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# THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

A Play in Three Acts

BY

WILLIAM PATTERSON TAYLOR

NOTE.—In putting this little play together the writer has had in mind not only the real children but also the *realer* children of a larger growth.

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*Sheet,*

# The Night Before Christmas.

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## CHARACTERS.

SANTA CLAUS.  
MRS. SANTA CLAUS—Reader.  
MESSENGER BOY.  
MESSENGER BOY.  
MR. NORTH POLE.  
MRS. MAGNETIC POLE.  
PAPA “in his cap.”  
MAMMA “in her kerchief.”  
KRIS—HARRY.  
KRINGLE—WILLIE.  
MAID.

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## ACTS.

*AMP 21 Apr 30*

ACT I. Santa Claus' workshop at North Pole.  
ACT II. Children's bedroom.  
ACT III. Scene I. Husetop scene roughly charcoaled on sheet.  
Scene II. Same as Act II.





# THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

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## ACT I.

SANTA CLAUS' workshop at the North Pole, fittingly furnished. The "North Pole", decorated, emerges from the floor-centre. Great noises outside: sleigh-bells, whip-cracking, laughter and calling to deer. ("Ho! Dasher! Ho! Dancer! Ho! Vixen!"). Door opens as wind whistles and snow blows in. ENTER SANTA, very jolly but cold, swinging arms and shaking snow [cotton] from fur coat.

SANTA. "Ha! Ha!! Ha!!! He! He!! He!!! Ho! Ho!! Ho!!!

Whew-w-w—cold?

But, what EVER is the use of GRUMBLING?

Hasn't it a *right* to be cold?

Isn't it CHRISTMAS?

Isn't this (pointing) the NORTH POLE?

What *ever* is the use of *grumbling*?

*I never knew."*

(Removes great-coat. All sorts of toys and trinkets fall out. Stoops down for them and picks up some black snow [Cotton].)

SANTA. "Now, *I* never complain, but just look at that dirty snow! What would my wife, Phoebe, say? I do wish they'd hurry up with the anthracite I ordered. This soft

coal is spoiling everything up here—The Aurora Borealis might as well——”

(Boy on snow-shoes rushes in)

SANTA. “Hello! Ah-we-lah—what have you, my son?”

BOY. “A telegram, Kind Sir!”

(Boy on snow-shoes, rushes in)

SANTA. “Hello! E-tuk-i-shuk—what have *you?*”

ESKIMO. “A wireless, Kind Sir!”

(A speaking-tube whistles—A telephone bell rings)

SANTA. “Hold on to that 'phone-bell, Ah-we-lah, please! (At speaking tube) Well?”

BOY'S VOICE (through tube) “Santa! Santa!! Don't forget my candy, my tools, my ball, my gun, my——”

SANTA. “Are you GOOD?”

MAN'S VOICE (through tube). “He is *very* good, Santa, and I am his loving father.”

BOY'S VOICE. “And—Santa! just before Christmas, I'm as good as I can be! Ask my sister and the fellers!”

SANTA. “Of *course* you shall have them! What is your name?”

(Boy gives name of “the worst boy around”)

SANTA. “I shall write it down in the GOOD BOOK, at once! Keep on being a GOOD boy! *Good-bye!*”

SANTA (starting to scratch vigorously in a very big book with a great quill-pen). “Hello! (holds lit candle under ink-well) this ink is frozen! a-gun,—a-ball,—a-box-of-tools,—and—some—goodies—for——, a-*very-good*-boy. (To boy on snow-shoes) Now then, Ah-we-lah, pass me that 'phone, please. (Always say ‘please’)”

BOY (handing 'phone). "Yes, Kind Sir!"

SANTA (at 'phone). "Hello! Hello!! Hello!!!—I do believe that Arctic Circle has *again* crossed my line—Hel-lo! (Repeating message) 'I am'—hello! Central? What? 'Parallels and meridians all mixed up'? Ah! *there* he is! Hello?—'I am 1-2-3-4-5, New York, Philadelphia and Paris—Kanamaker!—Well? (Repeating message) 'We have an order for one North Polette. A bad boy of —, down here, needs the big stick and nothing short of a polette will cover the case. Have you any?' (Very slowly and solemnly) 'You have the *very* wrong number. This is Santa Claus. I have nothing *whatever* to do with *bad* boys. Only *good* boys and girls for ME—(but *all girls* are good).' (Repeating message) 'Good-day!' 'Good-bye—it's *night* up here!' (To ESKIMO) E-tuk-i-shuk—bring me that polette outside the door, please—(always say 'please')."

ESKIMO. "Yes, Kind Sir!"

(Exit ESKIMO as wind sounds and snow blows in through opened door)

SANTA (to audience). "Would you like to see a *real* polette, children? Wait!"

ESKIMO (entering door with wind and snow, carrying a stiff paper roll, pushed out into a long cone). "Here it is, Kind Sir!"

SANTA. "Thank you, E-tuk-i-shuk. (Takes polette, slowly compresses it and at the same time squeezes water from a sponge concealed in the hand and throws it away) Oh! that's nothing!"

ESKIMO (here picks up a big thermometer, looks at it, notes a hole in bottom, stoops down, fingers spot on floor, mops his brow and vigorously fans himself—then, shaking head). "Tut, tut—tut, tut—tut, tut!"

SANTA (blowing out a candle). "Oh! be joyful, E-tuk-i-shuk! Don't look so glum—and the night before Christmas,

too! There! (handing candle to him) Eat THAT! Rather have blubber? Folks shouldn't blubber the night before Christmas."

ESKIMO (eating candle). "Tutti-fruitti—fruitti-tutti!" (Outside sounds: sleigh-scraping, dog-barking, whip-cracking and whistling. A knock).

SANTA. "Who's there?"

ANSWER. "Peary!"

SANTA. "No?"

PEARY. "No!?!—Has that man *Cook* been here?"

SANTA. "To all *appearyances*, not!"

PEARY. "Hear that, Henson?"

HENSON. "Ya-a-a-s, Sir!"

SANTA. "I'd ask you in, gentlemen, but *this* is my busy day. Good-bye!"

PEARY AND HENSON. "Good-bye! Now for Mt. McKinley!"

(Outside sounds: sleigh-scraping, etc.)

SANTA (to boy on snow-shoes). "Now then, Ah-we-lah, what have *you*, here?"

BOY. "A telegram, Kind Sir!"

SANTA (reading). "'Don't forget my fourteen children and my forty-four grandchildren. S. S. Smith.'

(Examines Good Book) Smith? Smith? *Strange* name! But I've heard it before—Mercy, Yes! Fifty columns of them! 'A. Smith; B. Smith; C. Smith; X. Smith; Y. Smith; Z. Smith; & Smith!'—and here's where they all must come from: 'The Smith Manufacturing Co.'"

BOY. Any reply, Kind Sir?"

SANTA. "Sure! The same I *always* send. (Writing on blank) 'Are—they—*Good?* rush answer.'"

BOY (exit as sounds of wind, whinny of deer and sleigh-bells enter door). "Good-night, Kind Sir!"

SANTA. "Good-night, son! (To ESKIMO) Well, E-tuk-i-shuk, what have *you?*"

ESKIMO. "A wireless, Kind Sir!"

SANTA (examining message). "Bless me, what a list! A list of the good children of —— (reads local names)—whew-w-w! that means work! and look at that clothes-basket full of letters (picks up several)—One from Panama; one from Australia; Turkey; Shanghai; New Jersey; here's one from —— (removes coat). I've heard of a man who had so much to do that he went to bed. None of that for *me!* Not for *worlds* shall I disappoint those GOOD children of —— But let me see what sort of a night it is first—(opens door—speaks slowly and impressively) Glorious! The wind has died down. How beautiful that rising moon! I hear music! (Quartette quietly hums "Happy Angels." The very stars are dancing for joy! They seem to know it is the night before Christmas! (Closes door.) Yes, the night before Christmas! and not through, yet! I never realized how *many* good boys and girls there are. Starts to hammer at bench—soliloquizing as the quartette hums louder:

"Work, work, work——"

(The North Pole here begins to move around to the music—  
Santa, astounded, drops mallet.)

Well! I'll be snow-balled! I *knew* there were phenomena up here, but *that* beats all! That must be a case of Polarization!"

(Electric bell rings, Maid, all in white, patters across the room, opens door, admits a beautiful creature, also in white, receives card on tray and takes it to SANTA.)

SANTA (reading). "Mrs. Magnetic Pole!"

NORTH POLE (aside). "'Mrs. Magnetic Pole'? Why, that's my *wife!*—(To her) Maggie! what brought *you* here?"

MRS. M. POLE. "Oh! I was tired of being left out in the cold the night before Christmas, so I came to the club!"

NORTH POLE (aside to audience). "Note! THE Club! Why, *He's I!* (Taking MRS. M. P. into his arms) Oh! you most attractive thing!"

SANTA (to audience—pointing at POLES). "Now, I *like* that! So near and dear to each other! (To them) Please *excuse me*—I have *other* important business—(starts to hammer as quartette again hums) :

Work, work, work, as the wind bloweth keen  
 O'er the ice and the snows of my North;  
 Work, work, work, for the children, I ween,  
 Are expectant all over the earth.  
 Kings, high enthroned amidst splendor and state,  
 View their tributes of gold undefiled;  
 But *I* for *my* throne and *my* tribute await  
 Just the heart and the laugh of a child.  
 Then it's  
 Work, work, work——

(Alarm clock goes off!)

What? Twelve o'clock? I must be away!

[(Amidst packing, ringing of telephone-bell, whistling of speaking-tube, sounds of sleigh-bells and wind. SANTA goes to inside door.)

I'm off, Phoebe, dearest wife! Good-bye, Kris! Good-bye, Kringle! Be good children! Take good care of your cold, Mother!"

MOTHER (a deep bass voice from within). "Good-bye, Nicholas, dear! Don't forget your rubbers! Bundle up warm!"

SANTA. "What an *awful* cold she has! I must bring her some 'frog in the throat'."

THE THREE. "Good-bye, dear Papa!"

SANTA. "Come along, E-tuk-i-shuk!"

ESKIMO (carrying many bundles). "Yes, Kind Sir!"

SANTA (to THREE). "Good-bye, all! Merry Christmas!  
Be good to yourselves!"

(EXIT SANTA AND ESKIMO.)

NORTH POLE AND MRS. M. POLE (together—falling into each other's arms). "Alone, at last!" (Electric effects, if desired)

SANTA (outside—snapping whip). "Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer! and Vixen! On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Dunder and Blitzen!"

(QUARTETTE, as bells jingle.)

"Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way!

Oh, what fun it is to ride in a dear deer open sleigh!

Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way!

Oh, what fun it is to ride on the Eve of Christmas Day!"

CURTAIN.

## ACT II.

(Room fitted up as children's bedroom with fireplace and window.)

(Outside sounds of mingled crying and laughter. Enter PAPA "in his cap", leading night-robed HARRY, eating a stick of candy; followed by MAMMA "in her kerchief," leading night-robed WILLIE, crying violently.)

MAMMA. "Willie, you are very naughty! Making such a fuss—and the night before Christmas, too! Santa will not bring you a thing! Look at Harry, how happy *he* is!"

WILLIE (sobbing). "Yes! he's *happy*—because-he-got-all-my-candy!" (Explodes.)

HARRY. "He! He! He! not 'til *he* tried to get *mine*! He! He! He!" (Vigorously attacks candy again.)

PAPA. "Tut, tut, tut! Acting like this, just after prayers, too!—and the night before Christmas! ('Phone bell rings) Keep quiet, children—(At the 'phone). Yes, *this* is 'NAUGHTY TWO'—; 'Long distance, you say?—what's that?—louder, please—'on the way south'?—who?—who?—(manner changes—cautions children with finger) 'Santa!! Claus!!'—'A little bird tells you——' what?—'two children, Harry and Willie, are quarrelling'? But, Santa!—Central? 'somebody has broken in'?—Do try to get that connection again, won't you, please? It's *very* important! Hangs up—long wait—dead silence—children frightened—bell rings again) Yes, Central!—'can't get it'?—*Too* bad!" (Hangs up. Both children cry)

MAMMA (sympathetically). "Don't cry, children. Kiss and make up. I *think* it will be all right, then."

CHILDREN (kiss—then, together—hand in hand—bowing to audience and pointing at each other). "He's my dear, dear brother Willie—Harry."

HARRY. "Here, Willie, take *my* candy!"

WILLIE.. "No, Harry, only *half* of it!"



PAPA AND MAMMA (together and to audience). "Ar'n't they *perfect?*"

PAPA. "Come, now for the stockings! I'm *sure* that Santa will be here. He *never* misses *good* children."

(All go to the fireplace and mirthfully hang up stockings. MAMMA *puts to bed* WILLIE and PAPA HARRY. Tucking them in tenderly and carefully each kisses both).

WILLIE. "Good-night, Mamma!"

HARRY. "Good-night, Papa!"

WILLIE. "Good-night, Papa!"

HARRY. "Good-night, Mamma!"

BOTH (*together*). "Good-night, dear Mamma and Papa!"

PAPA AND MAMMA. "Good-night, darlings!"

(The boys, folded visibly tight in each other's arms, go to sleep *instantly*.)

PAPA AND MAMMA (standing over the bed—together). "Are—not—they—just—too—sweet—for—*any*—thing?"

(Tiptoeing away, they turn, admire, return and softly put arms under pillows to find whistles.)

MAMMA (*gently blowing hers*). "I do declare! Ready to give the alarm!"

PAPA. "Let's put them back?"

(Do so, and, lowering gas, tiptoe out.)

(After a considerable silence a *good* reader behind the scenes begins:)

"'Twas the night before Christmas——"

(Silence—Wind—Distant sleigh-bells and chimes ("It came upon a midnight clear"—Long silence—Quartette, under window ("Silent Night" Silence.)

READER:—

“When, all through the house,  
Not a creature was stirring,  
Not even a mouse——”

HARRY (whispering), “Willie! Willie!”

WILLIE (with bated breath.) “Harry, if you *talk*, I’ll tell  
mamma!”

READER:—

“The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,—

(Stockings swing to and fro.)

In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;”

WILLIE AND HARRY, tittering, blow whistles quietly.)

READER:—

“The children were nestled all snug in their beds,”—

CHILDREN (hug each other noticeably, sit up in bed and say  
together): “Sure!”

READER:—

“While visions of sugar-plums danced through their heads.”

(A gorgeous vision of sugar-plums here descends and dances  
over their heads.)

BOYS. “Yum! yum! yum!”

READER:—

“And mamma in her kerchief, and papa in his cap,  
Had just settled their brains

For a long winter’s nap,——

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

(Great clatter.)

CHILDREN (starting up). “Papa! Mamma! Mamma!  
Papa! Pa-Pa! Mam-ma!” (Blow whistles).

READER:—

“ Pa sprang from his bed to see——”

PAPA (bursting in—to audience). “ What’s the matter?  
What is the matter?”

READER:—

“ Away to the window Pa flies like a flash! (he does so)  
Tears open the shutters and throws up the sash!”

(Does so.)

PAPA (slowly with head out window):

“ The moon, on the breast of the new-fallen snow,  
Gives a lustre of mid-day to objects below;”

(Pause and silence.)

READER:—

“ When what to his wondering eyes should appear  
But——”

PAPA (excitedly, turning to audience):—

“ A—miniature—sleigh, and —eight—tiny—reindeer!  
With—a——little—old—driver,——

So—lively—and—quick,

(Rapidly) I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!

(SANTA laughs outside.)

“ More rapid than eagles his coursers they came!”

And he whistled (SANTA whistles), and shouted

(SANTA shouts), and called them by name!”

(PAPA again puts head out window.)

SANTA (outside, snapping whip as sleigh-bells ring):—

“ Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer! Now,  
Vixen!

On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Dunder and Blitzen!

To the top of the porch!

To the top of the wall!

Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away, all!”

READER:—

“ As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly.

When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky——,

So up to the house-top the coursers they flew (hoof sounds)

With the sleigh full of toys (sounds of toy-drums, horns, sleigh-bells, etc.),

And St. Nicholas, too (SANTA laughs).

And then in a twinkling was heard on the roof

The prancing and pawing (prancing and pawing) of each little hoof."

PAPA (at window). "I'll draw in my head and turn me around——(Great noises in the chimney!)

PAPA (excitedly). "Down the chimney——"

SANTA (entering). "St. Nicholas comes with a bound!" (bows). (PAPA in hiding, points toward SANTA; Children visibly cuddle up.)

SANTA (thoughtfully—naming local school). "*That's done! What next? (Examines note-book). 'Harry and Willie' 'Harry and Willie'? Why! a little bird told me they had been NAUGHTY! This is no place for Santa Claus! 'Up the chimney he goes!'*"

(He does so. Children bawl!)

READER (very slowly and solemnly). "Now—will—you—be—GOOD?"

(Bell tolls.)

CURTAIN.

## ACT III.

(Curtain rises on house-top scene roughly charcoaled on sheet and well to the front. Snow falls. Three distant bells strike—successively—two o'clock. Silence. Quartette sings; “It came upon a midnight clear.” Silence. Sleigh-bells. Whinny and pawing of deer.

SANTA (behind scene). “Dasher! Dancer! Comet! *quiet* boys!—I tell you what! this sleigh (sleigh bells) is getting *low* (strikes toy drum); and there's that orphan asylum, still (makes toy sheep go ‘bah-h-’); and the orthopaedic hospital (blows toy whistle); to say nothing of the Old Folks' Home (shakes baby-rattle—sleigh-bells, whinny and pawing of deer). Dunder and Blitzen! Stop that noise—or I'm done for! (Clocks strike half hour) Half past two! I must be off! where next? Let me look at my note-book (reads) ‘But they-kissed-and-made-up’! ‘Kissed and made up’? Who? (Reads) ‘Harry-and-Willie’. ‘Harry and Willie’? Why, I must have *overlooked* that! *That* makes a difference! Down the chimney I go, again!—But—whew—w—w—w—what a narrow escape for those two boys!”

(Great scratching of descent and bump of landing. Silence. House-top scene rises on that of Act II. SANTA at centre, in pantomime—lights low.

READER:—

“He was dressed all in fur,  
 From his head to his foot (SANTA points)  
 And his clothes were all tarnished  
 With ashes and soot (brushes);  
 A bundle of toys (shakes them)  
 He had flung from his back (does so)  
 And he looks like a peddler  
 Just opening his pack (does so).  
 His eyes how they twinkled (snaps them);  
 His dimples (points) how merry!

His cheeks were like roses,  
 His nose like a cherry  
 (Rubs color off and studies it.)  
 His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow  
 (Forms with lips 'prisms'),  
 And the beard (strokes it) on his chin  
 Was as white as the snow,  
 The stump of his pipe (clinches it),  
 He held tight in his teeth,  
 The smoke it encircled (gesture)  
 His head like a wreath.  
 He had a broad face (broadens it),  
 And a round little belly  
 That shook, when he laughed (laughs all over),  
 Like a bowlful of jelly,  
 He was chubby and plumb (gesture)  
 A right jolly (shakes) old elf,—  
 And Pa laughed (Papa suppresses laugh)  
 When he saw him,  
 In spite of himself,  
 A wink (wink) of his eyes,  
 And a twist (twist) of his head,  
 Soon gave him to know  
 (PAPA shows reassurance)  
 He had nothing to dread.  
 He spoke not a word (finger on lips),  
 But went straight to his work (works),  
 And filled all the stockings (does so);  
 Then turned with a jerk (jerk)  
 And, laying his finger aside of his nose (does so),  
 And giving a nod (nods)  
 Up the chimney he——"  
 (SANTA tries to leave! PAPA, MAMMA, HARRY AND WILLIE  
 start after, catch and hold him!)

READER:—

"Up the chimney he rose?"

FOUR (pointing at SANTA). "Ah! he tried!"

READER:—

"He sprang to his sleigh?"

FOUR (pointing). "What! Inside?"

READER:—

"To his team gave a whistle?"

FOUR (pointing). "When he's let!"

READER:—

"And they all flew away like the down of a thistle?"

FOUR (pointing). "Not just yet!"

READER:—

"But it's time now to end and to pass out of sight——"

THE FIVE (SANTA in middle, HARRY and WILLIE on either side and PAPA and MAMMA at ends holding hands and bowing):

"Happy Christmas to all and"——(the five hold up fingers and almost whisper). "Hark! The Christmas waits!"

(Quartette sings, as in distance, one stanza of "Christians Awake!"—Silence; then, as right under window, one stanza of "Happy Angels!"—Silence; then, as in distance again, one stanza of "Silent Night"—Silence.)

(The FIVE, together and very softly):

"To all a good-night!"

Chimes.

CURTAIN.

(Note: The arrangement of this play evidently allows omissions; but the writer, having aimed at a continuity of thought throughout, would regret overmuch abbreviation.)

## Happy Angels.

*With spirit.*

Hap - py an - gels! still ye dwell in yon worlds of glo - ry; And in joy - ous

an - thems swell, Love's redeem - ing sto - ry, Shin - ing mul - ti - tudes! shin - ing

mul - ti - tudes! shining multitudes ye came! Our Redeem - er to proclaim;

Still our song is just the same—Glo - ry! Glo - ry! Glo - ry be to God!

## Christians, Awake!

*f*  
Chris - tians, a - wake, sa - lute the hap - py morn, Where - on the

Saviour of man - kind was born; Rise to a - dore the mys - ter - y of love,



## Christians, Awake!

Which hosts of an-gels chant-ed from a - bove; With them the joy - ful

The first system of musical notation for the song 'Christians, Awake!'. It consists of a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with a harmonic accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: 'Which hosts of an-gels chant-ed from a - bove; With them the joy - ful'.

ti-dings first be - gun Of God in - car-nate and the Vir - gin's Son.

The second system of musical notation. The treble staff continues the melody, and the bass staff provides accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'ti-dings first be - gun Of God in - car-nate and the Vir - gin's Son.'

## It Came Upon the Midnight Clear.

*p* It came up - on the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,

The first system of musical notation for 'It Came Upon the Midnight Clear.' It features a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is present at the beginning. The lyrics are: 'It came up - on the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,'.

From an - gels bending near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:

The second system of musical notation. The lyrics are: 'From an - gels bending near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:'.

*mf* "Peace on the earth, good-will to men From heaven's all-gracious King;"

The third system of musical notation. A dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) is present. The lyrics are: '"Peace on the earth, good-will to men From heaven's all-gracious King;''

*mf* The world in sol-emn still-ness lay To hear the an - gels sing.

The fourth and final system of musical notation. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. The lyrics are: 'The world in sol-emn still-ness lay To hear the an - gels sing.'







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