

DR. BOCKERKNICK'S



SANTALOGY

A SEASONAL THEATER PIECE BY

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Dr. Bockerknick's Santology

INTRODUCTION:

On Christmas eve, despite months of relentless holiday music and neon Santas dulling the senses, childhood anxieties somehow evaporate, leaving delighted anticipation, and wishes hidden winking behind crinkled tissue and scotch tape. The bringer of this magic is a vivid red-clad hallucination, a portly, snowy-bearded elf with saintly mien and infinite generosity. His belly laugh announces his spell to sleeping tots who awake to transformation on what is for the young of Christian denomination the morning by which all mornings are judged, and the ribbons give way, revealing new possessions in chaotic bathrobe and pajama joy. On the birthday of the prophet Jesus Christ it is Santa Claus who brings the party.

Where did the elf come from, and what did he replace? Saint Nicholas was the patron saint of the Dutch, but how this worthy divine of Mediterranean origins morphed into a rotund reindeer-propelled gift-giver is part of the story

ships tied to his private wharf off Pearl Street, Manhattan, with a mansion on Pearl street, Albany, and with more land than can be seen from the top of a mountain, and more enemies than friends. Robert Livingston was a Scot who grew up in Rotterdam, where his father, a Puritan preacher, had been exiled, and he was fluid not only in Dutch and English, which he spoke with the northern brogue, but also the dialects of the Five Nations of the Iroquois Indians which brought him the pelts of the forest creatures to fill his ships. He was known by his many enemies as a tough customer who would fight for land and money as for his life.

Two of his boys were sleeping in the attic of the manor house one humid midsummer night when a collection of his enemies, possibly local Indians he had dispossessed, or tenant farmers he had defrauded, we don't know, climbed onto the roof clutching knives and other weapons.. But who they were is not so important to our story as how they tried to enter the house to forever rid the world of First Lord Robert Livingston and his family- through the chimney! The boys tackled the first assassin to emerge from the large Dutch

fireplace, and the rest of the band fled over the roof, filling the attic with the clatter of scampering feet.

One hundred years later the grandson of one of the boys, on his farm in Poughkeepsie, found the perfect way to ease the terrors that kept his many children so acutely aware of roof-noise. Whether from a crow or a branch, the scraping or banging would evoke knife-wielders and murderous intent, and this man, Major Henry Livingston, had 12 children to put to sleep. He sat down in his tiny desk under the stairs, stuck his quill in the ink pot, and wrote 'Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas'. He read it to his gathered brood, who were eager for entertainment on Christmas eve, on a night when our country was young and the snow drifts reached the roof, when by the frozen river the stomping of the ponies in their stalls and the smell of broiling venison and apples baking filled the house where soon not a creature would be stirring.. then he tucked the poem, which would later become the most famous poem in the English language, into a folio of other writings and forgot about it.

But there is more than one dark secret behind the familiar verses; there is also a tale of fraud and misappropriation that follows in a string of events lasting one hundred and fifty years, during which a. the manor house was invaded, b. our country was born c. the poem was written, d. the poem became famous and e. a signature finally appeared under the last stanza. The man who signed the poem was not the man who wrote it, and though at first the appropriation was reluctant, so as not to disappoint this man's own children, who wished and assumed that it had come from his pen, it later brought him the fame and respect for which he longed like a deer longs for a doe. His name was Clement Clarke Moore, and he lived in, and in fact owned, the Chelsea area of Manhattan.

All this is uncovered by our friend Doctor Bockerknick, a historian who also longs for recognition, with help from Mary and her legendary computer skills, and put to song and rhyme and frothy dialogue. To reveal these secrets requires time travel and orphans, two important ingredients in seasonal entertainment, and the playing of the roles gives much leeway

and wiggle room to improvisation. This isn't Shakespeare, it's a play that tells the story, starting with a question: why does Santa pop down the chimney, rather than, say, ringing the door bell?

DR. BOCKERKNICK ' S SANTOLOGY

A new Christmas play with songs for all ages

Book, Songs by Paul M. Jay

Additional Music by David Cantor

music link

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This play 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.

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. 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 a long ponytail. Also plays Harriet.

LADY X

A knowledgeable woman, a teacher at the school, on lots of committees. She has a strong sense of civic duty, an annoying manner. Also plays Cook.

CHILDREN:

All the children sing. There can be as many as you would like, and they can be played ironically by older actors. 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, who have made up their own names, 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.

HISTORICAL CHARACTERS:

CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE (played by Janitor)
Wealthy landlord, professor of ancient languages at the Episcopal Seminary 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. His theme music is bad organ music

HARRIET BUTLER (Played by Mary)

A governess. Worked for Henry Livingston and later 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. Was known as Major Henry, or Harry.

overture

Prologue

DR. BOCKERKNICK appears in front of curtain, or darkened stage. 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 RATHER IMPORTANT THINKING

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

A SAINT OF COURSE LIKE SAINT LOUIS
WHO WON THE SERIES A FEW YEARS AGO
(SORRY ABOUT THAT LITTLE JOKE)
THERE'S SO MUCH MORE THAT WE SHOULD
KNOW
BEFORE HE POPS INTO ONE'S BUNGALO

WHERE DOES HE GET THAT SUIT? I ASK
NOT AT MACY'S LAST I CHECKED
WHY IS HE SO GENEROUS AND UP TO TASK
HAS HE EVER SENT A GIFT COLLECT?

(I DON'T EXPECT HE HAS)

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

TONIGHT THE DEAL IS TO REVEAL
THROUGH THIS NONPROFIT 'FRIENDS OF SANTA'
WHY THEY CHOSE ME TO PLAY THE MAN
SERIOUSLY, WHY CAN'T A
GUY IMPROVE HIS SELF ESTEEM
A STARRING ROLE LIKE THIS ONE
HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SECRET DREAM
THOUGH MY ACTING TALENT'S HIT OR MISS

THIS FIREPLACE UNDER CONSTRUCTION
IT'S VERY CLEVER WE SHALL SEE
AS SOON AS OUR FRIEND STOPS BANGING
A PORTAL TO ANCIENT MYSTERIES

BUT CHILDREN PLEASE! 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

THAT'S YR CUE! STAGE MANAGER! RAISE THE CURTAIN

WE'LL START WITH ACT ONE AND I'M CERTAIN
ONE ACT WE CAN PULL OFF BEFORE
YOU TELL US WHEN YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH
DINGALING! WE'RE OFF!

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

Scene 1

Contemporary classroom. A banner is on the wall that says 'FRIENDS OF SANTA'. It is the annual social function of a civic organization for orphaned kids. LADY X and CHILDREN are hanging Christmas decorations around the classroom. There is punch in a bowl and donuts. 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'.

LADY X sits at a table on a folding chair. Children amuse themselves writing name tags and eating cookies.

[SANTATIME TONIGHT]

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.)

LADY X

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, or brandy.

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 public 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. And Christmas is not Santa's birthday, it's somebody else's birthday, who I won't mention, though really, he is a historical figure.. why shouldn't I?

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 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!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

So why do you come down the chimney?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Efficiency. 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 reindeer, and off I go ho ho ho, to the next roof.

Does that answer your question, miss nosey posey?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

I like my nose. 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. With snow on the ground stockings get wet. 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!

MARY

Donut crumbs. I'll get the poem off the internet.

DR BOCKERKNICK

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 BOCKERNICK

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, it's probably got more bugs than a... I don't know..

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

more bugs than a buggy?

MARY

Naw...

DOCTOR BOCKERNICK

More bugs than a Russian Embassy?

LADY X

I was going to say Volkswagen parking lot..

MARY

In theory we could go back to the first reading of the poem. Is anybody listening?

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. 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)

Luckily you don't need a brain if you have books.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Aww! Is this going to be like school?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

What has school to do with simple curiosity? No, no no, not at all like school. 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...

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Not even Johann Straus. Ho ho ho.

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

Dead? If you go back to when he was alive, then he wouldn't be dead, this Clement Clarke Moore. Now he's dust, but we're going back to when he was very much alive.. 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! Somebody, I don't know who yet, is going back to the first reading of the poem! Who wants to go?

LADY X

Mary, please calm down. Let's just read it and get on with whatever. You can do your software experiments on your own time.

MARY

This is my own time. Nobody's paying me.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

No, no, no, this is unprecedented! Going back to a moment in history would be an astonishing thing, it's never been done! Wow! The most famous poem in the English language! Hey, I bet it could get me in the history department on a cozy campus, with tenure, or a prize! Lord knows the mantel could use some glitter, something to jazz up the old obituary. Crank it up!

MARY

That's the spirit! I sure hope this does what it's supposed to do. Time travel sounds like fun, doesn't it?
(She loads the program.)

LADY X

I hold you responsible for anything weird that happens..

DR. BOCKERKNICK (looking over MARY's shoulder)
How does that even work?

MARY

You don't want to know. But I'll tell you this, I did write the algorithm on a Christmas Eve, which has something to do with why it can manipulate the time line, assuming it works. But we have to watch out for feedback loops.

LADY X (laughing)

You write algorithms on Christmas Eve? Oh, Mary!

MARY (ignoring her)

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! It's perfect! 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! Anyway, do we have any lucky volunteers? Oh, I wish I could go!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD (saluting)
No trouble maam. 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? Who would have guessed there would be orphans in a Christmas play.

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...

COMPUTER MUSIC

LADY X

Check your shoe laces!

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. BOCKERKNICK (looking up chimney)

They're gone!

END OF SCENE

Scene 2

Drawing room of Clement Moore house. It is still dark. 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. They crouch behind a couch. Enter Moore himself, in the dark, followed by his children, lighting a lamp. "He's behind you!" shout children in the audience. pantomineCCM

By the time the lights go on, Supergirl and Lord S 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 tea.

(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!

(HARRIET and COOK enter with tea service.)

COOK

Brilliant, Sir! This is Harriet Butler.

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

MOORE (glancing disapprovingly after the cook. To Harriet:)

Hello. I was expecting you yesterday. As it happens I have things under control.

COOK

Of course you do.

MOORE (to Harriet)

You did bring a recommendation?

(He takes a letter from Harriet and opens it.

Reading:)

To those who might require
testament to lack of ire
the person who bears this note in hand
was never canned or reprimanded.
signed Siegnoro Whimsicallo Pomposo

(he stuffs the note in his pocket, smiling to himself)

COOK

Harriet has just arrived from Poughkeepsie.

MOORE

How is the Major?

HARRIET

Always busy, always agreeable.

MOORE

The eye of the storm, old Harry. And why did you leave his employ?

HARRIET

The children grew up. It happens. Now how about some tea for the lovely children!

(She serves them.)

MOORE

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

(He pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket, puts on a funny hat and grabs a bag and a cane, acting out his poem as he reads it, 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!”)

COOK

Here you are, sir, your tea is getting cool. (She serves him.)

HARRIET (to children)

Hello dears, you look so sad. Oh, what will put smiles on your little faces? Bananas on your clocks! 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

CHILDREN (ala Gilbert and Sullivan)

HE'S CLEMENT CLEMENT CLARK MOORE

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

CHILDREN (ala Gilbert and Sullivan)
HE'S CLEMENT CLEMENT CLARK MOORE

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 IS 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 (aside to SUPERGIRL)

Argh! Not another poem!

HARRIET

Oh you will like this one. Guaranteed!

(Takes a folded sheet of paper from her apron and begins reading to the children.)

"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. Christmas lights start to sparkle on the fireplace.)

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? What's a
clatter?

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 3rd century.
Patron Saint of thieves, I believe. It’s amazing that he’s
still 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.. very Dutch indeed,
for any of you wish to expand your knowledge, which I
doubt. That would explain why he is still with us. But let’s
press on!

“More rapid than eagles his courses they came
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name”
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 Sinterclaus 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. I mean, Saint
Nicholaaaas said.. Don't forget, Saint Nicholaaaas 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

No I did not. Not my style at all.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (disappointed)

You didn't? I know you did. I told my friends.

MOORE

I suppose it's possible. No one has signed it.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (hopefully)

So you did write 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
'undo' is. It should 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 modern christmas!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Oh, I don't think he did.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

But he SAID he wrote it!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

You mean, he did not deny writing it. Let's see (reading from a web site or book)

Clement Clarke Moore (1779 - 1863) wrote the poem Twas the night before Christmas also called "A Visit from St. Nicholas" in 1822. It is now the tradition in many American families to read the poem every Christmas Eve. The poem Twas the night before Christmas has redefined

our image of Christmas and Santa Claus. Prior to the creation of the story of Twas the night before Christmas St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, had never been associated with a sleigh or reindeers! The author of the poem Twas the night before Christmas was a reticent man and it is believed that a family friend, Miss H. Butler...

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (interrupting)
That's Harriet!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

.... sent a copy of the poem to the Troy, New York Sentinel who published the poem. The condition of publication was that the author of Twas the night before Christmas was to remain anonymous. The first publication date was 23rd December 1823 and it was an immediate success. It was not until 1844 that Clement Clarke Moore claimed ownership when the work was included in a book of his poetry. Clement Clarke Moore came from a prominent family and his father Benjamin Moore was the Bishop of New York who was famous for officiating at the inauguration of George Washington.

Well well well, the son of a bishop managed to steal the most famous poem in the English language... That's quite a feat if it's true. I want to get to the bottom of this. 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.)

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Mop?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

No...

MARY

Contra dance?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

More loose ends than a contra dance? It'll have to do. Now fire up the time machine, I'm going in, or up. Troy NY, north east of Albany, offices of the 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!

LADY X

Why does he keep saying that...

END OF SCENE

Scene 4

1823. Office of the editor of the Troy, NY Sentinel. DR. BOCKERNICK 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

On Exclamation-Point Dunder? On Explanation Point Blixem? This simply won't do. On DONder! On BLITzen! 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

UNCREDITTED TOO,
THOSE WE DON'T PAY FOR
OTHERS WE DO

MOORE (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 VICES 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
Of all the...! 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 silly rhyme.

DR BOCKERKNICK

Just a poem?!?! You all think a little namby pamby poem can't be important? A poem can change the course of history. As it has many times!

LADY X

Oh, you exaggerate, sir.

MARY

Oh yes it has. Many, many, many times!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

At least twice that I can think of.

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 first happened during the Revolution. (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!"

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

School, I knew it.

LADY X

That was an essay, not a poem.

DR. BOCKERKNICK (ignoring her)

Well it turned the tide of the war.. If it wasn't for that you'd be eating tea and crumpets instead of donuts and punch.

MARY

I've got one for you. About a hundred years later during the Civil War... the Union army was losing, slogging through the freezing rain singing "John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave", can you imagine a more cheerful tune? A lady from Boston 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 halleluiah!

MARY

If it wasn't for that we'd be having mint juleps and butter biscuits instead of donuts and punch. You couldn't have stopped them with a stealth fighter.

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.

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! 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
NOOOOOOOOOO!

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

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD
Yeah!

DR. BOCKERKNICK
Well the poem put a whole new way of thinking on the table: treating children nicely! ENTERTAINING THEM! 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

There's no original manuscript, so who knows. It's a mystery.

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.

MARY

Moore certainly signed it.. He spent half his life signing 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 we bet 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 poptarts 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!

scene 8

(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)

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

Saint Nick was at the time a small man, little more than an elf. And he may have had shape-shifting abilities to make it past the flue..

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Like an X man!

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

I suppose.

SUPERGIRLMAGICPONY (to Lord Spaghettihead)

That's the Fantastic Four. Anyway, we don't have a chimney at the orphanage.

DOCTOR BOCKERKNICK

He could enter through the ventilation system, if it came to that.

MARY

That would be undignified for a saint. A sooty chimney is bad enough.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

If Moore didn't write it, we can deduce that it was already written, ergo post hoc et cetera, it stands to reason 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. I could go, perhaps. That was rather fun. Who did Harriet Butler mention, someone she worked for since she was a girl? She must have gotten the poem from somewhere.

MARY

Somebody named Harry. That's too far back for you to go,

and anyway it won't be necessary. Children, could I ask you to be our time travelers one more time, if that's alright? What could be more exciting!

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

History's boring.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Oh no! It can be 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? Signor something something. We have to find this man, the witness to Santa's visit.

MARY

Signorio Pomposo, something like that.

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Sounds Italian, or faux Italian. Are you children willing to go up the chimney again, to find this Pomposo fellow? And who is Harry? Questions! The lifeblood of science! And you, children, are going to answer them for us!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Do we have to?

MARY

if you only do what you want to do, you will end up
lying in bed eating cookies.

UPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Yeah? That doesn't sound so bad.

MARY

is bad. 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.

ORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

don't want to go.

UPERGIRL MAGICPONY

DO want to go. Maybe.

MARY

The only way we'll find the truth is to send you two
looking for it. We're sort of counting on you. The whole
world wants to know the truth!

LADY

They do not.

UPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Go where?

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

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.

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! And 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. Or 'the Major', or 'the Judge'. He wore many hats. 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. That is hardly evidence of anything. And nobody really cares who wrote it. 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?

(music starts)

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
Will you stop saying that?

END OF SCENE

Scene 9

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! And do the same for me. What a day we've had! And I'm dreaming of a hot bath, if that's even possible in this house...

(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
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.....

.....

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

LORD SPAGHETTI HEAD
Hey, that was hot!

LIVINGSTON
More children! (yelling) Darling, are these ours?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD
We're orphans. We're from the future. Is this the past?

LIVINGSTON (humoring them)

No, it's the present. Let's see, yesterday today was the future, and yesterday is now the past, today is now. You should have come yesterday, orphans from the future. Good lord! How in the name of Christmas did you get here?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

They sent us.

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.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Doctor Bockerknick! And Mary.

LIVINGSTON

Did they send you here for any particular reason?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

We were bored!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

To find out something important.

LIVINGSTON

Well, I'm sure important things are happening somewhere,

but not here. Nothing important for miles. I should know.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

It's important to us!

Enter Harriet to hang wet stockings on the fireplace..

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (to Lord Spaghettihead)

Look, it's Harriet!

HARRIET

Major, you do attract the young ones. Who are these tadpoles?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Harriet, it's us!

HARRIET

Excuse me?

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY (whispering to Lord Spaghettihead)

She hasn't met us yet..

LIVINGSTON (busy)

What did you want to know?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Why does Santa come down the chimney!?

HENRY LIVINGSTON

St. Nick, you're referring to..That is a most interesting question.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

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

LIVINGSTON

No, no, not at all. Sometimes, but otherwise not at all.

HARRIET

He's a wonderful poet. Recite something, please Major.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Yeah!

LIVINGSTON

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

(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.

(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.)

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

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

SHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

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

ADULTS

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 THEIR
AMUSEMENT AND SAFETY

HARRIET

SHUSH SHUSH SETTLE DOWN PLEASE

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

Shshshshhsh

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!

(Children making antlers with their fingers)

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! ... I had trouble sleeping for years, and I told my children the story too, which I shouldn't have done. They couldn't sleep either!

SUPERGIRL MAGIC PONY

What really happened?

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Why couldn't you sleep?

LIVINGSTON

O.K.Despite my better judgement.. We're in the attic of a house, a house on the edge of the Jansen Kill along the river between here and Albany. Two boys are sleeping, one'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 . It was a hot night....

Scene 10

(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

We will need more memory for that!

DR. BOCKERKNICK

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

Scene 11

(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. 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 guaranties 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
Everybody. It depends on which point of the compass you look. The Indians aren't too happy, for one, since this was all their land.

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

YOUNG ROBERT

Kidd's treasure? No wonder he was upset, finding us in the way of fortune.

GILBERT

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

ROBERT

They might try again.. one of us should stay awake.

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

END OF SCENE

Scene 12

Children have been watching with Henry Livingston.
Dark, contrasty lighting without background. Scary
images are projected.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

That was scary!

LIVINGSTON

Don't blame me if you have trouble getting to 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, wanting nothing so much as to drop down the chimney and 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? Lovely 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 not possible. My life is humming along very nicely, and there's quite a lot to do. But please 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. Though I experience it as the present.

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

Rather you didn't, but if you do, please use my nom de plume, Seignorio Whimsicallo Pomposo!

Computer music/ lights flashing

END OF SCENE

Scene 13

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? That wasn't a crow.

LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD

Not a crow, an enemy!

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY

An enemy who turned into Santa!

DR. BOCKERNICK

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 up his nose, and wonderful presents.

LADY X

Finger ALONGSIDE his nose!

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.

DR BOCKERNICK

I don't think a fire is ever convenient for anyone. It just makes our job that much harder, and 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.)

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 was afraid of this, should have known, should have known... Oh, look at that!

(LIVINGSTON emerges from the chimney, which is smoking and lights flashing)

LIVINGSTON (to BOCKERKNICK)

Diedrich! How long has it been, my friend?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

Too long, Harry!

LIVINGSTON

So you're Bockerknick! I suspected as much. When are we? What has happened?

DR. BOCKERKNICK

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 that ever was written.

LIVINGSTON

What poem? The Illiad? Not my work!

MARY

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

DR. BOCKERNICK

But you never signed it. You should have signed it, Harry.

LIVINGSTON

Why?

MARY

Because somebody else DID sign it.

LIVINGSTON

Who? And also why?

Mary and Dr. Bockernick put a hat and cloak on Livingston and he turns into Clement Clarke Moore, posing for a full length portrait.

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

What's left of it. My husband is in for a surprise. Oh for

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

(We hear the sound of sleigh bells)

DR. BOCKERNICK

That's my ride, I'd better be going.

LADY X

You mean SANTA had better be going. As per our agreement.

DR. BOCKERNICK

Oh yes our agreement.. ho ho ho. (he gets his Santa suit together)

Happy Christmas to all, I mean happy holidays! I've got to watch myself.. And good night!

(He starts to depart up the chimney)

MARY

What a nice man.

LADY X

So generous! An hardly any attitude!

Dr. Bockerknick as Santa decides not to leave just yet.

“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 AND ICE CAVE LIKE SUPERMAN
FULL OF ELVES DON'T GET ME STARTED
IT'S WHAT I DO, WE 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
I GIVE 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

SANTA disappears up the chimney.

MARY, LADY X and CHILDREN start dancing in a big

chorus line.

SUPERGIRL MAGICPONY and LORD SPAGHETTIHEAD 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

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

Oh my, I completely forgot.

(she checks her messages)

Isn't that something! Oh well, I give up.

ALL

YAY! She gave up!

CHILDREN (to Mary, who is surprised)
Mommy? We're hungry.

MARY

Oh, come along then. Harry's not going to like this.

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

DR. BOCKERKNICK'S SANTOLOGY

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE
MOST FAMOUS POEM IN THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE,
ATTRIBUTED TO
CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE
WRITTEN BY HENRY LIVINGSTON
OF POUGHKEEPSIE
INSPIRED BY DARK SECRETS
OF FAMILY HISTORY.

FOR GENERAL AUDIENCE



CLEVER NONSENSE