of the poem 'Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas' which is attributed to Clement Clarke Moore. Lately much evidence has come to light that the poem was actually written by Henry Livingston of Poughkeepsie, NY. The story of the poem is told through various devices, including time travel. The musical is written for general audience.

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### CONTEMPORARY CHARACTERS:

#### DR. BOCKERKNICK

He is based on Washington Irving's character Diedrich Knickerbocker, the fabulist historian who sticks vaguely to the truth. He is an appealing mix of skeptic and dreamer. He facilitates the quest to find out who wrote the poem. Starts to smell an Academic Prize, which is why he is so anxious to send the kids back in time. Also plays Editor, Printer and Priest.

#### JANITOR

A school janitor. Also plays Moore and Livingston.

#### MARY

A computer wiz, retired from IBM. She is wearing khaki shorts, workboots in the middle of winter and her long brown hair is tied back in a pony tail. She's voraciously curious and questions authority. Though friends with LADY X she tends to conflict with Lady X's conservatism. Also plays Harriet.

#### LADY X

A knowledgeable woman, possibly a teacher at the school. She has a strong sense of civic duty, which is why she attends meetings all the time. She's an educational bureaucrat with an annoying manner. Also plays Cook.

### HISTORICAL CHARACTERS:

#### CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE (played by Janitor)

Wealthy landlord, professor of ancient languages at the Episcopal Seminary on W. 20th Street in Chelsea, New York City. Son of the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York, he is credited with writing 'Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas'. Moore is the colorful villain of the play. It's fun and easy to hate him. He's pompous, self-righteous and self-serving. His theme music is bad organ music

#### HARRIET BUTLER (Played by Mary)

A governess. Worked for Henry Livingston and later

Act One

Contemporary classroom. A banner is on the wall that says 'FRIENDS OF SANTA'. It is the annual social function of a civic organization for kids. There is punch in a bowl, some presents and Christmas decorations, a small plastic Christmas tree. Christmas decorations are being hung in the classroom. A JANITOR is helping to make a makeshift fire place with stockings hanging from it in front of one of the two doors to the hall, hanging a bar above and behind the door so that Santa can drop down the 'chimney'.

Prologue

DR. BOCKERKNICK appears in front of curtain. He has on half a Santa suit, half professorial (i.e. boring) street clothes.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

One moment, please.

(He looks at his cell phone and shuts it off.)

Good evening, Audience! How are we? Or more to the point, who are we? I'm Bockerknick, Dr. Bockerknick to you!

"THROUGH THE FIREPLACE"

I'M AN HISTORIAN BY PROFESSION  
IT CURED ME OF POLITICS AND DRINKING  
WHAT BRINGS ME HERE TODAY  
AWAY FROM VERY IMPORTANT THINKING

IS A FIGURE SO UNIQUE  
WITH ABILITIES THAT WE LACK  
APPROVAL RATINGS THROUGH THE ROOF  
IN FACT THE ROOF IS HIS TARMAC

A SAINT OF COURSE LIKE SAINT LOUIS

WHO WON THE SERIES YEARS AGO  
(SORRY ABOUT THAT LITTLE JOKE)  
THERE'S JUST SO MUCH THAT WE DON'T KNOW

WHERE DOES HE GET THAT SUIT?  
NOT AT MACY'S YES I CHECKED  
WHY IS HE SO GENEROUS  
HAS HE EVER SHIPPED COLLECT?

HOW DOES HE FLY THROUGH THE SKY?  
A GOOD TRICK TO KNOW ON YOUR COMMUTE  
WHY DOES HE ENTER IN A WAY  
THAT WOULD COVER ANY OTHER SAINT WITH SOOT?

THROUGH THE FIREPLACE, THE FIREPLACE!  
DOESN'T THAT STRIKE YOU AS ODD?  
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN HIS MODUS OP  
BUT IT IS ODD, LIKEWISE HIS ROTUND BOD IS ODD  
HIS BOD IS VERY ODD

HAVE YOU EVER REALLY WONDERED  
WHO HE IS AND WHERE HE CAME FROM  
TONIGHT THE PLAN IS TO REVEAL  
THESE MYSTERIES AND THEN SOME

TONIGHT AT THE REQUEST OF  
THIS NONPROFIT 'FRIENDS OF SANTA'  
I'LL DO MY BEST TO PLAY THE MAN  
BECAUSE I MEAN WHY CAN'T A

GUY IMPROVE HIS SELF ESTEEM  
A STARRING ROLE LIKE THIS  
HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY SECRET DREAM  
THOUGH MY ACTING TALENT'S HIT OR MISS  
HIT OR MISS, MY TALENT'S HIT OR MISS

THE FIREPLACE UNDER CONSTRUCTION  
WILL SERVE NICELY TO LET US SEE  
AFTER OUR FRIEND STOPS BANGING  
UP THE CHIMNEYS OF LOST HISTORY

AND CHILDREN IF I MAY ADDRESS THE YOUTH  
I PROMISE YOU WON'T LEARN A THING OH NO  
OR BE BETTER OFF FOR IT / ALL THE ABUSE

WILL TAKE PLACE ON STAGE SO OFF WE GO

STAGE MANAGER! RAISE THE CURTAIN  
IT'S TIME FOR ACT ONE AND I'M CERTAIN  
IF I DON'T GET OFF I'LL BE HURTING (he clutches his crotch as if needing to pee.)  
TELL US WHEN YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH  
YOO HOO DINGALING!  
WAKE UP, WE'RE OFF!

(Exits as curtain rises. Note: there doesn't have to  
be a real curtain)

Scene 1

The children are singing a song, led by LADY X

"SANTA TIME TONIGHT"

CHILDREN

HE'S WATCHED US  
FIDGET IN THE CAR  
WITH A TELESCOPE  
FROM BEHIND A STAR  
HE'S JUST BEEN SIGHTED ON  
MILITARY RADAR  
HOLD YOUR FIRE

I'VE BEEN BAD  
THAT'S NOT NEWS  
I'VE BEEN GOOD  
A GOODY TWO SHOES  
WILL HE BE KIND AND NOT IRONIC  
FLESH AND BLOOD AND NOT BIONIC  
ARE THE REINDEER SUPERSONIC  
SANTA TIME TONIGHT

EVERYONE

AFTER HALLOWEEN THANKSGIVING  
ROSHASHON AND RAMADAN  
NOTHING IS MORE FRIGHTENING THAN  
NOT KNOWING WHAT TO GET YR MOM  
OPEN UP YOUR HEART

FILL IT LIKE A STOCKING  
LIKE A WALMART CART  
AND SANTA SAVES THE DAY  
SCARING OFF THE PUMPKIN KING  
WELCOME TO THE HOLIDAZE  
A RITUAL GLASS IS RAISED  
TO ALL RELIGIONS CREEDS AND ISMS  
WELCOME TO THE HOLIDAYS

THE HOME COOKING THE WRAPPING PAPER  
USE THE RIBBON NOT THE STAPLER\  
LOVE IS GIVEN LOVE IS TAKEN  
LOVE IS TOKENS SLIGHTLY HIDDEN  
LIKE THE NUT'S AND CLAMS OF CAVEMEN  
THAT HAVE THE GOODIES IN THEM  
BEARS AND SEAGULLS UNDERSTAND  
WHAT LIGHTS UP LITTLE CHILDREN  
WELCOME, WELCOME TO THE HOLIDAYS  
A RITUAL GLASS IS RAISED  
FOR ALL RELIGIONS CREEDS AND ISMS  
WELCOME TO THE HOLIDAYS!

(LADY X sits at a table on a folding chair. Children amuse themselves writing name tags and eating cookies. MARY is walking down the hall (invisible) that is on the other side of the classroom wall. She pokes her head in to see what's going on.)

LADY X

Hello dear. You look lost.

MARY (at the door)

Does anybody know why the computer lab is locked?

JANITOR (to MARY)

I had to lock up the labs, but you can set up here if you want. There's an internet connection. And there is your chimney, folks. Ta da!

(exiting)

Merry Christmas! I mean, Happy Holidays!

LADY X

Thank you so much! (to Mary) Come in, please. Have a cookie, it's Christmas eve!

(MARY enters, carrying a notebook computer.)

Has everybody got a name tag?

(Checks name tags kids have made for themselves.)

Lord Spaghettihead? Welcome your lordship. And Supergirl Magicpony! How are you, dear? Children, I'm so glad all of you could make it. I am "Lady X."

(Refers to her nametag.)

and this is our friend Mary, (Mary has made herself a name tag) who knows all about computers. And thanks for coming to this meeting!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (bored)

You said party.

LADY X

Of course I mean party! It's a Christmas party! I've been to so many meetings lately my mind is jelly. Speaking of jelly, there's a fine lunch of donuts and punch on the table, so help yourselves.

(looking at her watch)

But I don't know where Santa is. Where's our entertainment?

MARY

(setting up her laptop computer)

Maybe he's having trouble parking his sled.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

He parks on the roof.

LADY X

We have to lure him. Maybe with a donut. Here Santa!

(she waves the donut under the chimney)

MARY

Try that with hot coffee.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Santa only comes when we're asleep.

LADY X

(turning off the lights)

So let's all pretend to be asleep, shshshshsh.

(Jingling is heard. There is a loud crash from the back of the stage.)

DR. BOCKERKNICK (off stage)

I'm all right!

LADY X (whispering)

Ah, there he is!

MARY

Shshshsh!

(A large heavy bag drops down the chimney, followed by DR. BOCKERKNICK. He has on a makeshift Santa costume. The process of entering the room that way is clumsy, but BOCKERKNICK makes the best of it, kicking the bag into the room. After gathering himself he lifts the bag over his shoulder.)

DR. BOCKERKNICK

How am I supposed to make my way in the dark?

(LADY X turns on lights.).

CHILDREN

Yay, Santa!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Ho Ho HO!

LADY X

Ho ho ho indeed! What fun! Why don't we all thank Santa for all his wonderful work at this time of the season....

MARY (wryly)

Thanks, Santa.

CHILDREN

Thank you, Santa!

(DR. BOCKERKNICK is settling himself in a chair, getting ready to distribute gifts, with a wink and a finger aside of his nose.)

LADY X

And thank you also, Santa, for being so non-denominational -- for a saint, I mean.

MARY

How can a saint be non-denominational?

LADY X

Mary, there are laws about religion in schools. Santa does a WONDERFUL job of working around that.

DR. BOCKERKNICK (handing out presents)

I think ALL holidays should be honored, whatever the religion! At least by suspending alternate-side of the street parking . That should be in the constitution. Well, it just makes sense.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

And a school holiday!

MARY

And discounts on appliances! 30% off!

LADY X

That's Presidents Day, Mary.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Santa?

DR. BOCKERKNICK:

And what would you like for Christmas, Princess?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I'm Supergirl! Could you tell us a story?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

What a good idea! Any particular kind of story, Supergirl?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (looking up the chimney)

Hello?

LADY X

Maybe the chimney wasn't such a good idea. Mr. Spaghettihead, what kind of story do you want is the question on the table.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

It's Lord Spaghettihead, to the rescue! What's it like on the North Pole? Does it melt?

DR BOCKERKNICK

I wouldn't be surprised.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Tell us why you come down the chimney!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

And up it too!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

I don't know! Doesn't everybody?

CHILDREN

NOOO!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Then how do you get into the house?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I use the front door. If it's somebody else's house I ring the door bell.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (knocking on girl's head)

I knock

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Hey, cut that out!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (hitting her harder)

Of course if they don't answer, I have to knock louder.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Stop that!

(She takes LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD'S nose and twists it.)

LADY X

Stop it, you two!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Truce!

So why do you come down the chimney?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

It's right there. So I pop down and bing bam boom the stockings are filled and I eat the cookies, but not all of them, have to watch the old waistline, then I whoosh back up the chimney, jump into my sled, switch on some nice Christmas music, (music starts) fire up the reindeers, and off I go ho ho ho

“IT’S REALLY QUITE CONVENIENT”

IT’S REALLY QUITE CONVENIENT  
HOUSE AFTER HOUSE AFTER HOUSE AFTER HOUSE  
THE FRONT DOOR IS LOCKED AND PEOPLE ARE SLEEPING  
IT SEEMS THE BEST WAY TO AVOID ANY FUSS

NOW IF I ARRIVED BY TAXI  
OR RIDING A LARGE MOOSE  
WOULD IT BE CHRISMASSY ?

LADY X

IT WOULD BE OVER BUDGET

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

OR IF I GOT STUCK HALFWAY DOWN  
BECAUSE OF MY BIG CABOOSE  
IF I WORE A GREEN TAN AND WAS DANCING A JIG  
DRINKING A SCOTCH OR SMOKING A CIG  
A JOHN DEERE CAP AND A BIG OLE RIG  
WOULD THAT BE CHRISMASSY AT ALL

IF I POPPED OUT OF A GASPIPE ON A  
SUNDAY AFTERNOON....  
STRUMMING A GUITAR AND  
SINGING THE CODA FOR  
A JOHN DENVER TUNE  
WOULD THAT EVEN QUALIFY AS CHRISMASSY?

MARY

It would be pretty scary

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

Does that answer your question?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (interrupting the song)

No! Why do you land on the roof?

LADY X

Didn't he just explain that?.

MARY

That's just not a real explanation.

LADY X

Well, I'm satisfied.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Why do you fill stockings?

LADY X

Because they're hung on the fireplace, obviously. And he's right there.

MARY

Oh please! The stockings are hung to dry, that's why they're on the fireplace. But that doesn't explain the chimney entrance.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

It's the only way into the house, what do you want from me?

MARY

Yes, but is it magical or what? I think what the girl is asking.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I am?

LADY X

That is not what she is asking. My dear, the answer to your question is, 'The Night before Christmas'! There's nothing curious about that! It's all in the poem!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

(hopeful, to SANTA)

Are you going to read 'The Night Before Christmas'?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

I believe that's the custom at this annual gathering.

(He rummages through his pockets.)

Who has a copy of it?

(Silence)

LADY X

No one has a copy? Typical ...no, not of you Doctor, it's just a general statement.

DR BOCKERKNICK

Hey, I have a lot on my plate just right now !

MARY

All I see are donut crumbs. I'll get the poem off the internet.

DR BOCKERKNICK

Say, why don't you read it?

MARY

I have a better idea. What if we could talk to the man who wrote the poem? It all happened in the poem.

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

How can you talk to the man who wrote the poem? He's dead.

MARY

I'm not saying bring him back to life. I'm saying use digital technology to go back in time.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

My cell phone could do that.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (sarcastically)

If you had one, orphan!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I know you are but what am I?

MARY

Actually, I wrote this computer program that could make it possible to travel back to an event in history. It is, I believe, the first application of its kind. It's still in the beta stage, so obviously we can't use it but in theory we could go back to the first reading of the poem.

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

How can you go back to before computers? It's physically impossible.

LADY X

Before electricity even.

MARY

Oh, there's always been electricity. Look, if you set the computer clock to the year 1800, say,

when it reboots, the computer thinks it's 1800. It's a computer, it doesn't know any better. So it is possible. But if we choose to do that, we need to know who wrote The Night Before Christmas and when and where. Santa? I hope you brought your brain.

DR. BOCKERKNICK (searching his pockets)

Oh my goodness! Where did I put it?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

It's in your head!

(BOCKERKNICK starts to pull reference books from a shelf and pile them on the table.)

DR. BOCKERKNICK

No, my head is empty.

(knocks on his head with his mouth pursed, to make a hollow sound)

The next best thing to a brain is a book.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Is this going to be like school? Help!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

No, no no, not at all like school. What has school to do with simple curiosity? Now, what's the question again?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Why do you really come down the chimney?

MARY

That's question number one.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Ahh, I just love a good question. Without questions we couldn't scratch our heads, rub our chins, or even shrug our shoulders.

MARY (concentrating on the notebook computer)

Question number two: who wrote T'was the night before Christmas when all through the house?

EVERYBODY

Not a creature was stirring not even a mouse!

“WHO WROTE IT?”

WHO WROTE IT, WHO WOVE THE MAGIC SPELL  
WHO FROZE IT IN TIME  
WHO'S BRAIN HATCHED THE POEM WE KNOW SO WELL  
WHO'S MICE WERE SO STILL ON THAT NIGHT SUBLIME  
WHAT KIND OF MIND  
WHO'S PERFECT RHYME  
CAN WE GO BACK TO WHEN  
SUGARPLUMS DANCED IN YOUNG CRANIUMS

LADY X (consulting encyclopedia)

The poem was written by Clement Clarke Moore in the early 1800's, I believe. He would be the one who 'saw' Santa entering the house in that ... unusual way.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (hopeful)

Is he going to read the 'Night Before Christmas'?

LADY X

Clement Moore? That's very unlikely. As Santa pointed out, he's been dead for well, over a hundred and fifty years.

MARY

This application should be able to find this Clement Clarke Moore. How do you know he wrote it?

LADY X (checking the encyclopedia)

Clement Moore, best known for writing "the Night Before Christmas", so that as they say, is that. He wrote the poem.

MARY

That isn't that at all! It's just the beginning of that! Imagine actually going back to the first reading!

LADY X

Mary, let's just read it and get on with what we have to do, which is to provide whatever entertainment we can scrounge up on a non-existent budget. Do your software experiments on your own time.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

No, no, no, this is unprecedented! Going back to a moment in history would be an astonishing thing, maybe even get some notice in the history department on a cozy campus, with tenure, or some academic prize, Lord knows the old mantel could use some glitter. Oh, let's do this, let's crack this nut!

MARY

Oh goody, I've been dying to see if this does what it's supposed to do.

(She loads the program.)

DR. BOCKERKNICK

(looking over MARY's shoulder)

Ingenious. How does that even work?

MARY

I can't really explain it, but I did write the probabilistic algorithm on a Christmas Eve, which has something to do with why it works, if it works.

LADY X (laughing)

You write algorithms on Christmas Eve? Oh, Mary! Do you even have a life?

MARY

So let's see, we will need a good portal. We could use an actual door. No, that wouldn't work. The fireplace! There's our portal! We just have to plug these lights into the firewire port.

(She plugs some Christmas lights into her port. The Christmas lights around the fireplace start to glow.)

Don't try this at home. Let's give it a test. Now children, you can say no, but why would you? This could be a real adventure!

LADY X

Mary, stop! Is that safe?

MARY

There may even be a tiny chance that the computer freezes or for some reason you can't get back, which would be too bad, but I can't even calculate how small the odds are of that happening.

LADY X

That's not very reassuring, that you can't calculate.

MARY

Anyway, do we have any lucky volunteers?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (saluting)

Lord Spaghettihead, reporting for duty!

MARY

Terrific!

LADY X (to Lord Spaghettihead)

Sign here absolving us of any responsibility in case of accident.

(Hands him a form and a pen.)

And here and here.

(To SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY)

And you dear? Don't go if you don't want to. This is strictly voluntary and Mary has no idea what's going to happen.

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

(whispering aside to Lady X)

Shouldn't their parents be signing?

LADY X (whispering)

They're orphans. That's what Friends of Santa is about. You should read the literature!

DOCTOR BOCKERNICK

Orphans? What is this, a Dickens novel? Musical theatre?

CHILDREN

"AREN'T WE ADORABLE?"

WE'LL BELIEVE  
ANYTHING YOU SAY  
THOUGH WE'RE ORPHANS  
WE'RE GRATEFUL ANYWAY  
AREN'T WE ADORABLE  
WE'RE NOT THE ONES  
YOU BUY THE STUFF FOR  
DON'T SPEND ALL THOSE  
HARD EARNED BUCKS FOR.  
BUT AREN'T WE ADORABLE  
WE'RE ORPHANS  
POOR LONELY ORPHANS  
NOBODY'S PRIORITY  
AND NO ONE'S TO BLAME  
SO THANK YOU  
THANKS A LOT

LADY X

Please stop.

CHILDREN

WE'RE OPHANS  
BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU SAY  
POOR LONELY ORPHANS ....  
WE'RE GRATEFUL ANYWAY

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

All right, I'm ready!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Me too!

MARY

Good. Sign here. Let's see, I'm starting the instruction queue, I'm accessing the computer clock... When was the poem written?

LADY X

We're talking sometime in the eighteen twenties, in Chelsea, on the west side of Manhattan, above Greenwich Village. The house of Professor Moore, author of "The Night Before Christmas." I'm sure our Santa can enlighten us.

DOCTOR BOCKERNICK

Knowledge and truth! Truth and Knowledge!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Why do we want to see who wrote it? We haven't even heard it yet.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

So we can find out why Santa comes down the chimney! Pay attention!

MARY

I'm starting you off ... are you coming? We're rebooting now and...

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Quick, children, up the chimney! Can you reach the bar?

(LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD and SUPERGIRL  
MAGICPONY woosh up the chimney. Lights begin  
to flicker.)

LADY X

What's happening?

MARY

They're going back in time!

DR. BOCKERNICK (looking up chimney)

They're gone!

END OF SCENE

Scene 2

(Harriet, a governess, arrives, through the snow, at the kitchen door of a fancy brownstone in Chelsea New York City 1830 (?) .... This scene could be acted out without a set, Harriet walking in from offstage with snow on her coat. She introduces herself to the cook by saying that she had just come down from the Hudson Valley. )

HARRIET

Lord it's good to be inside!

COOK

Let's get your wet things off, Dearie. They're frozen stiff!  
How far have you come?

HARRIET

From Poughkeepsie, it takes two whole days in this weather!

COOK

Oh it's beautiful up there, I hear, but not warm at this time of year.

HARRIET

Icy cold!

COOK

Who did you work for? I am sure you have references.

HARRIET

I've been working since I was a girl. Twelve children in all! And lots of relatives, so you could say I'm experienced. They're all grown up now and yes, I have a reference.

She pulls out an envelope with papers and gives it to the cook.

COOK (reading)

"To all those who might require  
Testament to honesty and lack of ire

I swear with sweet not ugly oaths  
I swear that the delightful Creature  
who bears this note in hand  
was never canned nor reprimanded  
signed Seignor Wimsicallo Pomposo “

Oh, La dee dah. “ Seignor”

HARRIET

Oh, they're not la dee dah at all. I would say Professor Moore is more la dee dah.

COOK

I'll say, owns everything around these parts, down to fourteenth street. Everybody pays him  
rent, including me.

HARRIET

But you work here...

COOK

song: " EAT WHAT I DO"

I WORK BUT I EAT WHAT I DO  
BY THE TIME I'VE SPICED UP THE STEW  
UNLESS I WANT TO GET THINNER  
THAT'S MY OWN DINNER  
AND NOW THAT APPLIES TO YOU DEAR  
IF YOU WANT TO SURVIVE HERE  
YOU'LL EAT WHAT I DO

HARRIET

SURVIVING FOR ME IS NOT A REAL BOTHER  
I'M A PROFESSIONAL A SURROGATE MOTHER  
THEY SENT ME HERE TO NEW YORK TOWN  
FROM UP THE RIVER WHERE THE  
CHILDREN HAVE GROWN  
AS LONG AS THERE ARE NICE FAMILIES  
AND UP THE HUDSON THERE PLEASE  
THEY LAY A FINE BOARD THAT INCLUDES  
ALONG WITH THE PEAS AND THE CHEESE  
MUSIC AND ART AND VENISON STEW AND APPLE TARTS  
ON HOLIDAYS IT WAS QUITE DELIGHTFUL  
THE MAJOR UP RIVER WRITES A GREAT DEAL  
IN FACT THERE WAS SOMETHING I MANAGED TO STEAL

(Harriet grabs a piece of paper out of her pocket but does not unfold it)

COOK

PROFESSOR MOORE WRITES TOO  
I APPRECIATE HIS POETRY I REALLY REALLY DO  
THE MAN CAN HAVE A SWEET OLD TIME  
SPEWING OUT RHYME AFTER RHYME  
NONE OF WHICH I UNDERSTAND  
BUT WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY GRAND  
WHEN HE READS HIS STUFF I HAVEN'T A CLUE  
BUT WHO GIVES A DAMN AS LONG AS THEY EAT WHAT I DO

THE PROFESSOR'S A MAN OF AFFAIRS  
YOU MIGHT FIND THEM A BIT STIFF UP STAIRS  
HE'S NOT A BIG TIPPER, HE'S SOME KIND OF VICKER  
SON OF THE BISHOP PRINCE OF THE CHURCH  
PROFESSOR MOORE SITS HIGH ON HIS PERCH  
I'VE COOKED IT UP AND SERVED IT UP TOO  
AND NOW THAT APPLIES TO YOU DEAR

HARRIET AND COOK:

WE'LL KEEP THINGS QUIET AND JOLLY  
IN TIMES OF CAROLS AND HOLLY  
WHAT'S RIGHT AND WHAT'S WRONG  
ISN'T WRITTEN IN STONE  
SO HE SHOULDN'T MAKE TOO MUCH OF A FUSS  
AS LONG AS HE EATS WHAT WE DO

HARRIET

What does he do?

COOK

He's a professor of languages at the seminary, wrote a big book, a compendious Lexicon! of Hebrew and Greek! . They like to read the Bible in the original languages. And he plays organ in the church.

HARRIET

Oh, a compendious lexicon! And he's a musician! That's interesting.

COOK

Well, not really. He bought the organ for the church, it's the best, most expensive organ in America! But then he said he had to be the organist, that was the deal. Between you me and the lamp post I don't think they like his playing very much.

HARRIET

They play music up the river too. And the singing! It never stopped!  
(She sings a high note)

Bell rings:

COOK(sings)

He will be wanting his tea.  
(normal voice)  
I'll let Professor Moore know you've arrived.

scene 3

A dimly lit fireplace becomes visible as it glows strangely. In the dark, Supergirl Magicpony and Lord Spaghettihead emerge from the fireplace. They sneak around in the dark, unsure where they are. Enter Moore himself, in the dark, followed by his children, lighting a lamp. "He's behind you!" shout children in the audience.

Supergirl and Lord S get their bearings. By the time the lights go on, they have blended in with the group of Clement Moore's children sitting on a sofa, played by the kids from the school.

MOORE

Come children. Time for a bedtime story. But first, some cocoa.  
(He rings for COOK. Sees that fire has gone out.)  
Oh dear, why is there no fire?  
(In the parlor, MOORE, has sat in his favorite chair, his CHILDREN gathered around him [who now include LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD and SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY].

MOORE

Now all we need is a fire, and then all will be well in my house. I have a new poem!  
(The COOK enters with tea service.)

COOK

Brilliant, Sir!

(She goes to light fire. When she has it lit, she sneaks back to kitchen, rolling her eyes.)

MOORE (glancing disapprovingly after the cook)

Now, children, Sinterclaus has left us a poem! Let's see what it says!

(He puts on a funny hat and grabs a bag and a cane, acting out the poem, trying to be amusing. Princess Magicpony and Lord Spaghettihead look at each other excitedly, thinking it might be the Night Before Christmas. They are soon disappointed)

What! My sweet little Sis, in bed all alone;  
No light in your room! And your nursy too gone!  
And you, like a good child, are quietly lying,  
While some naughty ones would be fretting or crying?  
Well, for this you must have something pretty, my dear;  
And, I hope, will deserve a reward too next year.  
But, speaking of crying, I'm sorry to say  
Your screeches and screams, so loud ev'ry day,  
Were near driving me and my goodies away.  
Good children I always give good things in plenty;  
How sad to have left your stocking quite empty:  
But you are beginning so nicely to spell,  
And, in going to bed, behave always so well,  
That, although I too oft see the tear in your eye,  
At present, my dear, I must bid you good bye;  
Now, do as you're bid; and, remember, don't cry.

(One girl is crying. LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD looks bored and horrified. He mouths the words "GET ME OUT OF HERE!")

MOORE

Ahh, tea has arrived.

COOK

Here you are, sir.

(She serves him.)

And this is Harriet Butler, who has just arrived form Poughkeepsie.

MOORE

Ah, just in time. To the rescue!

HARRIET

With cocoa for the children!

(She serves them.)

Hello dears, you look so sad. Oh, what will put smiles on your little cheeks? Maybe a game? I also have a nice Christmas poem, one I bet you haven't heard before!

( She pulls a crumpled poem out of her pocket)

MOORE (taking Harriet aside)

"I'M CCM1"

THEY DON'T GET THE POINT OF POEMS  
THEIR LITTLE MINDS SEEM TO ROAM  
IN CIRCLES AND CIRCLES  
WHILE I READ THEM MY VERSE  
THEY'LL THANK ME WHEN THEY'RE OLDER OF COURSE  
TILL THEN I HAVE TO REPEAT TILL I'M HOARSE  
I'M CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

YES I'M CLEMENT, CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE  
YOU MAY CALL ME 'PROFESSOR' OR 'SIR'  
YOU'RE WELCOME AT TABLE ON THURSDAYS AND MONDAYS  
THE REST OF THEIR SCHEDULE IS TO USE A PHRASE  
WRITTEN IN STONE SO DON'T CHANGE A BONE OF IT  
I IMPLORE  
FOR I'M CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE I MAY  
SLIP INTO LATIN OR GREEK SAY  
OR PERHAPS HEBREW IT'S SOMETHING I DO  
WHEN I SPEAK TO PEOPLE LIKE YOU  
THEN I BEG YOUR PARDON  
I'LL REPEAT IN PLAIN ENGLISH  
WHAT I'VE JUST IMPARTED  
FOR YOUR BENEFIT. NOW  
YOU MAY GET STARTED

HARRIET

Right away, Professor.

MOORE

WAIT I STILL HAVE THE FLOOR  
HERE'S A LIST OF THEIR CHORES  
THEIR DINNER'S AT SIX THEIR BATH IS AT SEVEN  
FOLLOWED BY PRAYERS TO  
GREASE THEIR WAY TO HEAVEN

AND NO LAUGHING OR CRYING OR UPROAR  
NOT IN THE HOUSE OF CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

CHILDREN  
NOT IN THE HOUSE OF CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE!

HARRIET  
I see. Children, though your last nanny was I am sure very very nice, I'm going to be very very much nicer.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (skeptical)  
OK

MOORE  
Oh no, their upbringing must be very very strict! If they misbehave use the switch! That is how it must be done.

HARRIET  
Yes sir! (aside, to children) Children, if I pretend to hit you, pretend to cry. You know how to cry, don't you? I know you do.

CHILDREN  
Yeah, we know.

MOORE (snooping on the conversation)  
Well, that is certainly true. They're very good at it.

HARRIET  
I promise, Professor, to follow your strict standards! The switch it is!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY  
Hey!

HARRIET (whispering)  
Oh, don't mind all that. I'm NOT going to hit you, under any circumstances.  
(Normal voice)  
Now wouldn't it be nice to read this little poem before you go to bed?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD  
Not another poem!

HARRIET  
Oh you will like this one. Guaranteed to put a nice banana on yr clock!  
(Takes a folded sheet of paper from her apron and

begins reading to the children.)

HARRIET

“T’was the night before Christmas when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring not even a mouse  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care  
In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there”

(Quickly, the children are entranced. MOORE sits in  
a chair by the fire, watching and listening.)

MOORE

(as HARRIET reads poem)

“NOT IN MY HOUSE” (Reprise)

I’M CLEMENT CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE  
THERE’S A LESSON HERE THAT I CANNOT IGNORE  
THE CHILDREN ARE STRANGELY AMUSED  
BY THIS SIMPLISTIC NONSENSE  
THIS CHILDISH DRIVEL  
IT’S AMORAL OR WORSE  
BUT IT SEEMS TO DISTRACT THEM  
I DON’T KNOW WHAT FOR  
MAYBE I’M JUST AN OLD BORE  
BUT THAT CAN’T POSSIBLY BE MY CURSE  
FOR I’M CLEMENT, CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

(Rises from his chair.)

Let me read that, please, Miss Baxter is it?

(HARRIET hands him the poem.)

HARRIET

Butler.

MOORE (waving Harriet away)

“When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter...”

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Out on the lawn? Is that like the sidewalk?

MOORE

(Looks at him quizzically.)

Quiet! I’ll address any questions afterwards. Now where in blazes was I?

“When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter  
I jumped from my bed to see what was the matter  
Away to the window I flew like a flash  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash  
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow  
Gave the luster of midday to objects below  
“When what to my wondering eye should appear  
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer.

(The children are laughing.)

With a little old driver so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment it must be Saint Nick.”

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Sinterclaus!

MOORE

Saint Nicholaaas, Bishop of Myra in the 4th century. I don't see how he could still be around. He was also the patron saint of the Dutch, and New York State was, back in the seventeenth century, a province of the Greater Netherlands..a very Dutch place, if any of you wish to expand your knowledge, which I doubt. But let's press on!

“More rapid than eagles his courses they came  
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name”

MOORE (cont.)

Let's skip ahead through this flapdoodle...

”As I drew in my head, and was turning around  
Down the chimney Saint Nicholas came with a bound”

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Father? Why did Sinterclaus come down the chimney?

MOORE

I have no idea, but I must tell cook to bring up more firewood.  
(He rings for the cook and puts more logs on the fire.)

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

But Father! He only comes on the night before Christmas, like in the poem, with presents!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

We have to let the fire die out!

MOORE

It dies out after you've gone to bed, then I close the flue.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Then how will Santa Claus come in? If he doesn't come there won't be any presents!

MOORE

If you behave yourselves and do as you're told there will be presents, I said I would give you a book. Don't forget, Saint Nicholas is watching! Always!

Enter Cook with firewood. Moore copies the poem in his hand, and destroys the original by using it to light the fire.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

The poem! Don't burn it!

MOORE

I have a copy. And remember what I said. Children that are seen and not heard may be looked favorably upon.

COOK

Where's Harriet?

MOORE

I'm afraid I had to let her go. She won't do at all, far too lenient for this household. Now children, shall we finish reading this poem?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (hopefully)

You wrote it didn't you? I knew you wrote it!

MOORE

"YES I DID"

YES I DID AND DON'T YOU THINK I DIDN'T  
BUT NEVER LET IT OUT OF THE HOUSE

CHILDREN

YES FATHER! NO FATHER!

MOORE

THE TRUTH CANNOT AND MUST NOT REMAIN HIDDEN  
OH I FEEL LIKE JUDAS OR FAUST

CHILDREN

YES FATHER! NO FATHER

MOORE

YOU CAN BELIEVE A LITTLE WHITE LIE  
IF IT MAKES YOU MORE OBEDIENT  
AND IT DOESN'T MAKE YOU CRY  
IT WON'T MAKE ME MORE LENIENT  
THERE'S NO REASON WHY WHY WHY  
NOT TELL A LITTLE WHITE LIE

CHILDREN

OH FATHER!  
NO FATHER!

MOORE

AFTER ALL NO ONE HAS SIGNED IT BUT ME  
THAT'S MY ALIBI  
THAT'S THE FACT KNOCKING ON THE DOOR  
YOU MUSTN'T TELL ANY ONE  
A LITTLE SECRET BETWEEN US FOUR  
THAT THE AUTHOR OF THIS POEM IS  
YOUR WONDERFULLY TALENTED DADDY  
CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

THE CHILDREN SO PROUD WHEN I READ IT OUT LOUD

CHILDREN

(dancing around MOORE)

THE CHILDREN SO PROUD!

MOORE

(referring to the adoration)

Now this is more like it.

END OF SCENE

Scene 3

We are back in the school room.

MARY

I can't tell what's going on. We have to get them back.

LADY X

I hope you know a way to do that.

MARY

I'm going after them.

LADY X

You can't just go into the past.

MARY

The word 'can't' isn't in my vocabulary. But maybe I can hit 'undo' and it will reverse the temporal effect.

(Hits a key on her computer.)

Oops, didn't work. Maybe if I reboot. Control alt delete!

(She reboots. The lights begin to flicker, and then the children drop out of the chimney.)

MARY

Kids! Thank goodness! Are you OK? Did he read the poem?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (in tears)

That was horrible!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

I wouldn't want to be one of his kids!

LADY X (looking at the computer)

Oh no, it says here that his children loved him.

MARY

That's because they thought he wrote the night before gol dern christmas!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Oh, I don't think he did.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

But he SAID he wrote it!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Mary, send me back. You must have the capacity in

that thing. We must persist in our Santaclausological Investigation! Knowledge and truth!  
This has more loose ends than a...a..

(tries to think of an analogy. He hitches up his pants and heads for the chimney.)

LADY X

Mop?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

No...

MARY

Contra dance?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

More loose ends than a contra dance? Spare me. Now fire up the time machine, I'm going in, or up. Troy NY Sentinel, 1823, where the poem first appeared, please, thank you!

MARY

I'm not sure that's a good idea, but give me a minute.

(BOCKERKNICK gets in the chimney. MARY starts furiously punching computer keys. Finally, the strange music starts up again and the lights begin to flicker. BOCKERKNICK goes up the chimney!)

There he goes!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Knowledge and truuuuuuuuuth!

END OF SCENE

#### Scene 4

1823. Office of the editor of the Troy, NY Sentinel. DR. BOCKERKNICK is dressed in a business suit of the 1820s, at the editor's desk. He opens an envelope and reads the poem, laughing. He looks it over further. He begins to make changes.

EDITOR

for Clement Clarke Moore. Possibly brought the poem into the Moore household.

COOK (played by Lady X)

The cook for the Moore household.

HENRY LIVINGSTON (played by Janitor)

The pater familias of a large family on a farm, Locust Grove, south of Poughkeepsie, New York. He fought in the revolution, the battle of Montreal, and was known as Major Henry, or Harry. He's fun-loving, loves children and has a great sense of humor. The kind of grownup whom kids love. He has many of the same characteristics of Santa himself.

### CHILDREN:

All the children sing. There can be as many as you would like. The ones in the first scene are orphans, perhaps from foster homes. They are interchangeable with the children of Clement Moore and of Henry Livingston. The older children pretend to believe in Santa for the sake of the younger ones. The two with speaking roles are:

PRINCESS MAGICPONY

Girl around 7 or 8. Shy, curious. Wears her hair in a ponytail.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Boy approximately same age. Boisterous. Has a head of unruly blonde hair.

Two boys, Gilbert and Robert Livingston, have one scene in second act. Who of the cast plays these rolls, or whether they are totally separate characters, will be determined by the production. This scene also needs an Indian coming down the chimney and a man playing the boys' father.

On Exclamation-Point Dunder? On Explanation Point Blixem? This simply won't do. On comma Donder Exclamation-Point! On Blitzen Exclamation-Point. Much better!  
(to printer) Run this tomorrow, that way people will have it on Christmas eve.

(Light changes to indicate passage of time. Clement Moore is seen writing a letter with a quill pen)

MOORE

Dear Editor, Troy, N.Y. Sentinel. Re: the Christmas poem you printed last season.

“WHO WROTE IT?”

DO YOU KNOW WHO WROTE THE THING  
DOES ANY NAME ANY BELL RING  
HAS MR. ANONYMOUS COME OUT OF HIDING  
IS IT SOMEONE YOU KNOW  
THAT YOU'RE NOT CONFIDING TO ME  
CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

EDITOR

NO WE DON'T KNOW  
IT CAME OUT OF THE BLUE  
SOME DO YOU KNOW  
ANONYMOUSLY, UNCREDITTED,  
THOSE WE DON'T PAY FOR  
OTHERS WE DO

MOORE (cont., triumphant)

THAT CLINCHES IT THE POEM IS MINE  
I SIGNED IT NOW IT'S MINE, MINE, MINE!  
I'LL BE SO WELL KNOWN SO  
BREAK OUT THE BRUSHES AND TURPENTINE  
I'LL NEED A PORTRAIT IN MY GOWN  
LOOKING RICH AND INDUSTRIOUS  
BRILLIANT AND FINE  
DIGNIFIED TO THE CORE  
FOR I'M CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE  
AND THE CHILDREN SO PROUD WHEN I READ IT OUT LOUD

CHILDREN

THE CHILDREN SO PROUD

END OF SCENE

Scene 5

New York City, 1844. A quaint publisher's office.  
MOORE is talking to the PRINTER, who sports a  
pipe held tight in his teeth.

MOORE

One hundred copies, my good man. And before the holidays, I beg you. I may need more. And don't forget to add that poem!

(PRINTER blows a cloud of pipe smoke.)

MOORE

"TOBACCO"

TOBACCO? TOBACCO?

A SHAMEFUL SIN!

WILL WIDEN THE DEVIL'S GRIN

IF YOU COULD SEE YOURSELF THROUGH MY EYES

OF ALL THE VICIES I DESPISE!

VANITY IN WOMEN AND SMOKING IN MEN

CATS AND DOGS AND SOBBING CHILDREN

SCREAMING AND BARKING AND MAKING A DIN

AS YOUR VERY SOUL GOES UP IN SMOKE

YOU MUST ABSTAIN AND CLEANSE YOUR CORE

ALL OF LIFE'S PLEASURE'S I HAVE FORSOOK

THE BETTER TO GET TO MY HEAVENLY NOOK

CAUSE I'M CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

I'LL BE HANDING THIS OUT AFTER MASS

THE REMAINDER I'LL SELL TO MAKE UP THIS EXPENSE

IT MAY SELL QUITE WELL I GET A GOOD SENSE

ABOUT A CAREER IN LITERATURE

FOR CLEMENT CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

(Exits.)

PRINTER

(Reading from MOORE's manuscript.)

He was chubby and plump and right jolly old elf

And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself

(He laughs and begins looking through his paper  
stock. At the very cheap end of his selection he sees  
toilet paper and picks it to print the book on)

END OF SCENE

Scene 6

The chapel in MOORE'S church. MOORE is playing the church organ – badly. We hear the voices of people saying hello to him and pointing at him.

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS (offstage)

Cheers, Professor Moore! Not even a mouse!

MOORE (to himself)

Now what are they going on about? It must have to do with that damn poem.

(He continues to play the organ. Finally, he stops.

His face creases into a smile.

He begins writing on a sheet of paper.)

“FINALLY GETTING RESPECT”

TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS  
WHEN ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE  
I'M FINALLY GETTING RESPECT AFTER  
YEARS OF ABUSE  
MY FINE VERSIFYING IS  
KNOCKING THEM DEAD  
I WROTE IT ALL IN MY HEAD  
I WAS INSPIRED BY A LIVERY DRIVER  
ONE WINTER AFTERNOON  
A JOLLY ELF OF A MAN  
POSSIBLY A WALLOON  
AT LEAST HE WAS DUTCH  
AS ARE MANY OF US  
BUT IT'S NOT SOMETHING I PLANNED  
AND THERE'S NO ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT AS SUCH  
CAUSE I WROTE IT ALL IN MY HEAD  
YES I WROTE IT ALL OUT IN MY HAND  
AND NOW IT'S IN GREAT DEMAND  
THIS WONDERFUL PIECE OF CHRISTMAS LORE  
BY CLEMENT, CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

AND THE CHILDREN SO PROUD WHEN I READ IT OUT LOUD

CHILDREN (or priests)  
THE CHILDREN SO PROUD

END OF SCENE

Scene 7

Back in the schoolroom. Once again, weird music plays and the lights begin to flicker. DR. BOCKERKNICK drops down the chimney.

MARY

Back so soon?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

He claimed he wrote it! He published it as his!

LADY X

Let's just be glad everybody made it back. I refuse to let you do that again, Mary, you're putting people in danger. IT'S JUST A POEM. Let's not get so excited about a poem.

DR BOCKERKNICK

Just a poem?!?! You all think a little namby pamby poem can't be important? Poetry is powerful! It can change the course of history, and many times it has!

LADY X

Oh, you exaggerate, sir.

MARY

Oh yes it has. Many, many, many times! At least twice.

LADY X

I don't remember that from when I was in school.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

It didn't happen when you were in school. It happened during that ultimate turning point in our nation's history! At Valley Forge, during the Revolution. The Continental Army was freezing and starving, without socks or food, desperate to head back to the warm hearth, back to the farms and the loving arms. Then Thomas Paine wrote:

MARY

My my, Santa's on a roll!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

School, I knew it.

DR. BOCKERKNICK (improvising a snare drum)

"These are the times that try men's souls, the summer soldier and sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now deserves the thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered!"

LADY X

It was an essay, not a poem; but no matter.

DR. BOCKERKNICK (ignoring her)

General George Washington had that read to his miserable troops which inspired them to cross the Delaware on a freezing Christmas night and attack Trenton, New Jersey! That recharged the war effort, and the boys turned it around, won the war. Bang bang bang, till the redcoats surrendered. And they did it without any modern weaponry or conveniences! Just with a poem.

MARY

And a few muskets and canon.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Yes, I suppose.

MARY

And a hundred years later during the Civil War, Santa, I'm sure you remember, in the middle of winter the Union army was losing, slogging through the freezing rain singing "John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave", can you imagine anything more depressing? A lady from Boston, Julia Ward Howe, heard that from her carriage driving through the camps and instead of getting all upset about it, in the middle of the night in her hotel room, she woke up from a dream, got out of bed and stuck a pen in the ink and wrote, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." And she was half asleep, but she wrote five good verses to sing as you march along to your death.

LADY X

Glory, glory halleluiaah!

MARY

After that, forget about it. Even if Johnny Reb had a stealth fighter, they wouldn't have had a chance. God's terrible swift sword, for goodness sakes.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

If you sing that song in the south, people will get up and leave the room.

LADY X

A stealth fighter? During the Civil War?

MARY

Don't forget George M. Cohan! Was it World War One? Anyway, we won it. "Over there, over there..."

LADY X

Those were songs, not poems. But Mary, speaking of non-sequiters, I was just thinking, how can that computer go back to before computers, before electricity even?

MARY

Curious? My algorithm is like unwrapping something, like a present, but at a larger order of magnitude.

Digitized Curiosity, if you will!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

I wanna go up the chimney again! But let me bring a sword, or a laser gun!

(The children start fighting with finger-guns,  
swords and pretend horses.)

LADY X

Put those laser guns back in their holsters!! It seems we have to provide more entertainment before we can move on or it's going to turn into mayhem.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

ENTERTAINMENT?! This has serious historical significance! For instance, do you happen to know that back when the poem was written people thought children should be caned, not entertained. Whack! Always have a good stick nearby. Spare the rod, and spoil the child! Absolutely shameful, but they thought it was necessary.

MARY

Do you think it was necessary, kids?

CHILDREN

NOOOOOOOOO!

LADY X

Now there are laws about that. Why, If I laid a hand on you children I'd be in big trouble.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Well the poem put a whole new way of thinking on the table: treating children nicely! And that's not all. Back then men would wander over the city in drunken gangs on Christmas Eve...

LADY X

That's probably enough information, Doctor.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Too much!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

I'm so sorry if history doesn't interest you. What were we talking about?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Beating children.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Oh, yes. People eventually realized that children are a huge market! Milton Bradley, Walt Disney, Pee Wee Herman!

MARY

P. T. Barnum, Bozo the Clown and Donald Duck! All rich!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Who's Donald Duck?

LADY X

Donald Duck wasn't rich, that was his Uncle Scrooge.

MARY

So who wrote "The Night Before Christmas?"

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Maybe a group of elves. There's no original manuscript, so who knows.

LADY X (deliberately)

Clement. Clarke. Moore.

LORD S and SUPERGIRL MP

But it's not true! He ....

LADY X

Children! Look, the New York Times, the Daily News, the New Yorker! They all say so. My

goodness, how can there be any doubt?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Don't believe something just because it's in the Daily News.

MARY

He claimed to have written it. That's different from writing it.

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

Not in the eyes of the law. It depends on who signed it.

LADY X (to Mary)

Are you saying Moore was a fraud? One of New York City's most upright citizens? Goodness, I don't think so!

MARY

Houston, we have a discrepancy! This might call for a little wager.

LADY X

A wager? What are we betting, money? How tacky.

MARY

How about a child's wish? Children, what's your greatest wish? What do you really want for Christmas??

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

We're orphans. Parents!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

I'd rather have a rocket ship!

MARY

You'll have to ask NASA about the rocket ship, but parents might work. Hmm, now, that's making it really interesting! Parents for the children! That's our top prize tonight! The one who solves this mystery gets to adopt these orphans. That means we continue the investigation and see who gets to be a parent to these lovely angels.

LADY X

Just a minute, Mary. I think the loser should adopt the lovely angels.

MARY

O.K. I hope you have some gruel handy to feed your new kids, honey.

(They shake hands)

LADY X

I don't intend to lose. What you have here is not scientific proof. It's imagination run wild. If he didn't write the poem, who did? One of the elves?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

That's what we're going to find out!

END OF ACT ONE

## ACT 2

### Scene 1

The classroom.

(Children are doing the Dance of the rubbing chins. Doctor Bockerknick is drawing formulas and gibberish on a white board in the schoolroom. Mary is surfing the internet. Lady X is writing in her appointment book)

MARY

Who did the governess mention, someone she worked for since she was a girl? She must have gotten the poem from somewhere.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

If Moore didn't write it, we can deduce that it was already written, which infers post hoc ergo sum, we have to go back earlier. We could give your application another spin, though I'm not sure you have the capacity in that little thing.

MARY

Nonsense! Children, you're going back one more time, if that's alright. What could be more exciting!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Exciting for you, maybe. History's boring.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Personally I find this invigorating, like an aftershave!

(Feels his beard.)

So I've heard.

LADY X (contemptuously)

What exactly do you teach, anyway, Doctor?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

I teach this and that, generally speaking. Specifically, I teach the facts. Now, who was that man the governess mentioned? Seignor something something. We have to find this man, the witness to Santa's visit.

MARY

Seignorio Pomposo, something like that.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Are you children willing to go up the chimney again, to find this Pomposo fellow?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Do we have to?

MARY

If you only do what you want to do, you will end up sitting in bed eating cookies.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Yeah? That doesn't sound so bad.

MARY

It is bad, believe me. The point is if you really don't want to do something, that could be a sign that that is exactly what you should do.

LADY X

Thank you, Mary Poppins.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I want to go!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

That means you shouldn't go. I don't want to go, so I should go. Huh? That doesn't make sense.

MARY

You're right. You should go whether you want to or not. The only way we'll find the truth is to send you two looking for it. We're sort of counting on you.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Where are we going?

MARY

Let's see, the governess is the big clue here...it seems she worked for the Livingstons in Poughkeepsie. Major Henry Livingston. Perhaps he gave her the poem.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I've been to Poughkeepsie!

MARY

This is Poughkeepsie 200 years ago. Same place, different century.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Hmmm, Henry Livingston. Doesn't ring a bell.

LADY X

If this Livingston of Poughkeepsie wrote the poem, and that's a pretty big if, you would think he'd be well known. You can't just pick somebody out of a hat and claim that he's the author of The Night Before Christmas.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

That probably depends on the hat. But consider this: if we're right, we may be about to uncover where the most famous poem in the English Language came from! That has to be worth something, at least a nomination for something. Come on!

LADY X

I should mention one more time that this software experiment isn't exactly science. And it's very risky! A history book is always the best way to learn history, and who knows what unknown consequences time travel has.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

(flipping through reference books)

What unknown consequences? We're looking for the truth! Mary, send the children back to the time of this Livingston!

MARY (tapping on her computer)

Here he is. Major Henry Livingston Jr. Fought in the Revolution! How exciting!  
They called him Harry.

LADY X

And why are we wasting time with this man whom nobody's ever heard of!

DR. BOCKERKNICK (looking at computer screen)

Yes, Harry. According to this, Livingston wrote a lot of stuff that he never signed. At least not with his real name. If Moore wrote it he would certainly have signed it, but Livingston wouldn't have.

LADY X

Don't be delusional. Children, pick up your presents at the door and I'll see you all next year!  
Meeting adjourned!

MARY

Party, not meeting!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I thought we were going to get parents.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

I'd rather have the presents!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

You're so dumb. Parents have to give you lots of presents, that's what they do.

MARY

Hold on, hold on. There is outstanding business on the table! Places everyone! Do not move.

'CRANK BACK THE CLOCK'

Let's crank back the internal clock .. farther...farther... almost there. We need to generate a harmonic regression. . I'm assigning all the graphic memory to the application layer... Where they're going now, folks, the poem is possibly being read for the first time in history. That gives me goose bumps! What year are we talking about?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

(looking in reference books)

1806 is I believe where most accounts have the first documented Santa sighting. Set the clock to Christmas Eve, 1806, in the Hudson Valley. Livingston's farm.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

I hope this place is better than the last one.

(He climbs into the chimney, followed by  
SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY.)

MARY

I'm resetting the console. It should get us back to the early nineteenth century. We should have enough bandwidth for a 200 year regression. Rebooting now! Here goes!

(Lights flicker, music plays, and the children go up  
the chimney.)

DR. BOCKNERNICK

Knowledge and truth!

LADY X

Why do you keep saying that?

END OF SCENE

Scene 2

The house of Major Henry Livingston. We are in the parlor. LIVINGSTON has just come in from his surveying..

LIVINGSTON (yelling out the door)

Sydney! Take Dunder and Comet to the stable, and warm the oats and put blankets on them!  
What a day they've had!

(He sits before the fire, pouring a glass of port)

song: "OH WHAT A LIFE"

I COME FROM BACK A FEW CENTURIES  
A NICE PLACE TO BE IF YOU LIKE WIND IN THE TREES  
VENISON STEW, CORKS POPPING  
SLEIGHS PULLING UP IN THE SNOW  
OH WHAT A LIFE

ICE BOATS ON THE RIVER  
FROZEN MEADOWS  
AWAITING THE CRICKET'S SERENADE  
THE CHESTNUT TREES SHADE  
BUT FIRST THE RIVER ICE HAS TO CRACK  
AND IT DOESN'T QUITE HAVE THE KNACK  
OH WHAT A LIFE!

I COME FROM A TIME WHAT A TIME  
IT TOOK MY WIFE THIS LIFE IT DID  
BUT I FOUND ME ANOTHER AND I HAD MORE KIDS  
NOW THERE'S A DOZEN THE ELDEST IS SYD  
AND I DO MY BEST TO KEEP IT ALL HID  
THE JOY AND THE SORROW.....

I COME FROM A TIME IT'S CRIME  
HOW.....

(The fire in the fireplace flickers and goes out, and  
out of the fireplace emerge LORD  
SPAGHETTIHEAD and SUPERGIRL  
MAGICPONY, as before.)

What a surprise! More children! Where did you come from?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

We're from the future.

LIVINGSTON (humoring them)

The future? Good lord! How in the name of Christmas did you get here?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

They sent us to find you.

LIVINGSTON

Who sent you?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Dr. Bockerknick? I don't know all their names.

LIVINGSTON

I know a Knickerbocker, Diedrich Knickerbocker, but not a Bockerknocker.

Doctor Bockerknick! And Mary.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Why did they send you here?

LIVINGSTON

We were bored!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

To find out something important.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Well, I'm sure important things are happening somewhere, but not here. Nothing important for miles. I should know.

LIVINGSTON

It's important to us!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Why does Santa come down the chimney!?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

That is a most interesting question. You seem to be going to a lot of trouble to find the answer.

HENRY LIVINGSTON

But first we want to find out who wrote a famous poem. Are you a poet?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

No, no, not at all. Well a little bit. No, not at all.

LIVINGSTON

Are you sure? Maybe you just don't know it.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Why don't you read us a poem?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

no, no, no, no! NO! Well, if you insist.

LIVINGSTON

(children enter through the front door and start hanging their wet stockings and lighting the fire. HARRIET is helping them)

“WITHOUT DISTINCTION,” [by Anonymous]

WITHOUT DISTINCTION FAME OR NOTE  
UPON THE TIDE OF LIFE I FLOAT  
A BUBBLE ALMOST LOST TO SIGHT  
AS COBWEB FRAIL, AS VAPOR LIGHT  
AND YET WITHIN THAT BUBBLE LIES  
A SPARK OF LIFE THAT NEVER DIES

HARRIET

Bravo. Is that for tonight?

LIVINGSTON

No, I have a new one for tonight!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Is it about Christmas?

LIVINGSTON

Very much so! Yes it is about Christmas. Ho! Ho!

(The children look at each other, excited that it might be the poem. He goes to his desk.)

(The rustle of paper as LIVINGSTON looks through a large portfolio of writings for his Christmas poem, carefully keeping the pages away from the whale oil lamp that he uses to read by.)

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (to Lord Spaghettihead)

Look, it's Harriet!

ALL CHILDREN

"SHSHSHHS"

QUIET HE'S GOING TO READ  
WE MUST BE AMUSED CAUSE THERE ARE NO TV'S  
HOME ENTERTAINMENT IS DO-IT-YOURSELF  
FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER FEW CENTURIES  
AMUSE OR THE HOUSE WILL EXPLODE  
AMUSE CAUSE OUTSIDE IT'S SO COLD  
AND OUR STOCKINGS ARE WET WET WET ALL THE WAY TO THE KNEES  
PLEASE AMUSE

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD AND SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY  
HOW ELSE CAN WE HAVE ANY FUN  
CAN'T TURN ON THE SONY  
THE SHARP OR THE SAMSUNG  
NO RECHARGEABLE TRIPLE A'S 9 VOLTS OR D'S  
NO PLAYSTATIONS UNDERNEATH CHRISTMAS TREES

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

It's like there was only one channel: the Home Channel.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

What about the History Channel? Or the Weather Channel?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Oh, it's only history after it happens, and it hasn't happened yet.

ALL CHILDREN

AND WE DON'T CARE WHAT HE'S BEEN DOING ALL DAY  
AND WHAT'S OCCUPIED HIM FROM EARLY DAWN  
WE JUST WANT THE HERE AND NOW TO BE GONE  
WITH A POEM OR EVEN A SONG  
PLEASE AMUSE  
READ TO US PLEASE  
SHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

SOMEWHERE IN HIS HEAD THERE'S A WORLD THAT'S NOT THIS  
THOUGH NO ONE'S COMPLAINING  
IT'S A NICE TIME AND PLACE TO EXIST  
WE NEED A STORY OF MAGIC AND JOY  
OTHERWISE PROB'LY THIS HOUSE WE'LL DESTROY

SUPERGIRL AND LORD S

CAUSE THERE ARE NO SODAS OR PLASTIC TOYS  
OR TRIPS TO THE MALL FOR A BARBIE DOLL  
IN AN SUV WITH A DVD  
ENGINEERED WITH CONCERN FOR OUR AMUSEMENT AND SAFETY

HARRIET

SHUSH SHUSH SETTLE DOWN PLEASE

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Shshshshshsh

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

No you shush!

LIVINGSTON

It's an account of a visitor to this very house, around this very time.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Who is it? Is he here now?

LIVINGSTON

(looking at his watch on a fob)

No, it's a little early.

(Livingston searches through a large portfolio of poems, finding the right one and straightening out the paper)

LIVINGSTON

'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS WHEN ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE  
NOT A CREATURE WAS STIRRING, NOT EVEN A MOUSE.

(He pauses for effect. There is total quiet.)

THE STOCKINGS WERE HUNG BY THE CHIMNEY WITH CARE  
IN HOPES THAT SAINT NICHOLAS SOON WOULD BE THERE  
THE CHILDREN WERE NESTLED ALL SNUG IN THEIR BEDS

HARRIET

Or they soon will be.

LIVINGSTON

WHILE VISIONS OF SUGAR PLUMS DANCED IN THEIR HEADS  
AND MAMA IN HER KERCHIEF AND I IN MY CAP  
HAD JUST SETTLED OUR BRAINS  
FOR A LONG WINTERS NAP

WHEN OUT ON THE LAWN THERE AROSE SUCH A CLATTER  
I JUMPED FROM MY BED TO SEE WHAT WAS THE MATTER

AWAY TO THE WINDOW I FLEW LIKE A FLASH  
TORE OPEN THE SHUTTERS AND THREW UP THE SASH

THE MOON ON THE BREAST OF THE NEW FALLEN SNOW  
GAVE LUSTER OF MIDDAY TO OBJECTS BELOW

WHEN WHAT TO MY WONDERING I SHOULD APPEAR

A MINIATURE SLEIGH AND EIGHT TINY REIN-DEER

WITH A LITTLE OLD DRIVER SO LIVELY AND QUICK  
I KNEW IN A MOMENT IT MUST BE SAINT NICK

MORE RAPID THAN EAGLE HIS COURSES THEY CAME  
AND HE WHISTLED AND SHOUTED AND CALLED THEM BY NAME

NOW! DASHER NOW! DANCER NOW! PRANCER AND VIXEN  
ON COMET ON CUPID ON DUNDER AND BLIXEM

HARRIET (laughing)

I didn't know your horses were reindeer, Major!

EVERYBODY

Shshshshshsh!

LIVINGSTON

TO THE TOP OF THE PORCH! TO THE TOP OF THE WALL!  
NOW DASH AWAY! DASH AWAY! DASH AWAY ALL!

AS DRY LEAVES BEFORE THE WILD HURRICANE FLY  
WHEN THEY MEET WITH AN OBSTACLE MOUNT TO THE SKY

SO UP TO THE HOUSETOPS THE COURSERS THEY FLEW  
WITH A SLEIGH FULL OF TOYS AND ST. NICHOLAS TOO!

THEN IN A TWINKLING I HEARD ON THE ROOF  
THE PAWING AND PRANCING OF EACH TINY HOOF

(Livingston scratches out a word and replaces it)

AS I DREW IN MY HEAD, AND WAS TURNING AROUND  
DOWN THE CHIMNEY SAINT NICHOLAS CAME WITH A BOUND

HE HAD A BROAD LITTLE FACE AND A LITTLE ROUND BELLY  
THAT SHOOK WHEN HE LAUGHED LIKE A BOWL FULL OF JELLY

HE WAS CHUBBY AND PLUMP AND RIGHT JOLLY OLD ELF  
AND I LAUGHED WHEN I SAW HIM IN SPITE OF MYSELF

A WINK OF HIS EYE AND A TWIST OF HIS HEAD  
SOON GAVE ME TO KNOW I HAD NOTHING TO DREAD

HE SPOKE NOT A WORD, BUT WENT STRAIGHT TO HIS WORK  
AND FILLED ALL THE STOCKINGS, THEN TURNED WITH A JERK

AND LAYING HIS FINGER ASIDE OF HIS NOSE  
AND GIVING A NOD UP THE CHIMNEY HE ROSE

(He scratches out something and writes a new line.)

HE SPRUNG TO HIS SLEIGH, TO HIS TEAM GAVE A WHISTLE  
AND AWAY THEY ALL FLEW, LIKE THE DOWN OF THISTLE

BUT I HEARD HIM EXCLAIM ERE HE DROVE OUT OF SIGHT  
HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!

(He puts the poem at the bottom of the pile while  
the assembled clap  
enthusiastically. Some children are already asleep,  
and are carried off  
to bed by HARRIET.)

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

So you wrote that poem!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

But we still want to know why Santa came down the chimney. Is it because the stockings  
were there?

LIVINGSTON

That's a pretty good reason, and he is airborne for much of the night. But there's another  
reason. Which I won't tell you because I'm sworn to secrecy! Well I've had quite a long day,  
and it is Christmas Eve.

BOTH CHILDREN

No! Tell us! Tell us! The secret!

LIVINGSTON

No no nononononoNO! I won't make that mistake again!...(beat) Oh, very well. This legend  
takes place long ago, when this valley was still inhabited by Indians and Dutch people. It  
scared the daylights, or the nightlights out of me when my grandfather told it to me, and I had  
trouble sleeping for years, and of course I told my children the story too, which I shouldn't  
have done. They couldn't sleep either!

SUPERGIRL MAGIC PONY

Your poem really happened?

## LIVINGSTON

Oh yes, in a manner of speaking, and so did this story. And good luck getting to sleep after this! There were two boys, and this was a hundred years ago, maybe three hundred years before your time. My grandfather told me that someone entered the house through the chimney, like Saint Nick, like you for that matter, but with a very different intent. We're in the attic of a house, a house on the edge of the Jansen Kill along the river between here and Albany. One boy's name was Gilbert. Gilbert would become my grandfather much much later, in fact the moment I was born. The other boy was his older brother, Robert. Robert had just returned from Scotland and one summer, they were sleeping in this attic. It was a hot night....

(Back in the classroom.)

LADY X

What are they doing?

DR. BOCKERKNICK (looking at computer screen)

Hey, they're going back another hundred years. Something about the chimney, I believe.

MARY

They will need more memory for that!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

No, it appears they're using Henry Livingston's memory.

### Scene 4

(This scene could be done a number of ways, including Livingston acting out the parts, and the children assisting in pyjamas, singing choruses. It could also be done on a dark stage, since it is night)

(Hudson valley, 1711, a mid-summer night. The large but crude manor house of Robert and Alida Livingston, recently built on recently deforested land. Gilbert is a teenage boy sleeping in the attic of his father's house. Next to him snores his older brother, Robert, passed out, wearing riding pants and riding boots. An empty bottle of French wine is on the nightstand. Gilbert starts awake to the sound of steps on the roof above his head.

A pair of legs appears in the fireplace. Gilbert tries to wake up his brother, pointing to the legs. The brother, a young man, finally wakes up, sees what's happening and leaps up out of bed, rushing headlong at the intruder.

They fight almost to a standstill, the intruder pulls a long knife, which young Robert is able to wrestle away. When it flies into the wall, Gilbert grabs it and hands it to his brother, who subdues the intruder with the knife at his neck.

Their father bursts into the room. His son is yelling.)

YOUNG ROBERT (to intruder)

Who sent you!

(The father grabs the intruder by the hair and propels him from the room and down the stairs.)

ROBERT LIVINGSTON (to his sons, in a tone that pretty much guarantees obedience.)

Stay here!

(exits)

GILBERT (to his brother)

Who was that?

YOUNG ROBERT

He didn't say He wasn't in a good mood, though

GILBERT

Who would want to kill us?

YOUNG ROBERT

I can think of a few people. It depends on which point of the compass you look.

GILBERT

Maybe he was looking for the treasure! He wasn't out to kill us at all, only to rob Papa.

YOUNG ROBERT

No wonder he was upset, finding us in the way of fortune.

GILBERT

Terrorized more likely. It was a stressful situation. What will father do with him? Do you think there are more of them?

ROBERT

I think we've scared them away.

Gilbert lies on the bed, wide-eyed, clutching the knife, jumping at the sound of feet on the roof. Downstairs there are shouts and banging.

GILBERT & ROBERT switching verses:

"I'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN"

I'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN/ NEVER CLOSE MY EYES  
IMAGINE THE CHIMNEY INSTEAD OF THE DOOR  
NOT BEING USED FOR WHAT IT SHOULD BE USED FOR  
AND WHO WAS THE MAN NOT USING THE DOOR  
AND WHAT LAW OF THE LAND APPLIES  
I'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN/ NEVER CLOSE MY EYES

COULD HAVE BEEN A NATIVE OF THE WOODS  
FATHER BROUGHT THEM TRINKETS AND GOODS  
MUCH MORE THAN THE WOODS HAD EVER GIVEN  
AND THEY GAVE THE FOREST IN RETURN

THE MOHAWKS AND THE MOHICANS  
BRAVES OF THE FIVE NATIONS  
AND THEY CAN NO LONGER HUNT THE  
BEAVERS AND ANTLERS IN THE HILLS AND FENS

AND THE FOREST HAS HEARD THE CRIES  
I'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN,  
I'LL NEVER CLOSE MY EYES

IT COULD HAVE BEEN A GOLD HUNTING PIRATE  
CREW OF THE INFAMOUS CAPTAIN KIDD  
YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE FATHER  
GOT HIS GOLD PLATES  
THEY HUNG KIDD FOR WHAT HE DID

AND NOW THERE'S RUMORS IN EVERY TAVERN IN MANHATTAN  
THAT THIS IS WHERE KIDD'S GOLD IS HID  
COULD BE THE STUFF IN THIS ROOM  
THAT LURED THE MAN TO HIS DOOM

TO A VERY UNPLEASANT SURPRISE  
OH NO I'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN, NEVER CLOSE MY EYES

COULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE GERMANS  
HE INVITED THE PALATINES  
TO COME FARM THE LAND  
HE PROMISED HE'D FEED THEM THAT LIFE WOULD BE GRAND  
HASN'T TURNED OUT AS PLANNED

THEY'VE LATELY TURNED INTO A BIT OF A PROBLEM  
A PRETTY ORNERY AND HUNGRY BAND  
AND THEY MAY THINK THAT WE'RE THE BIG PROBLEM  
COULDA BEEN COULDA BEEN

A MAD HUNGRY FARMER, GETTING EVEN FOR FATHER'S LIES  
I'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN, I'LL NEVER CLOSE MY EYES

HE COULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE ENGLISH  
HE PAID OFF THE ENGLISH GOVERNORS  
THEY HAVE AGENTS EVERYWHERE AND  
THEY ALL HAVE ONE WISH

TO TAKE THIS LAND AND CHOP IT IN SLIVERS  
TAKE A PIECE FOR THEMSELVES AND SELL IT LIKE FISH  
IT COULDA BEEN THE ENGLISH AN AGENT OF THE CROWN  
RAINING FROM THE SKIES  
I'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN, I'LL NEVER CLOSE MY EYES  
AYEAYEAYEAYES

(This piece could have different suspects coming  
down the chimney and acting out their frustrations  
according to the verses of the song.)

#### Scene 5

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

That was scary!

LIVINGSTON

Of course! That's the point. After my grandfather told me the story, I couldn't sleep.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Did they ever find out who came down the chimney?

LIVINGSTON

No, the boys never did; but when I was a child, when the wind was blowing or a crow landed on the roof at night, we imagined it was somebody coming armed to the teeth with carving knives, down the chimney, wanting nothing so much as to stick us. We were terrified. My grandfather came here to get away from all that, he became a farmer and a surveyor and my father and I also were farmers and surveyors, and it's a great place to be a farmer and a surveyor!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

And a poem writer! But Santa coming down the chimney...

LIVINGSTON

Well, yes, why wouldn't he? It was so nice meeting you.

(The CHILDREN get in fireplace.)

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Why don't you come with us?

LIVINGSTON

Is that possible? Can you imagine! What is the future like? There must be wonderful inventions.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Electric toothbrushes!

LIVINGSTON

Oh I would love to see one of those. But I'm afraid it's impossible. My life is quite perfect the way it is, and there's quite a lot to do. And give my regards to Old Mister Bockerknocker, or whoever it is that sent you here.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Dr. Bockerknick! He's Santa! How do you know someone from the future?

LIVINGSTON

Oh, he doesn't come from the future, he comes from the past. Which is where I come from.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Will we ever see you again?

LIVINGSTON

You never know...it's hard to predict these things.

CHILDREN  
(climbing up the chimney)

Goodbye! We'll tell people about you!

LIVINGSTON  
If you do, please use my nom de plume, Seignorio Whimsicallo Pomposo!

He bows and exits.

END OF SCENE

Scene 6

Back in the classroom.

MARY  
We haven't heard from them in a long time. Children, do you want to come back?  
NO? They have to! (to Lady X) Dear, would you hand me that grilled cheese sandwich?

(Mary puts the sandwich in the fireplace so that the smell attracts the children. Children fall out of the chimney.)

MARY  
There you are. How was your little adventure?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD  
We found out why Santa comes down the chimney!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY  
Because children were scared, if a crow landed on the roof, it was coming to kill them!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD  
To chop them to pieces!

MARY  
A crow?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD  
Not a crow, an enemy!

*SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY*

An enemy who turned into Santa!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

That's quite a transformation.

MARY

I'm beginning to see; Santa cleverly chased the Boogeyman out of children's nightmares by popping out of the fireplace in a red suit with a finger alongside his nose, and wonderful presents.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

And Donder and Blitzen! And Rudolph!

MARY

I believe Rudolph joined the team much later. But that makes sense to me. I think we've found out a lot. You have been very brave children.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Somebody else came down the chimney! With a knife! Before Santa did.

MARY (to Lady X)

If that doesn't convince you about who wrote the poem...

LADY X

It's guesswork, a logical chain of noodles, signifying nothing. You're still saying that the poem is an eyewitness account!

MARY

Clearly, it is!

LADY X

IF, and that's a BIG IF, this Livingston actually wrote the poem, why isn't there an original manuscript in his handwriting?

(Dr. Bockerknick flips through the piles of books on the table and floor. He also checks the computer.)

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Apparently, it was lost in a fire. Whoosh!

LADY X

That's convenient, a fire.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

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DR BOCKERNICK

I don't think a fire is ever convenient for anyone. It just makes our job that much harder, to nail Livingston as the author. I have to publish this immediately!  
(He begins frantically punching computer keys.)

MARY

Relax Doctor. You said yourself it was of no consequence. Nobody really cares, believe me, they just like the poem. Doctor, take it easy. That's not a mainframe.

(The computer starts to smoke and make noises.)

MARY

Oh dear, I should have shut the program down!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

What is it doing?

MARY

There's some kind of ground loop with the server! It's going in reverse. I should have known this would happen. Oh, look at that!

(LIVINGSTON emerges from the chimney)

LIVINGSTON (to BOCKERNICK)

Diedrich! How long has it been, my friend?

DR. BOCKERNICK

Too long, Harry!

LIVINGSTON

So you're Bockerknick! I suspected as much. Where are we?

DR. BOCKERNICK

The future! They have something called software which I messed with so that I could have a look at you. How have you been?

LIVINGSTON

Not well at all. In fact I've been dead for quite some time. But tell me how have you managed to live this long?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

The secret is fame. I'm so famous they named the New York City professional basketball team after me. The Bockerknicks!

LIVINGSTON

I will assume that that is a good thing. I have also been famous, very well known among my dozen children and a few odd neighbors.

MARY

I'm Mary, and I'm honored to meet the author of the most famous poem there ever was.

LIVINGSTON

What poem?

MARY

Account of a visit from St Nicholas. Moore didn't write it: you did!

HENRY LIVINGSTON

(taking up his violin)

Oh, I merely held the pen. Let's have some music! That's all that matters!

CHILDREN

QUIET HE'S GOING TO PLAY

AND WE DON'T CARE WHAT HE'S BEEN DOING ALL DAY

WE NEED SOMETHING FROM OUT OF HIS HEAD

OR WE WON'T BE GOOD AND WE WON'T GO TO BED

Presenting Seignioro Whimsicallo Pomposo, the not famous author of the Night Before Christmas!

(Livingston, surprisingly has turned into Clement Clarke Moore)

MOORE

I'M CLEMENT, CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

I MAY HAVE MENTIONED BEFORE

THIS POEM I WROTE HAS FLOATED MY BOAT

BEFORE THEY THOUGHT I WAS A SCARY OLD GOAT

THE CHILDREN SO PROUD WHEN I READ IT OUT LOUD

CHILDREN

THE CHILDREN SO PROUD

MOORE

MY COLLEAGUES IN ACADEME

COULD NOT IN THEIR WILDEST DREAMS

GET AS FAMOUS AS ME IT ONLY ADDS TO MY LUSTRE

TO HAVE CLIMBED A GREAT TREE

AN ANONYMITY BUSTER

WRITTEN BY ME CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

AFTER THE COMPENDIUM OF HEBREW AND GREEK  
AND LATIN OF COURSE RECENTLY PUBLISHED  
DID NOT GET THE RESPONSE THAT I SEEK  
DID NOT GET THE ATTENTION I WISHED FOR  
THIS VERSE SEEMS TO BE THE ODD ROAD TO GLORY FOR ME  
CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE  
THE CHILDREN SO PROUD WHEN I READ IT OUT LOUD

CHILDREN

THE CHILDREN SO PROUD

MOORE

I DID OTHER THINGS TOO  
AND NOBODY KNOWS IT  
THINGS NOBLE AND CIVIC  
ALMOST HEROIC  
I SAVED GREENWICH VILLAGE FROM THE GRID  
THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I DID

LADY X

AND SIGNING THE POEM THAT WAS A NICE TRICK

MARY

YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIRE HIM FOR MAKING IT STICK

MOORE

AND NOW I MUST BID YOU GOOD NIGHT  
I'VE GOT TO BE UP WITH THE MORNING LIGHT  
TO COLLECT SOME RENTS AND TO SET THINGS RIGHT

(Moore turns into Livingston)

LIVINGSTON

THAT PIRATE STOLE MY THUNDER  
HE CAN HAVE IT, IT'S SALVAGE, IT'S PLUNDER  
I'D BETTER BE GOING TOO  
LOTS TO DO, LOTS TO DO THERE'S ALWAYS A LOT TO DO

(To MARY)

Is this the way home? Good night all! Please forget you ever saw me, and have a wonderful,  
happy Christmas. I'm off!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Goodbye, and thank you for the poem. We'll never forget you!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

He wants us to forget him. That's what he just said.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Why would he want to be forgotten?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Because, that's the whole point. He didn't want to be famous. That's why he never signed the poem. I'm getting hungry.

MARY

So who lost the bet? It seems obvious to me. Sorry children, I would have loved to adopt you.

LADY X

Not so fast. Technically, you lost. Henry Livingston never claimed the poem, so Moore, who signed it, is the legal author, and I win the bet. Mary, I hope you have some extra pudding, 'cause you're taking these puppies home.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

So Mary has to adopt us! Yay! We can play with her computer whenever we want!

MARY

Oh for goodness sake, do I hear sleigh bells or is that my tinitis?

(We hear the sound of sleigh bells. Soot falls into fireplace. Suddenly, who should bound down the chimney and out of the fireplace but SANTA CLAUS himself!)

SANTA CLAUS

Merry Christmas, I mean happy holidays! I've got to watch myself..

"WARMHEARTED MAN"

NOW THAT I'M A CELEBRITY  
EVEN MY REINDEER GET FREE PUBLICITY  
ON PAPER, RADIO AND TV  
AND MY CLONES ASK YOU FOR MONEY  
AS YOU PROBABLY HEARD  
I LIVE ON THE NORTH POLE WITH MY HERD  
IN AN ICE CAVE LIKE SUPERMAN

FULL OF ELVES DON'T GET ME STARTED  
IT'S WHAT I DO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND  
I'M JUST A CLINICALLY, OBSCENELY  
CERTIFIABLY WARM HEARTED MAN

VISIONS OF SUGARPLUMS  
TELL YOU I'M COMING SOON  
STUFFED STOCKING EMPTY GLASS COOKIE CRUMBS  
I'M ALREADY A SILHOUETTE ACROSS THE MOON  
BUT I DON'T SURVIVE BEYOND 12/25  
START SHOWING UP AGAIN AROUND THANKSGIVING  
HAVE BEARD WILL ADVERTISE  
IT'S NO WAY TO MAKE A LIVING  
A FRANCHISE ON NEON SIGNS  
AND GREETING CARDS, TOYS  
AND GIVE THEM TO LITTLE GIRLS AND BOYS  
AND I'VE BEEN DOING IT FOR A LONG LONG TIME  
IT'S WHAT I DO YOU DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND  
I'M JUST A CLINICALLY, OBSCENELY, OVER THE TOPLY  
CERTIFIABLY WARM HEARTED MAN

Everybody starts dancing in a big chorus line,  
except Supergirl Magicpony and Lord  
Spaghettihead, who try to stop the horrifying mess  
of an over-the-top amateur final number.  
They are banging on the keys of the notebook  
computer, desperately trying to get the program to  
quit.

The dancing continues.

ALL

IT'S WHAT HE DO  
WE DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND  
HE'S JUST A CERTIFIABLY! INDUBITABLY! INCOMPREHENSIVELY!  
WARM HEARTED MAN

They dance while Santa climbs back up the  
chimney. The children get into a panic

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

It didn't work!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Try again, we've got to stop them! It's horrible!

Finally the computer starts smoking, the children  
move away, then it explodes and the dancing stops.

CHILDREN

Phew!

MARY (panting)

Hey, we were just getting started! My notebook computer! It's ruined!

LADY X (trying to leave)

Oh, I'm so late for this other meeting! I have to rush off. Bye now! Merry Christmas!

MARY

Your meetings are all cancelled. It's Christmas Eve!

LADY X

They are? It is? Oh my, I completely forgot.

(she checks her messages)

You're right, isn't that something! Oh well, I give up.

ALL

YAY! She gave up!

CHILDREN (to Mary)

Mommy? We're hungry.

MARY

My husband is in for a surprise. Come along then.

Some of the children have fallen asleep and Mary  
has to carry them.

Song:

(Quietly whispering)

HO HO HO AND JINGLE JINGLE  
NOW OUR PLAY IS DONE  
WE HOPE YOU GO HOME HAPPY  
CAUSE AREN'T YOU GLAD IT'S OVER

AND AREN'T YOU GLAD WE HAD SOME FUN  
AT CLEMENT MOORE'S EXPENSE  
BUT MOSTLY AREN'T YOU GLAD  
IT ALL MADE SO MUCH SENSE

Merry Christmas!

END