

CHRISTMAS: NAUGHTY AND NICE

[These five one-acts were performed together to make a Christmas show by Dark Water Theatre at the Old Port Playhouse, Portland, Maine, December, 2009. “Honest Xmas Presents” also appears in *Collected Plays* as part of *A History of Really, Really Bad Ideas* (Volume VI). “Nuns and Buns” appears as “Beware of Nuns Throwing Buns” in the same volume. “A Christmas Mistake” was originally a story published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2005. “A Christmas Miracle at the B.O.O.M.” also appears in Volume IV. “The Christmas to End All Christmases” was written for the 2009 show and appears here in a slightly modified version.]

“ . . . it melds the perversely funny with the poignant.”
The Portland Phoenix, 12/16/2009

HONEST XMAS PRESENTS

(one-act)

CHARACTERS: (4)

(The Functional Family, all played by adults)

BILLY FUNCTIONAL, eleven,
MELISSA FUNCTIONAL, thirteen
MOM, indulgent American mother
DAD, indulgent American father
GRAN, senile, male or female

SETTING: A living room in America

(The family is about to open its Xmas presents)

(MELISSA comes in late)

MOM Okay, everybody — now that we're all here *finally*, Melissa —
I guess it's that time!

MELISSA I'm so sorry! (She's not sorry)

MOM My word! It's Christmas again!

MELISSA Oh, do we have to! I think this is so dorky.

DAD We've got to exchange presents!

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MELISSA No, we don't. There's no rule!

BILLY Come on, Melissa! Or we're never going to get them open!

MELISSA Oh, you just want things. You're such a child!

DAD Leave him alone now, Melissa. He's been very good this morning.

MELISSA Only because he thinks he'll get better presents that way.

BILLY Mom!

MOM (very calmly, rationally) Now you two, I don't want to hear this.

DAD (very calmly, rationally) Can we have one holiday — one — where everybody gets along? Is that too much to ask, hmm?

GRAN (drooling, makes sounds) (sound of slurp!) Slurp! Presents! . . . Yeah, presents!

BILLY Gran's drooling all over herself again.

MOM No, she's not. It's just a little human moisture. (Gets up, cleans GRAN off)

DAD Nothing to be so upset about. How you doing, Gran?

GRAN (drooling, makes sounds) Slurp! Slurp! (Topples over sideways)

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MELISSA She is so gross!

MOM Melissa! (MOM rights GRAN)

MELISSA Well, she is!

BILLY So are you!

MELISSA Dad!

DAD Just calm down now, young man. Or maybe there won't be any presents around here!

BILLY Jeez!

GRAN (wildly) Jeez means Jesus! . . . Praise Jesus! (Topples over again)

BILLY Mom, Gran toppled over again.

MOM (straightening GRAN) It's all right, Gran. Everything is just fine. See, she's as right as rain!

GRAN (drooling, making noises) Slurp! Slurp!

DAD Well, I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm ready for some Christmas presents!

ALL (except for MELISSA) Yay! (They clap)

DAD Okay, who's first?

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- MOM Why don't you hand them out from the pile, honey? You're just so good at that kind of thing.
- DAD All right, if everyone agrees.
- MELISSA I don't.
- DAD (calmly) Now, Melissa, I think maybe we've heard just about enough of that today. Don't you?
- MOM Not too hard on her, dear. We don't want to harm her self-esteem.
- DAD I know, honey. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Melissa. I got carried away. Do you forgive me?
- MELISSA (sulkily) Well, I don't know . . . I'll have to see.
- MOM See, she's a good girl! She's always willing to reconsider.
- MELISSA I'm not a girl. I'm a woman!
- DAD She's probably going to be a diplomat or something.
- BILLY What about me? I want to be a diplomat too.
- MOM You will be, Billy, if that's what you want. It's just a matter of putting your mind to it!
- DAD That's right! Now what do you say to us putting our minds to these Christmas gifts?

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MOM / BILLY Okay! Right on!

GRAN Where the fuck's mine?

DAD / MOM Gran!

MOM (quietly) Your language, Gran. (to DAD) What are we going to do about this, honey?

BILLY She's sorry. Let's go!

DAD Okay! Here we go. (Grabs a present from the pile) This one Says: From Billy to . . . The handwriting's a little hard to read. To . . . M . . . Melissa! Here you go, Muffin!

MELISSA I've asked you and asked you not to call me that anymore. My name is Melissa!

DAD Sorry. I'll try to remember.

MOM Your dad calls you that, sweetie, because he wanted Muffin to be your name when you were baptized, but they made a mistake in some office somewhere, and so your name never got officially registered that way. And that's why —

MELISSA I don't care! Can we get this over with, or what?

BILLY Open mine! Open mine!

MELISSA (irritated) Okay, I will! (Tears off the wrapping)

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- MOM What did your brother get you, honey?
- MELISSA (removing the last of the wrapping) Yuck! It's dog poop!
(Holds it up)
- BILLY Do you like it?
- MELISSA Mom, Billy gave me dog poop! (Waves it) This is so gross!
- MOM Now, honey, don't be negative. You know how much Billy
likes toys like that.
- BILLY It's supposed to be funny.
- DAD And it must have cost Billy quite a lot to give that to you
instead of keeping it for himself.
- MELISSA Well, he can keep it for himself, for all I care. The last thing
I need in my room is some "gosh darn" plastic dog poop.
- BILLY (after a beat) It's not plastic.
- MELISSA Oo! (Throws it down) Yuck! Billy, you have such bad taste!
- BILLY I didn't ask you to taste it!
- MELISSA I swear to god you are so immature.
- MOM He's only eleven, honey. Give him a little space.

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- MELISSA I'll give him a little space all right — in the attic — and forget the key.
- GRAN (out of nowhere) You keep me in the attic!
- MOM Gran, you know that's not true!
- GRAN It is too true. And you beat me!
- DAD Gran, we do not! How can you say these things?!
- GRAN I open my mouth and they just pop out.
- DAD What if people heard you? They'd want to arrest us.
- GRAN Should arrest you. Should arrest us all! Sons of bitches!
- DAD Okay, who's next here?
- MOM (grabbing from the pile) Hey! Here's a present for me!
- BILLY Go, Mom!
- DAD What is it, honey?
- MOM I hope it's something I can use around the house. You didn't go spending hard-earned money on something I don't even need for myself, now did you!? (She opens the package)
- BILLY What is it?

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- MOM I don't quite know. Let's see what it says here. (reading)
"For removal of . . . piles." Oh . . . It's a pile remover.
- DAD Laser! It's called Pile Driver. Drives him up back into the body.
- MOM Why, thank you. honey. It's just what I've been wanting.
- DAD Me too. I know how hard it's been to get you to make an appointment at the hospital, so I saw this little gadget from The Sharper Image and so I thought . . .
- MOM It's perfect. And just what I wanted.
- MELISSA I'm not going to get piles.
- BILLY You are too! Right on your face.
- MELISSA You're already a pile.
- BILLY And they're going to hang down off your chin.
- GRAN I've got piles! . . . You want to see 'em? (Gets up, starts to pull up her dress) Big ones!
- DAD That's all right, Gran. You don't have to show us.
- GRAN Why not? You might not believe me. You don't believe me about anything else I say.
- MOM We believe you, Gran. We believe you. . . . Who's next now?

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DAD (grabbing a present) Let's see who this one's for. (checking)
Well, how about that! It's for yours truly.

BILLY Go, Dad!

MOM Go ahead, open it up!

DAD (unwrapping the gift) It's from (reading) "a loving wife."
Now who could that be?! (General giggles. DAD and MOM
nuzzle a bit) (removing the last of the wrapping) Well, would
you look at this! (holds it up) It's a penis enlarger. Goodness,
it's just what I need. How did you know, honey?

MOM I thought it might be something you'd like! You're not the only
one who can shop at The Sharper Image!

(They nuzzle again)

BILLY How does it work?

MOM It clamps right on, and then it does something to the glans and
something underneath. They say there's very little bleeding at all.

DAD Fantastic!

BILLY Try it out, Dad.

DAD Should I? (Stands up)

MOM I think it takes reading the instructions. The clerk was very
insistent on that.

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DAD Maybe we better wait then. What have I always told you kids?

BILLY / MELISSA (sarcastically) “Always read the instructions”!

DAD “And it shall follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”

MOM That is so nice, dear. Perfect for Christmas.

BILLY How come I haven’t got any presents yet?

MOM Your turn’s coming, Billy.

MELISSA I bought Billy a present.

BILLY You did?

MELISSA Yeah, it’s there somewhere.

DAD Well, how wonderful! See, Melissa’s part of the family after all!

MOM (finding the gift) Here it is! (Hands it to BILLY)

BILLY Wow! What is it, Melissa?

MELISSA You’ll just have to open it and see.

BILLY (tearing off the wrapping) Hey, it’s candy!

MOM How nice!

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DAD Terrific, Melissa!

MELISSA (knowing that he will) Now don't eat it yet.

BILLY Why? It looks great!

MELISSA Save it for a rainy day.

BILLY No way! I'm gonna eat it right now. (Pops the candy into his mouth, makes appreciative noises) Hm, yummy! What kind is it?

MELISSA . . . Chocolate-covered E.coli.

BILLY You mean that bacteria that kills kids?

MELISSA Afraid so.

BILLY Mom! Melissa poisoned me!

MOM Oh, it's just a little joke, Billy. (not so sure, to MELISSA) Isn't it?

MELISSA Maybe.

BILLY I'm going to die! I'm going to die!

DAD Melissa, are you fibbing?

MELISSA I'm not gonna say. You can't make me. I've got free speech.

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- GRAN Hit her! Hit the little bitch!
- MOM Gran, what did I tell you about your language? How do you think these children are going to grow up if they hear language like that?
- GRAN Sons of bitches! Sons of fucking bitches!
- MOM All right, I guess that's enough present-giving for today.
- BILLY But what about my E.coli?!
- MELISSA Oh, for god's sake, I didn't give you E.coli. . . . It's just a Mickey Finn.
- BILLY Oh, my god! (Falls flat, out cold, but his legs in the air)
- DAD (going to him) Billy! Billy!
- MOM Oh, sweet Jesus!
- GRAN Praise Jesus! Praise Him!
- MELISSA Oh, what's everybody getting so excited about? It'll just keep Billy quiet for a day or so. Is that so bad?
- DAD Billy? . . . Billy? (Checks him) You're sure it's just a Mickey Finn?
- MELISSA (irritated) I swear! God, what do you take me for!

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MOM (to DAD) Do you think we should just let him sleep it off?

MELISSA Listen to how quiet it is around here.

(All listen. It is quiet)

MOM It is sort of nice.

GRAN (after a beat) What the fuck did you get for me?

MELISSA Billy'll be fine! Just leave him be. Besides, I have another present to give.

DAD You do?

MELISSA It's for Gran.

GRAN For me?

MELISSA I bought it on behalf of the whole family.

GRAN What the hell is it? It'd better be good, you little shit!

MELISSA (handing the present to GRAN) Here it is. Open it.

GRAN (opening the present, tries to read it) I can't read it without my glasses. What the fuck does it say?

MELISSA Here, let me read it for you, Gran. (Starts to take the piece of paper)

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GRAN I can read it myself! Fuck you! (making it out slowly)
“To Gran . . . from us all. . . please accept this gift certificate,
good at any time, for the services of Dr. Kevorkian of Michigan,
all expenses paid.”

(Pause)

MOM Well, how thoughtful!

DAD Yes!

BILLY (waking up temporarily from his Mickey Finn, sticking his arm up
from the floor as a salute) You rule, Melissa! (Conks back out)

BLACKOUT

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

A Christmas Mistake

CHARACTERS: (2) plus a life-size hand puppet*

FATHER, male, any type, age 25-40

TINA, a realistic, cute hand puppet that looks like a five-year-old girl, not a Muppet or anything grotesque

HOMELESS SANTA, male with bushy white beard but not fat, age 35-70

SETTING: A suggestion of the railing of the Golden Gate Bridge as you walk over the bridge

TONE: Play very realistically even though it uses a puppet character.

***Note: It is possible for an adult female to play the little girl, but no child actor, please**

(The FATHER enters, dressed for cold weather. He carries his daughter in his arms)

FATHER: (to audience) A few years ago, this was, I was walking across the Golden Gate Bridge on Christmas Eve carrying my daughter, who was five at the time. It wasn't that late, but already it was nearly dark. And cold. (Shivers) I told Tina that we should go home because she was sick and needed to rest.

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(The FATHER should provide the voice for the puppet: something with a hint of the child-like but not too cartoon or outlandish)

TINA: But I've never been *on* the bridge!

FATHER: She said.

TINA: If I don't do it now, when will I?

FATHER: Tina knew that she had a problem with her spine that made it hard for her to walk and that was going to end her life early. (lowering his voice) In fact, she died before she turned six. (Places his finger to his lips to indicate that he does not want the daughter to hear this)

TINA: Who you talking to, Daddy?

FATHER: Just some people.

TINA: Can I get down now?

FATHER: No, Sweetie, you'd better not.

TINA: I can still walk.

FATHER: I don't think it's a good idea, Tina.

TINA: (somewhat resigned but not really) Okay!

FATHER: That night we were happy, looking all around at the bright lights of the several cities that we could see.

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TINA: (jumping, pointing) Look, Daddy! Look at those! Aren't they pretty!?

FATHER: It was nippy, but Tina was bundled up, as I was, all nice and toasty. Just our faces were cold. We even had muffins, chocolate ones, that we had brought at a store on Lombard Street. (Takes a muffin out of a paper bag) "Do you want your muffin now, honey?" I asked her.

TINA: Okay.

FATHER: (trying to handing it to her) You got it?

TINA: Yeah, but I want to put it in my coat pocket. I'll wait a few minutes. I want to make mine last. Can you help me, Daddy?

FATHER: Of course I can.

(He puts the chocolate muffin in the puppet's coat pocket)

FATHER: I gave her a kiss on the forehead (He does) And we walked along a bit more. (He moves along the bridge) Just as we were about to turn back and go home and get completely warm, Tina spotted a man up ahead.

(The HOMELESS MAN enters, approaching the bridge as if he means to jump from it)

TINA: Daddy, look! (Points at the man)

FATHER: I couldn't move. One of his legs was already over the railing on the bridge. He wasn't that large a man, nor was he dressed in red, but he did have a bushy white beard, and –

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TINA: Look! It's Santa Claus!

FATHER: He was probably homeless. "I don't think so," I said.

TINA: Yes, it is! Can we go see him? Huh? *Please!*

FATHER: I really didn't know what to do. I felt sorry for the man, who looked like he might very well be going to jump, apparently neither seeing nor hearing us, so concentrated was he on the dark water below.

(The HOMELESS MAN leans over the bridge, but still has one leg on the ground)

FATHER: I made a decision then that I have never regretted. About how many things can one say that? Still holding my daughter, I moved toward the homeless man, who finally heard us and turned his head. (He does) The look of abject desolation in his drunken eyes was so searing that I could not come any closer. (The FATHER stops) He looked back down at the water far below and hitched his body in an attempt to get his other leg over the railing.

(The HOMELESS MAN is torn between following through and hesitating)

TINA: What's Santa doing? He looks so skinny. Is he sick?

FATHER: My tongue was unable to form any words, and I was about to turn back toward the way we'd come, sure there was nothing I could do to save the man if he was that far gone, and I

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(cont'd.)

certainly did not want my daughter to see him commit suicide right before her eyes. (Covers the daughter's eyes with his hand) Yet before I could move, Tina called out to him.

TINA: Look what I have for you, Santa! (Reaches into her coat pocket)

FATHER: She was holding out her chocolate muffin, her little hand sticky because the muffin had gotten partly crushed in her coat pocket. The homeless man looked back, wavering, his eyes bright in the gleaming lights from the cities all around us.

HOMELESS MAN: (shaking his head) No. No.

TINA: But you've got to keep you strength up! I don't have any cookies and milk right now. But you can have my muffin. My daddy says it'll make you fat.

FATHER: Again she held it out.

HOMELESS MAN: Don't want to anymore.

FATHER: He mumbled and looked back toward the water. His body was poised.

(The HOMELESS MAN puts his other leg over the railing)

TINA: But you've got to deliver all the toys tonight, don't you? To all the boys and girls everywhere, isn't that right?

HOMELESS MAN: No, little girl, I don't.

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TINA: At least to the good ones!

HOMELESS MAN: Not happening.

TINA: Not even to me?

FATHER: The man's eyes flickered, then met mine, and he laughed.

HOMELESS MAN: Okay, I guess I have to. For you at least.

TINA: Here you go. (Holds out the muffin, probably with the FATHER's help)

FATHER: He took Tina's muffin, and I helped him down from the railing.
(He does) He went his way carrying the chocolate muffin. "You ready, honey?" I said, and then I took my sweet, sweet daughter home for that final Christmas.

(He walks off talking very softly to TINA)

SLOW FADE

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

NUNS AND BUNS

CHARACTERS: (2)

Sister Mary Magdalene, a Liberal Nun, in traditional garb,
played by a Female or a Male in drag

Sister Thea, a Conservative Nun in traditional garb,
played by a Female or a Male in drag

Setting: A cafeteria line, then a lunch table

(The two nuns in their habits approach the food line)

THEA: I don't want to hear any more about, and that's all there is to it!

MAGDALENE: But we haven't finished the discussion.

THEA: As far as I'm concerned, yes we have. (Grabs s tray)

MAGDALENE: You start a topic and then you never want to finish it.
(Grabs s tray)

THEA: You'll just drive it into the ground, the way you always do, Sister
Mary Magdalene.

MAGDALENE: I do not! I bring up topics that need to be brought up.

THEA: I think you just like to argue.

MAGDALENE: All right, let's change the subject then. Let it be my
Christmas gift to you.

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THEA: (with a tray) Yes, let's do. It's not the Christmas we once knew, I suppose, but it's good that there are at least the two of us left to share it.

MAGDALENE: I love to eat out on Christmas. I'm so glad this place is open today.

THEA: Not quite a home-cooked meal, though, is it?

(They proceed to put food items on their trays, moving along)

MAGDALENE: I never said it when she was alive, but Sister Lourdes was a terrible cook.

THEA: You think so? I loved her pot roast. I miss her. I miss them all.

MAGDALENE: I'm afraid she made me curse under my breath.

THEA: I guess it doesn't take much then.

MAGDALENE: It was a venial sin at most.

THEA: It could have been mortal, depending on the precise words you cursed. Not that I need to hear them.

MAGDALENE: No, I've afraid you're quite wrong, Sister.

THEA: How can I be wrong when I have the Word of God on my side about cursing – and everything else?

MAGDALENE: Perhaps there is some question about whose side He's actually on!

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THEA: Sister, you are spoiling this Christmas.

MAGDALENE: It is not *I* that am spoiling it. I knew I should have come alone!

THEA: It was to keep you company. Where shall we sit?

MAGDALENE: Over there? (Pointing) You mustn't continue to think that nuns are allowed to travel only in pairs!

THEA: Thanks to people like you the Church is already backsliding on practice, to say nothing of dogma!

MAGDALENE: There is no progress without change!

THEA: I'm afraid, Sister, that, despite what you think, not all change is progress! Touché!

(They find a table)

MAGDALENE: Can we all get along? Please!

THEA: Don't quote at me. Besides, that Rodney King is hardly a role model!

MAGDALENE: All right, let me be quite rational about this. I am perfectly calm. (She isn't) I am merely saying that *perhaps* the Church has made certain dogmas just a bit too rigid.

THEA: No, you are trying to change a fundamental principle of our faith!

MAGDALENE: Am not.

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THEA: Are too. But no way in hell are you —

MAGDALENE: (shocked) Sister!

THEA: Excuse my Anglo-Saxon, Sister. But, as I said before, (very deliberately) no way in God's green *hell* is the doctrine of consubstantiation in the same league with *transubstantiation*. And it never will be! End of discussion!

(They continue to spread out the items they have selected to eat)

MAGDALENE: Oh, really? I agree that, yes, the Host — upon the priest's blessing at Mass — retains the accidents of what it once was, namely bread, as it indeed becomes the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. But why, oh why, can't there be a *little* room for at least a consideration of the other solution (i.e., *consubstantiation*) when *that* allows for a rational explanation of why the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ still look like a *piece of bread*! (Picks up a piece of bread and shakes it angrily)

THEA: How can I put this? — because it's *trans*, not *con*! Can't you understand anything?!

MAGDALENE: *Trans* doesn't always rule out *con*, as you'd know if you'd taught Latin as long as I have.

THEA: I'm afraid there's no getting around the fact that it's *trans*!

MAGDALENE: *Con*!

THEA: *Trans*!

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MAGDALENE: How about *trans and con*!

THEA: I have to sit hear and listen to garbage. Sister, this is downright heresy. Think back. Think back to the Thirty Years War, when our people died for the right to express this belief. And we *won*! We *won*! And we're not going to back down now! . . . I should have gotten a glass of juice. I'm quite parched, from arguing with you.

MAGDALENE: Well, I'm not backing down either. I think maybe there's a new movement afoot here.

THEA: (shocked) Sister! Don't be absurd.

MAGDALENE: I'll have you know that Consubstantiation isn't the only dogma I've been questioning,

THEA: I don't want to hear this filth. Especially on Christmas.

MAGDALENE: Well, you're going to.

THEA: I'm leaving then. (Starts to leave)

MAGDALENE: (grabbing her, pushing her back to her seat) Sit down, Sister!

THEA: This is outrageous.

MAGDALENE: Has it never crossed your mind that possibly, just possibly, the Protestants were on to something about *another* matter as well?

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THEA: You'll go too far one of these days, Sister. You going to eat that stuffing or not?

MAGDALENE: Stuff this. Maybe sprinkling water on a baby's forehead isn't . . . exactly . . . a real *baptism*!

THEA: You're not saying . . . ?

MAGDALENE: Just asking, Sister. What if God isn't really satisfied with just a few . . . itty-bitsy drops . . . like these! (Sticks fingers in her water glass and sprinkles some at Sister Thea's face)

THEA: Stop that! Are you out of your mind!?

MAGDALENE: Just a demonstration, Sister. Of how inadequate that must feel to Almighty God.

THEA: This issue was settled a long time ago, and it's no good digging it up all over again. There are enough problems in the Church today without —

MAGDALENE: Now if *I* were God —

THEA: (shocked) Sister Mary Magdalene!

MAGDALENE: I'm not saying I am. But if I *were* God, do you think I'd be satisfied that a soul was saved because somebody sprinkled just a bit of water on someone's forehead? When — When —

THEA: (melodramatically) Don't say it!

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MAGDALENE: When that person could have had his or her *entire body* immersed in water — the way a real God would like it!?

THEA: Oh, my god!

MAGDALENE: Now *that* would be a baptism! That would be a way to save a soul from eternal flames and guarantee admission to Heaven! . . . What do you say to that, Sister Thea? Wouldn't that be more satisfying if *you* were God?!

THEA: I can't breathe. You've absolutely gone past it now! Me, God?!

MAGDALENE: Breathe, Sister. Breathe good. We're making history here.

THEA: No, you're bringing down the Church to *their* level. It's the mysteries of our faith that have always nourished me! (Crosses herself)

MAGDALENE: Well, I'm here to tell you that things are changing.
(slangy) Important "stuff" is happening!

THEA: Not if I have my way, Sister Magdalene.

MAGDALENE: And just what way is that, may I ask? Huh? . . . *Huh?*

THEA: I'll . . . I'll . . . (stumped) I'll think of something. Eat your stuffing before I do!

MAGDALENE: Ha! Gotcha! (Takes a bread stick and throws it at Sister Thea) Gotcha!

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THEA: Hey! That hurt! Okay, since you don't want your stuffing, let's get rid of it. (Throws some stuffing at the other nun)

MAGDALENE: Hey!

THEA: And that's not all. (Grabs some other food, like a bun, and throws it at the other nun) God's Word will not be mocked!

MAGDALENE: Stop that! It's undignified. (Then throws something back at Thea)

THEA: You want to really get into it, eh? (Throws something else back)

MAGDALENE: That's the way you want it? Okay. How about this? (Throws salt from the salt shaker at Sister Thea) How you like that, Sister Thea?

THEA: You ain't seen nothing, Sister Mary . . . Prostitute!

MAGADELENE: Why you Sister Mary Bitch!

(With ad libs, they proceed to have an all-out food fight, throwing salt, pepper, stuffing, condiments, bread rolls, water, using the table as a shield, dodging behind it, launching "grenades" of food from their trays and whatever else is handy, running around until exhausted. Use food that can be cleaned up easily)

(SLOW MOTION with head bumps can also be used)

THEA: (sitting on the floor) Stop! *Stop!* This has gotten completely out of control!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

MAGDALENE: Do you give up then? Do you finally agree with me?
Finally!

THEA: No, Sister, no. Never! But you *have* made me . . . *incontinent!*

[In the Portland production, slow motion with a final head bump from Sister Thea against Sister Magdalene was used with the last line cut.]

BLACKOUT

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE at the OPEN MESS

CHARACTERS: (3)

CHET, a young Air Force captain, new to gay life

GRAHAM, an Air Force lieutenant colonel, a doctor,
who's been around a bit

SULLINS, an Air Force major, dressed in a Santa suit

SETTING: The bar of an Officers Open Mess, at a U.S.
military facility. CHET and GRAHAM are
sitting at a table for two off to the side, with
implied action by others out of the view of
the audience (Music, noises, voices)

(Onstage is a Christmas tree with a star on top)

CHET (stirring his drink with a swizzle stick) What do you
suppose makes a guy gay?

GRAHAM (Takes out a cigarette) Hey! Let's just enjoy it.

CHET I am! (about the cigarette) I thought you were giving those
up, doctor.

GRAHAM I don't have to take my own advice. We wouldn't want
people to be predictable, would we? Just like we're not
predicable — and see how we stand out in a crowd.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- CHET (sensing some melancholy) Are you sorry . . . about us?
- GRAHAM No, I'm not sorry. It's the best thing that's ever happened to me.
- CHET You're nice.
- GRAHAM It's the truth. . . . I hope.
- CHET (acknowledging the unseen others present) I wish I could squeeze your hand.
- GRAHAM (raises his hand invitingly, then quickly puts it down, looks around nervously) Have you told your wife yet?
- CHET Not yet.
- GRAHAM Will you?
- CHET She'll adjust. Or she won't! When I tell her how wonderful I feel . . . how open I feel, how . . .
- GRAHAM Yeah, I bet if your wife were here we could all dance together — taking appropriate turns of course.
- CHET (standing up, looking off) I think I see a free spot over on the edge of the dance floor. (Gesturing toward the dance floor) How about you and me?
- GRAHAM Yeah, sure.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- CHET What do you suppose they would do if we danced together?
- GRAHAM You start, and I'll join you later.
- CHET Why is it that people aren't even allowed to dance alone? All these rules!
- GRAHAM Nobody's stopping you.
- CHET Everybody would stare. More than stare if I asked you to dance.
- GRAHAM Oh? Getting philosophical since you came out?
- CHET Guess so. When I was straight, I never thought about if I could dance or not.
- GRAHAM Mustn't complain, though. Nobody likes a whiner. Even me.
- CHET Maybe if we —

(Suddenly MAJOR SULLINS, dressed as Santa Claus with a bag of toys, comes in, merry with Christmas cheer. He doesn't see CHET and GRAHAM)

- SULLINS Ho, ho, ho, everybody! Merry Christmas! (addressing the unseen club members) Okay, who wants to come over here and tell me what she wants for her Christmas? And I'll tell her what this Santa wants for his Christmas. Ho, ho, ho! (Laughs nastily)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- GRAHAM (quietly) Should I tell him I want you for Christmas?
- CHET (rather loudly) You've already got me!
- GRAHAM Shhh! (Looks around nervously)
- CHET Don't be so nervous. I love you.
- GRAHAM Sorry, it's a reflex. Part of survival training. They teach you.
- CHET You act like you're going to be shot.
- GRAHAM Naw, we won't be together long enough for that to happen. (Takes a gulp of his drink)
- SULLINS (singing "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen, then breaking off) Hey, where's some music around this place? I want to dance! (Goes off. Music comes on)
- CHET Sullins has the right idea. (to GRAHAM) I want to dance with you. (Holds out his hand) Come on!
- GRAHAM Is this that homosexual agenda I keep hearing about?
- CHET Someday we will.
- GRAHAM I doubt it. Old Scrooge there will never have a conversion.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- CHET If I can come out, and find it so wonderful, why shouldn't everybody else?
- GRAHAM You're just in love with sex, kid.
- CHET No, I'm just in love with dancing.
- GRAHAM We can go back to my room and turn on the stereo and dance till —
- CHET No, here. Tonight. This very night.
- GRAHAM Can you imagine the two of us holding each other in the Officers Mess? Can you?
- CHET Let's make a wish on that.(Points to star on the Christmas tree) What do you say?
- GRAHAM You're insubordinate, captain!
- CHET Come on. Do I have to do it alone? (Goes closer to the Christmas tree) I wish — I wish that we could always feel exactly the way we do right now.
- GRAHAM Didn't Dorian Gray make a wish like that?
- CHET Come on! Come over here. (whispering) Or I'll grab your leg in public!
- GRAHAM (coming closer to CHET near the tree) Okay, okay! Let me see — I've got it! Wish I may, wish I might. Hope we're still in love by tomorrow night!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- CHET You're a terrible poet.
- GRAHAM It may not scan, but the meat is there.
- CHET Why are you so bitter?
- GRAHAM I've been at this longer than you have.
- CHET Even on Christmas Eve?
- GRAHAM What better time? That's when people have to be especially wary of slipping on sugary-wugary candy canes.
- CHET You! . . . Well, I almost got you to make the wish.
- GRAHAM Tomorrow the world!
- CHET (going back to the table) If you did dance with me, we might start a trend. If nobody fights back, soldier, nothing ever changes.
- GRAHAM You trying to earn a purple heart?
- CHET It takes more guts to dance with you than for me to drop a bomb.
- GRAHAM (joshing) But Pilgrims of the Confraternity of St. Anne have to be careful!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- CHET Confraternity of St. Anne! We have to resort to that kind of roundabout bullshit in this day and age!
- GRAHAM You calling me a coward?
- CHET I'm just saying it would be brave to dance, that's all. A little dance.
- GRAHAM Know what? If you call a Chinese a coward, it's not considered much of an insult. The Chinese are real survivors, have you noticed? Have you ever been to China?
- CHET Are you changing the subject?
- GRAHAM Of course not. By god, we'll dance for our country! And no doubt one day the Daughters of Gay Liberation will erect a monument to us.
- CHET They might.
- GRAHAM To our corpses. And the plaque will read — To the Conquerors, Who Were Not Afraid!
- CHET It might.
- GRAHAM Until Major Santa Claus there comes along with his machine gun and blasts out the lettering and puts "Goddamn, Fucking Queers" there instead.
- CHET I don't intend to stand by and let anybody push my face in.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- GRAHAM (sighing) Why do I always fall for pilots? Does that make me a Sky Queen?
- CHET (bridling) I don't think it's necessary to be a 'queen' of any kind.
- GRAHAM Oh, don't be so uptight about being a little . . . (wiggles his hand) you know. You like doctors, so you're an Ether Queen.
- CHET Somebody has to be a man!
- GRAHAM I doubt that our dance act would be interpreted as manly.
- CHET I wasn't a sissy before. Why should I be one now?
- GRAHAM You'll learn to keep your tail between your legs, just like the rest of us, stud.
- CHET (meaning SULLINS) That little rooster can do what he wants. But we have to —
- GRAHAM Chet, we can't have everything. (Trying to soften the strain) Besides, I've got you. (He reaches under the table to touch CHET's knee briefly)
- CHET We're supposed to be content with a sneaky touch under the table?
- GRAHAM Whoa, mister! Slow down! . . . What time is it?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

CHET (looking at his watch) Ten to twelve.

GRAHAM In ten minutes we'll have been in love for two weeks.

CHET Is that a record?

GRAHAM At this velocity, yes.

(There is an offstage whooping-it-up noise from SULLINS)

CHET Sounds like he's having a good time.

GRAHAM We could go up to my room and forget about dancing and make love. Of course that would be sodomy — and on Christmas too!

CHET Why is it gays are so often bitchy?

GRAHAM Am I bitchy?

CHET There's a streak there.

GRAHAM Ah, the unjaded eye of the neophyte. (Bows to him)
I suppose we're 'bitchy' because that's where our frustrations go — if you're seeking my professional medical opinion.

CHET Don't you get fed up pretending to be straight, making up endless stories to deflect suspicion from yourself?

GRAHAM So sick you wouldn't believe.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- CHET And I used to make fag jokes!
- GRAHAM We forgive you that. Just don't turn bitchy. Promise?
- CHET I don't intend to.
- GRAHAM There are some who might say it's that trait that makes us witty.
- CHET I suppose being bitchy isn't as bad as raping peasants.
- GRAHAM Hey, heavy . . .
- CHET I'm beginning to get tired of thinking about all this.
(Gestures toward the offstage club members) They don't have to analyze and analyze.
- GRAHAM They have to pay. They have to raise children. I only have to swab their throats occasionally.
- CHET It's still unfair.
- GRAHAM You're supposed to say "I'd love to have you swab my throat sometime." Come on, Chet, we're supposed to take all our resentments out in sex, got it?
- CHET We've got as much right as anybody else.
- GRAHAM Are you serious, boy? Here's what you've got, boy?
(Takes CHET's swizzle stick from his drink and snaps it in two or tosses it away) Besides, tell the truth, wouldn't

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

(cont'd.)

you be shocked out of your Southern Illinois mind
if you saw two fags snuggling up in a public place?
Be truthful now.

CHET I'd get used to it — fast.

GRAHAM Rome will fall.

CHET Oh, come on!

GRAHAM You're right. It's already fallen. Never mind — I must
be drunk. (Finishes his drink) I was never that articulate
really. I was never . . .

CHET I think you're fine just the way you are.

GRAHAM That's what lovers always say — just before they begin
to make 'slight revisions' in the beloved.

CHET Really? What are you going to change me into?

GRAHAM The first thing is I'm going to make you shave closer.
(Touches his own cheek)

CHET (flirtatiously) Do I irritate you?

GRAHAM (grasping CHET's forearm) Oh, God, why can't we stay
like this forever? Why must it turn into something . . .
something crumbling at the edges, the way it did with
Ron, with Frank.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- CHET That doesn't have to happen.
- GRAHAM Maybe not. (Smiles wanly) I guess I'm taking myself too seriously. . . . But there are some things we can depend on. Patients will break their bones and get diaper rash . . . and lovers will continue to fall out of love.
- CHET I bet if we held each other near that Christmas tree, we'd never change.
- GRAHAM If we only dared . . .
- CHET Come on. Let's dance. (Holds out his hand) What do you say?
- (Suddenly MAJOR SULLINS staggers in, notices them, comes over)
- SULLINS (clapping CHET on the back) Hey, Swigert, you having a good time?
- CHET Can't complain.
- SULLINS No dates, you two — on Christmas Eve?
- CHET Afraid we've just got each other.
- SULLINS Jesus, that's not much!
- CHET So they say.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- SULLINS Guess you two will have to dance together then!
 (Laugh)
- CHET Yeah, guess we'll have to. (Stands up) You know how
 it is when you're in love. You do foolish things. (to
 GRAHAM) You want to dance, solider?
- SULLINS (amused, staggering, thinking they're just joking) Now
 if he kisses you, be sure not to giggle!
- GRAHAM Don't worry, major. I won't giggle. (He looks at
 CHET's extended hand) Well, I can always practice
 medicine somewhere else, I suppose. And I'm so tired of
 my own cynicism.
- (He gets up, takes CHET's hand. They walk hand in hand toward
the Christmas tree. They face each other, then slowly encircle
their arms around each other, and begin a slow dance)
- SULLINS (taking it all as a big joke) Whoopee! Aren't we sweet!
- CHET (to GRAHAM) How you doin'?
- GRAHAM So far, so good, though my legs are weak. (CHET swirls
 him around)
- SULLINS What a couple of clowns!
- GRAHAM (to CHET) Sullins thinks we're quite amusing.
- CHET Strange. I don't feel funny at all.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- GRAHAM You dance great.
- SULLINS (coming near to them, waving to the offstage band) Hey, give these fags some better music than that! I want to see 'em jitterbug.(The music does not change. The two men continue to slow dance) Okay, ladies, that's enough now. You guys were a scream!
- GRAHAM (to CHET) Now comes the hard part.
- CHET You want to stop?
- GRAHAM No, not really.
- SULLINS Okay, knock it off, you guys!
- GRAHAM (taking a deep breath) I think I just heard the major putting cartridges into his pistol.
- CHET I didn't hear a thing.
- SULLINS Hey, what do you guys think you're doing? (Comes right up to them) HEY! Didn't you hear me? I said knock it off!
- CHET (to GRAHAM) I think it's time we made a real wish on that star up there.
- GRAHAM I think you're right.

(They stop dancing, close their eyes, concentrate hard)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

CHET I'm wishing.

GRAHAM Me too!

(The lights flash *nine or ten* times. There is a slight pause as
CHET and GRAHAM check their bodies)

SULLINS (sincerely) Hey, you guys, have a good time now, you
hear! (Gestures for them to continue dancing) Go on!
Go on! (He smiles)

(CHET and GRAHAM come together and cautiously start to
dance together again)

SULLINS God rest ye merry, gentlemen! (SULLINS staggers off,
happy)

GRAHAM Hang onto me. I don't think this is happening.

CHET Of course it is. It just happens to be a miracle. And we're
going to do on dancing — on and on. And Christmas Eve
is never going to end.

(CHET and GRAHAM continue to dance together, the miracle
holding)

Slow Fade

ACT II

**THE CHRISTMAS
TO END ALL CHRISTMASSES**

CHARACTERS: (5)

MR. EBENEZER PUTZ, a mature and gentle gentleman,
once Scrooge, but now too nice
for his own good, age 35-90

FOUR SPRITES, either sex, but versatile enough to play
all the other parts

SETTING: Suggestion of an office of the Victorian period,
perhaps with a very high writing desk, a high stool,
etc. An offstage door that can open and shut, or a
sound effect of a door opening and closing.

STYLE: Absurdist. Use suggestions of costumes and
characters and props instead of full changes.

(Lights up. It is Christmas Eve)

BOB: (entering, mumbling) Good morning, Mr. Putz.

PUTZ: (at work) Good morning, Bob!

BOB: (looking around) You didn't get any blankety-blank tea yet? Note
that I'm keeping my language clean, the way you like, because of
the holiday.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: Not yet. I thought you were going to bring the kind of tea you like.

BOB: I keep forgetting. (snottily) Usually *you* get it!

PUTZ: I forget too.

BOB: Yeah, whatever. (under his breath) Old coot!

PUTZ: Aren't you a little late today?

BOB: I told you I would be late. Don't you remember anything anymore?
Jeez! I mean "Cheese."

PUTZ: I could be wrong, but aren't you a week late?

BOB: Oh, you're so petty. What's a week? You make plenty off my back.
Give me a break!

PUTZ: Actually, business has fallen off of late. Sales have –

BOB: And you're blaming me?

PUTZ: I'm not blaming anybody. I am just pointing out that business is
not what it used to be, when I was the way I was *before*.

BOB: Yeah, whatever! My guru says I need my leisure time at this season,
to grow spiritually! And how can you expect me to give my best
when I'm constantly hassled like this?!

PUTZ: I'm sorry, Bob. I've been under a lot of pressure financially.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB: Well, don't put it on me!

PUTZ: I was just trying to –

BOB: Are you saying I'm not doing a good job as your clerk – clerk, whatever I am? What am supposed to be, your slave? Do you really expect me to be here from eleven to four three *darn* days a week with only *darn* eight weeks of vacation and not feel *oppressed*?!

PUTZ: I'm sorry I brought it up.

BOB: You should be. (under his breath) Old fart. (out loud) You know what? I don't think I can work today, not after all this.

PUTZ: But I have some invoices that need –

BOB: Oh, you're too good to do invoices now? It's okay for *me* to have to do them! But not you, Mr. Boss, Mr. Big Shot Owner, Mr. Corporate Greed personified.

PUTZ: Bob, you and I are the only employees working here.

BOB: Yeah, twist it any way you like. Keep this up and I'm going to quit. Then where will you be, huh?!

(Enter Do-Gooder)

DO-GOODER: Hello, Mr. Putz. I'm here for your annual donation. You got it ready? (Hand out)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: Do I know you?

DO-GOODER: I work with Universal Begging. Nigel sent me. He says you're one of our biggest suckers – I mean, donors. Donors. I mis-spoke. I believe you gave a check last time, but maybe you have cash this time. It's easier for us to process. You wouldn't want all those Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Rastafarian, and Swedish children to go without this season, would you?

PUTZ: I guess not.

DO-GOODER: Of course you don't! We're counting on you to do your part. You would not believe how many people have grown hard-hearted because a few others have taken advantage of them and bled them dry. But not you, Mr. Putz! You are the very soul of this holiday, of all holidays. You got the money?

PUTZ: You're too kind.

BOB: Can we get this over with? Give 'em something, okay?
(to Do-Gooder) Then get the hell out.

DO-GOODER: I beg your pardon!

BOB: Well, you don't got my pardon. Got it?

DO-GOODER: (unrelenting, to BOB) So how much should I put *you* down for then this year? I did call ahead, and you don't have it ready?

BOB: Are you listening at all? Are you some kind of robot?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

(Enter Salvation Army worker with a kettle and bell)

SALVATION: (ringing a little bell) Time to give! Time to give! (Holds up kettle. Taps the bell on it) (loudly) Merry Christmas! Hark!

PUTZ: Aren't you supposed to stay outside on the street?

SALVATION: Hey, it's cold out there

PUTZ: I know, but –

SALVATION: You try standing in the freezing rain and scorching snow for hours at a time, ringing this tiny little bell. See how you like it!

PUTZ: I understand that your organization does quite well.

SALVATION: Does this kettle look like it's even half freakin' full to you? (Bangs on it)

PUTZ: (intimidated) No . . .

BOB: Kick 'em both out, Boss Man. (He disappears into the back)

SALVATION: We take shillings, Euros, U.S. dollars, anything but farthings.

DO-GOODER : Excuse me, I believe I was here first.

SALVATION: Oh, really? You trying to get his money?! Have you got a kettle and a little bell?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

DO-GOODER: I represent a far better organization, I'll have you know.

SALVATION: I don't care who you represent. There's only so much
freaking money to go around. You're not getting mine!

DO-GOODER: You are impertinent, sir/madam! You need to learn to
wait your turn.

SALVATION: And you need to save your soul. (Shakes bell at Do-Gooder)

DO-GOODER: Oh, and just who's going to save it? You?

SALVATION: You think I can't save your soul?! You want to bet? How
much you want to bet, champ? I'll kick your soul's ass!

DO-GOODER: I'd like to see you try!

SALVATION: Yeah? Well, you watch me!

PUTZ: Please, both of you!

DO-GOODER: He's not saving my soul, I'll tell you that.

SALVATION: You think not? How about if I take this kettle and put it on
your fat head?

DO-GOODER: You wouldn't dare.

PUTZ: And the money might fall out.

SALVATION: (to PUTZ) Shut up! You're not helping.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: I'm sorry.

SALVATION: (to Do-Gooder) Why don't you come over here and see how this kettle fits over your fat head? (Rings the little bell at Do-Gooder) Huh? Huh?

DO-GOODER: Why don't you come over here and put it on my fat head, huh? See what that gets you!

SALVATION: I'm real scared.

DO-GOODER: You will be, when I ring your little freaking, frigging bell.

PUTZ: Please! Family language!

DO-GOODER: "Frigging" and "freaking" aren't swearing. They don't even sound like the word I mean.

(Enter BOB from behind in disguise as a beggar)

BOB: Alms! Alms for the sake of alms!

PUTZ: Bob?

BOB: Bob left for the day. He'll be back tomorrow or the next day. Have you got something for a poor alcoholic hobo, or drug addict, or mental patient who won't take his medication, sometimes known as a homeless person?

PUTZ: I have some eggnog, right over there. (Starts for it)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB: It's not virgin, I hope.

PUTZ: I'm afraid it is.

BOB: Then keep it.

PUTZ: Sorry. Anybody else? There's some fruitcake as well.

SALVATION: Fruitcake and eggnog! Don't make me gag! (Gags)
Are you trying to kill us with that crap!? Puke!

BOB: Right! I'd rather starve to death.

PUTZ: I'm afraid that's all I have. Times have been tough.

BOB: Yeah, we *get* it, Putz!

DO-GOODER: Well, it seems that Mr. Putz doesn't quite keep Christmas
in his heart every day, now does he?

SALVATION: (out of nowhere, singing) "I'm dreaming of a white
Christmas . . ."

DO-GOODER: That is so racist!

SALVATION: What the fuck are you talking about?!

PUTZ: (covering up the "dirty" word) I have some *fudge* over here too.
Home made! (Shows open box)

DO-GOODER: You keep it uncovered like that? Haven't you ever heard
of microbes?!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

SALVATION: (sings) “Adeste, fideles, laeti triumphantes; Venite, venite in Bethlehem.”

BOB: Your Italian is so bad!

DO-GOODER: It’s not *Italian*. It’s French.

PUTZ: Isn’t it Latin?

BOB: Whatever! Why can’t you sing something in English. (singing)
“I saw mommy kissing Santa Claus, underneath the mistletoe last night.”

PUTZ: (apologetically) I hate to break this up, but I really have to get back to my business.

BOB: Who’s stopping you? Go right ahead, Mr. Nose to the Grindstone.
Some of us are taking the time to stop and smell the roses. (Pulls out a wilted bouquet and takes a very quick sniff) Whew! Somebody needs to change them stinky roses!

SALVATION: Why don’t you change them?

BOB: Why don’t you change your diapers? They’re seem to be all in a bunch.

SALVATION: Why don’t you change them for me?!

PUTZ: Now, now, gentlemen, it’s Christmas time. Let me help change the mood.

BOB: With what?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: How about this? (singing solemnly) “Silent night, holy night, all is clam [*sic*], all is bright.”

BOB: All is “clam”? What in the world does that mean?

PUTZ: That’s not right?

BOB: (irritated) “All is *calm*”!

PUTZ: Really? I always thought it was “clam.” But I’m a little bit dyslexic.

BOB: Dyslexic? That’s not all you are.

SALVATION: I need to go to the john.

DO-GOODER: Me too. Where is it?

PUTZ: (emphatically, loudly) I’m afraid the restroom is for customers *only*!

DO-GOODER/

SALVATION: (surprisingly docile) Oh, okay.

SALVATION: (matter-of-factly) We can pee on the street instead.

DO-GOODER: Sounds good to me. (They exit)

PUTZ: I’m sorry I couldn’t give them anything this time.

BOB: They’ll live. Hey, what are you giving your hard-working clerk Bob Scratchit for a bonus this year?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: I haven't told him yet, but it's not going to be much.

BOB: How much is not much? You're not planning to palm off that throat-gagging eggnog and fruitcake on him, I hope.

PUTZ: I sort of like them both.

BOB: You would!

PUTZ: As for a Christmas bonus, I was thinking of a gift this time around.

BOB: What?

PUTZ: A Happy Birthday Jesus tattoo?

BOB: You're kidding?

PUTZ: Or possibly Wise Men ear muffs – for the cold.

BOB: I'm out of here! Thanks for nothing! Give Bob a raise! (He slams out)

PUTZ: (wiping his forehead) Whew! Some peace at last. And now to work.

(Enter NEPHEW)

NEPHEW: Uncle Ebenezer!

PUTZ: Fred!

NEPHEW: Uncle!

PUTZ: Nephew!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

NEPHEW: How are you, my favorite uncle?

PUTZ: Wonderful! And how is my only nephew?

NEPHEW: Splendid!

PUTZ: And your pretty little wife?

NEPHEW: Still pretty. . . . Little – not so much.

PUTZ: But you have each other.

NEPHEW: That we do.

PUTZ: Still no children?

NEPHEW: I'm afraid not, Uncle.

PUTZ: Well, that *is* good news.

NEPHEW/

PUTZ: (together, overlapping) Excellent news. Yes, very good. Very good indeed.

NEPHEW: I certainly can't afford to increase the surplus population on my income.

PUTZ: God must be looking out for you, Fred my boy.

NEPHEW: Although things have been rather tight lately, tighter than usual.

PUTZ: Oh?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

NEPHEW: My pretty little wife loves to shop. We've taken her to four shrinks, but they say there's nothing they can do. It's an unbreakable addiction. Besides, they say she's essential for the economy.

PUTZ: At least she doesn't gamble or swear.

NEPHEW: Oh, she swears like a sailor, but at least not in public.

PUTZ: That's good! You're looking on the bright side.

NEPHEW: She bought her four thousandth pair of earrings the other day.

PUTZ: Four thousand?

NEPHEW: She just won't stop. I don't know what to do. (Cries)

PUTZ: Oh, Fred, Fred, don't weep.

NEPHEW: I'm not *weeping*. I'm crying. It's more manly.

PUTZ: Of course.

NEPHEW: I came here today to ask you a delicate question, Uncle.
Do you mind?

PUTZ: How delicate?

NEPHEW: It's about your money.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: You know that you're in my will, Fred. I've told you that, have I not? You will inherit everything once I am . . . no more.

NEPHEW: I know, Uncle Ebenezer, and I bless you for it every day. But I do have one small concern.

PUTZ: And that small concern is?

NEPHEW: When exactly do you think you might be *no more*? Soon?

PUTZ: I could be wrong, but I believe I have many good years left.

NEPHEW: (not pleased) Really? How many do you think?

PUTZ: Fred, I do need money to live on now. And I also have all my new charities.

NEPHEW: You aren't going to use it all up before you die, are you?

PUTZ: I don't intend to, but I do get caught up in the moment more than I used to. If I see a crippled or Asperger Syndrome child, I can't help myself. I simply have to run over and shove money into their hands.

NEPHEW: All well and good, but what about your only blood relative? Let me put you in the right holiday mood, shall I? (singing)
“On the first day of Christmas my uncle gave to me, one bank account and a partridge in a pear tree. On the second day of Christmas my uncle gave to me two trust funds, one bank account, and a partridge in a pear tree. On the —”

PUTZ: I'm sorry to break in, my boy.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

NEPHEW: Then don't break in. (singing) "On the third day of Christmas –"

(RUDOLF THE REINDEER crashes into the room)

RUDOLPH: (with a large red nose) (singing) "Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer had a very shiny nose, and if you ever saw it, you would even say it glows." (Shows off various reindeer poses) Season's greetings!

PUTZ: Isn't he darling!

NEPHEW: (dismissively) *No!* That fraud never even existed! And what does he really have to do with Christmas? Here's the real Christmas – family (me!) And don't forget this favorite: (singing) "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie. Above thy steep and seamless streets the silent cars go by."

PUTZ: Those aren't the lyrics, I'm afraid.

NEPHEW: Yes, they are.

PUTZ: "Steep and seamless streets"? It's "*deep* and *dreamless* streets."

NEPHEW: You're crazy. A deep street? It's a *steep* street! And streets don't dream.

PUTZ: The "silent *cars* go by"?!

NEPHEW: It makes perfect sense. The *cars* go up the *steep* street – silently!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: I don't think you've heard those lyrics right all these years. They didn't have cars in Bethlehem two thousand years ago.

NEPHEW: They did too!

PUTZ: I'm almost positive they did not.

NEPHEW: Well, maybe it's *carts* then. The silent *carts* go by – up the *steep* streets.

PUTZ: Fred, it's "silent *stars*."

NEPHEW: Oh, you're so picky. No wonder you don't have any friends. Who cares about the f – (Starts to say "fucking" but is headed off by RUDOLPH, who corrects him)

RUDOLPH: Effing!

NEPHEW: The "effing" stars! . . . Hey, keep out of this!

RUDOLPH: We don't want children hearing these words in a play.

NEPHEW: Not when they can hear them on the playground!

RUDOLPH: (hands over mouth in shock) What are you saying! Children never use bad words, especially at Christmas!

NEPHEW: Yeah, right.

RUDOLPH: (to audience) Do you, kids? Of course you don't! Give yourselves a big hand for not swearing! (Encourages the audience to applaud for itself) Way to go, kids!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

(Enter MR. FEZZIWIG, Scrooge's happy boss from
A Christmas Carol)

FEZZIWIG: Anyone fancy a twirl? (Suddenly starts twirling)

PUTZ: Mr. Fezziwig?!

FEZZIWIG: Yes, it's me, Ebenezer. I have not stopped dancing since
you left my employ all those years ago. (Dancing some more)

PUTZ: You brought the only joy into my young, dreary life.

FEZZIWIG: I'm glad about that, my boy, but I seem to have become manic.
I haven't stopped dancing for forty-five years! I've done three
kinds of jig, the waltz, the twist, the monster mash, even dirty
dancing and the stanky leg. But now I'd like to stop! (Dances
more, against his will) Please! Can you help me?

RUDOLPH: Isn't dancing good exercise?

FEZZIWIG: It's supposed to be, but I think I'm actually about to suffer
a stroke.

PUTZ: What would you like me to do? How do you stop someone from
dancing?

RUDOLPH: I could electrocute him with my nose.

PUTZ: Isn't that a bit extreme?

FEZZIWIG: Can you control the voltage?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

RUDOLPH: Sometimes.

FEZZIWIG: Are you 115 or 220?

RUDOLPH: I'm not sure!

PUTZ: Can we risk it?

FEZZIWIG: I feel that dancing impulse coming on again. (Begins to dance a silly dance)(singing and miming Frosty) "Frosty the snowman was a jolly, happy soul, with a corn cob pipe and a button nose and two eyes made out of coal."

RUDOLPH: (to PUTZ) He's got it bad.

FEZZIWIG: (even more manic) "Frosty the snowman is a fairy tale, they say. He was made of snow but the children know how he came to life one day."

NEPHEW: Throw a blanket over him!

PUTZ: Mr. Fezziwig! Mr. Fezziwig!

RUDOLPH: (singing in rivalry with FEZZIWIG) "Rudolph, with your nose so bright, won't you lead my sleigh tonight?"

PUTZ: Rudolph, please!

FEZZIWIG: (sings in rivalry with RUDOLPH) "There must have been some magic in that old silk hat they found. For when they placed it on his head he began to dance around."

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

RUDOLPH: I'll stop him! (RUDOLPH "electrocutes" FEZZIWIG with his big red nose, on his butt)

FEZZIWIG: Ouch! That hurt!

RUDOLPH: You think I enjoyed it!?! (Spits)

PUTZ: Mr. Fezziwig! . . . Rudolph!

(Enter a Wiseman, wearing ear muffs, carrying a suitcase)

WISEMAN: Excuse me! Excuse me!

RUDOLPH/FEZZIWIG: (not singing, answering together) *What?!?*

WISEMAN: I'm a Wiseman following a star and I got separated from my two traveling companions. Can you give me directions?

RUDOLPH: You don't have GPS?

WISEMAN: What's that?

RUDOLPH: Global positioning!

WISEMAN: I don't know what you're talking about. All I know is I'm cold. (Touches his ear muffs)

PUTZ: Would you like to come in for a moment?

WISEMAN: Thank you. That's very kind of you. (Steps in further)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: How about some eggnog and fruitcake?

WISEMAN: *Eww!* You trying to kill me?! Got to go! (Rushes out)

BOB: Me too! (Rushes out)

FEZZIWIG: *Eww!* You've got to be kidding. (Rushes out)

PUTZ: Wait! It's not that bad!

(WISEMAN re-enters)

WISEMAN: Would you mind if I left my laundry here?

PUTZ: Your laundry?

WISEMAN: Yeah, I'll pick it up on my way back from the manger.
No bleach. Easy on the starch.

(He hands PUTZ his suitcase and leaves)

PUTZ: (calling after him) But we're not a . . .

(Enter LITTLE DRUMMER BOY)

DRUMMER BOY: (drumming and singing) "Come they told me, pa rum
pum pum pum. A new-born King to see, pa rum pum
pum pum." (Holds out his cap for tips)

WISEMAN: Can I help you?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

DRUMMER BOY: “Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum, on my drum?”

PUTZ: Aren’t you already playing?

DRUMMER BOY: (new lyrics to the tune) “Oh, but there’s so much more, pa rum pum pum!”

PUTZ: I was trying to get back to work.

DRUMMER BOY: (aggressively) “Pa rum pum pum pum”! (Thrusts cap)

PUTZ: Well, I guess if you insist.

DRUMMER: (singing) “The ox and lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum.”

PUTZ: (joining in) How sweet. “Pa rum pum pum pum.”

(Enter NEPHEW’S WIFE with many shopping bags)

NEPHEW’S WIFE: Uncle Ebenezer!

PUTZ: Dearest! I’m afraid your Fred has left.

NEPHEW’S WIFE: Oh, bother Fred! I’m here to see you, dear Uncle.
I want to know what you want for Christmas this year.

PUTZ: Oh, nothing for me is fine.

NEPHEW’S WIFE: There must be something you want. I’m just out picking up a few things. (Shows the numerous bags)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

(cont'd.)

I feel so generous when I'm giving! How about a book? You like to read, don't you? (Pulls out a book) *Angels and Tsunamis*? The sure-fire way to make sure your guardian angel protects you the next time you run into a tidal wave. Or one runs into you!

PUTZ: I'm afraid I've already read it.

DRUMMER BOY: (calling attention to himself with the cap) Hey! "Pa rum pum pum pum"!

NEPHEW'S WIFE: And who, pray tell, is this?

PUTZ: The Little Drummer Boy.

NEPHEW'S WIFE: I have just the perfect gift for you, little drummer boy. (Searches the bags) It's in here somewhere. A coloring book! The story of a small boy, who just happens to be an angel, who comes to Earth and runs into the 39th Street Gang, and he helps them learn that God is real, and they stop being gang members!

DRUMMER BOY: Oh, that's so last century.

NEPHEW'S WIFE: You don't want it?

DRUMMER BOY: Like, no!

NEPHEW'S WIFE: But I have all these gifts I want to get rid of.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

DRUMMER BOY: Not my problem. Cash! “Pa rum pum pum pum!”

NEPHEW’S WIFE: You’re not as sweet as you look. (mocking)
“Pa rum pum pum pum”!

DRUMMER BOY: Oh, go shop!

NEPHEW’S WIFE: Maybe I just will. Only not for you!

DRUMMER BOY: You’re breaking my heart.

NEPHEW’S WIFE: (to PUTZ) Wasn’t that a Nordstrom I saw down the
block? And a Boomingdale’s?! I must be off!
(Goes to exit) Season’s Greetings to all denominations!
(Exits)

DRUMMER BOY: (toward her, angrily) “Pa rum pum pum pum”!

PUTZ: Would you care for some fruitcake?

DRUMMER BOY: *Eww!* Oh, gag! (Rushes out)

PUTZ: At last I can get to those invoices.

(Enter two ELEVES)

PUTZ: Yes?

FIRST ELF: We’re elves and we’ve been laid off at Santa Claus’s workshop.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

SECOND ELF: We're very skilled labor.

FIRST ELF: We were wondering if you might have a job for us. We can make just about anything you need. And some you don't!

SECOND ELF: Except make the economy get better.

(They giggle)

PUTZ: Can you do invoices?

FIRST ELF: What's an invoice?

SECOND ELF: Is that like a ventriloquist? (Produces a dummy, throwing his voice) "Hello, my name is Skippy."

FIRST ELF: (to SECOND) Hello, Skippy! I like your voice.

SECOND ELF: Do you like my *in-voice*? (Makes another voice) "Hi, I'm Skippy's imaginary friend!"

PUTZ: It's real cute, just not the kind of invoice I need right now.

FIRST ELF: Is that your car out in front? We can get those dents out in no time. Guaranteed!

PUTZ: I don't own a car.

SECOND ELF: We're really good!

PUTZ: No, thank you.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

FIRST ELF: How about plain old manual labor? We're good at that too.

SECOND ELF: Laying bricks, gardening, pool care?

PUTZ: Ah . . .

FIRST ELF: Baby-sitting?

PUTZ: You sit on babies?

(The ELVES giggle)

SECOND ELF: Elder care? You look like that might be something you'd be interested in.

PUTZ: Not quite yet, thank you.

FIRST ELF: Notary public?

SECOND ELF: Fake passports?

FIRST ELF: Other fake ID? Drivers' licenses?

SECOND ELF: Foreclosure purchases?

PUTZ: You do those?

SECOND ELF: We know a guy.

PUTZ: I'm afraid I don't do anything with foreclosures any more.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

FIRST ELF: Gotten soft, huh?

PUTZ: You might say that. I turned over a new leaf.

SECOND ELF: There must be something you want us to do!

FIRST ELF: Lap dancing?

PUTZ: No thanks.

SECOND ELF: I've got it. (Points at other ELF)

FIRST ELF: Got it!

FIRST/SECOND ELF: Christmas caroling! (singing)
"Feliz Navidad! Feliz Navidad!"

SECOND ELF: (singing) "I wanna wish you a Merry Christmas!"

FIRST ELF: (singing) "I wanna wish you a Merry Christmas!"

FIRST/SECOND ELF: (singing) "From the bottom of my heart!"

PUTZ: Wait! Wait.

(They stopping caroling)

FIRST ELF: Yeah?

PUTZ: I could use a Christmas tree. I've been meaning to get out to buy one, but –

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

SECOND ELF: Will you pay us if we bring you one?

PUTZ: Absolutely.

FIRST ELF: Consider it done.

SECOND ELF: Pay first?

PUTZ: All right. (Starts to get money)

FIRST ELF: (to SECOND) How many times I got to tell you?! We do the work first; then we get paid. You can tell Mr. Putz is an honorable gentleman and won't try to stiff us.

PUTZ: Oh, I'd never do that.

FIRST ELF: We'll be back with your Christmas tree in no time.
(an afterthought) If they come in asking, don't give any work to the gypsies! (They leave)

(Enter VIRGINIA, who is eight)

PUTZ: May I help you, little girl?

VIRGINIA: Some of my little friends say that there is no Santa Claus. Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?

PUTZ: Is your name Virginia?

VIRGINIA: Yes. (suspicious) Why are you asking? What are you up to? What is this?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: Well, you asked me if –

VIRGINIA: This man is talking to me! He even knows my name. (cowering)

PUTZ: Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the scepticism of a sceptical age.

VIRGINIA: Help me, somebody, anybody! (Reaches out her hand to the audience) I don't know you, but I love you!

PUTZ: Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. (He comes closer)

VIRGINIA: (screaming) Eeeeeee! Eeeeeee!

PUTZ: He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist.
(She is screaming even more loudly now) And you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! (closer still)
It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias.

VIRGINIA: (very loudest scream) Please, Mister, no! *Please!*

(Re-enter the TWO ELVES with a decorated Christmas tree)

FIRST ELF: Look what we brought you! (Shows the tree)

(VIRGINIA seizes the chance and runs screaming from the place)

VIRGINIA: EEK! Eeeeeeeeeee!

SECOND ELF: What's wrong with her?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: I have no idea.

(VIRGINIA screams until she is out of earshot)

FIRST ELF: (suddenly, about the tree) So what do you think?

PUTZ: It's already decorated?

SECOND ELF: You don't like it?

FIRST ELF: We brung you some holly too. (Shows some holly)

SECOND ELF: And a yule log! (Shows tacky yule log)

PUTZ: Where did you get this stuff?

FIRST ELF: It wasn't easy, believe me.

SECOND ELF: But nothing's too good for you, Mr. Putz.

PUTZ: Did you get this from the yard next door?

SECOND ELF: Oh, certainly not.

PUTZ: Did you?

FIRST ELF: It was just standing there!

PUTZ: You realize you're going to have to take it back.

SECOND ELF: Finders keepers.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: It was in my neighbor's front yard. He decorates every year.

FIRST ELF: Are you still going to pay us?

PUTZ: I'll pay you if you take it back. (Shoves some money into their hands) Put it back exactly the way you found it.

FIRST ELF: All right. But then we're going to hang around on the corner until somebody hires us.

(As they exit, they open a door, real or imaginary. Again we hear VIRGINIA screaming in the distance)

VIRGINIA: Eek! Eeeeeeee!

PUTZ: (Shakes his head) Work, work, I've got to do some work!
(Tries to do some accounting) I hope the police don't come.

(Enter MRS. CLAUS)

MRS. CLAUS: Yoo hoo! Mr. Putz!

PUTZ: (somewhat wearily) Yes?

MRS. CLAUS: You don't remember me?

PUTZ: I can't say that I do.

MRS. CLAUS: At the mixer last week!

PUTZ: (shaking his head, can't recall her)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

MRS. CLAUS: We played bingo next to each other!

PUTZ: Oh, of course. You're . . . You're . . .

MRS. CLAUS: Mrs. Claus. Or I was Mrs. Claus. Once my divorce from that monster is final, I'm going back to my maiden name. Moskowitz. But you can call me Sadie.

PUTZ: Sadie Claus?

MRS. CLAUS: Is that cute or what? Such an ice breaker, that name. But I'm not gonna miss it.

PUTZ: I'm sorry to hear you're getting a divorce. I hate to see families break up.

MRS. CLAUS: This family needs to break up! That Santa is a bastard. Everybody thinks he's so nice, all jolly and fat and so generous with the gifts, but when was the last time he gave me anything except a hickey?! Yeah, he's got Barbies for those brats in Zimbabwe! He's got stocking stuffers for everybody and his brother in Albania. All he's got for me is insults. Have you ever seen that guy? He has the nerve to call me fat! Oh, *he's* supposed to be so cute with his bowl full of jelly. But he wants *me* to go to Jenny Craig. But I'm not going. No way! If you read the small print, those results are not even typical!

PUTZ: I don't know what to say.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

MRS. CLAUS: You don't have to say anything. I could tell at the bingo that you had your eye on me.

PUTZ: Oh, I have a squint sometimes.

MRS. CLAUS: Aren't you the cutest thing, though. A squint! Mr. Putz, I know a leer from a squint. You had me practically undressed with those eyes at that bingo.

PUTZ: I don't really think . . .

MRS. CLAUS: I know you're shy. You've led a sheltered life. I bet you've never even been kissed! Have you? (a sudden doubt) You're not gay, are you?

PUTZ: Nowadays I try to be gay whenever I can be. Alas, I don't always succeed.

MRS. CLAUS: Not that kind of gay.

PUTZ: I'm not quite sure what you mean.

MRS. CLAUS: Then you're probably not. Why don't we see?
(Pulls out mistletoe)

PUTZ: What's that?

MRS. CLAUS: Mistletoe! People kiss under it.

PUTZ: There are just so many new customs!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

MRS. CLAUS: Shall we try? (Holds the mistletoe over both their heads)
They say it's like catnip if you do it right. (She kisses him)
How was that?

PUTZ: It was very nice.

MRS. CLAUS: Is that all? Just nice? . . . I know what you need.
(Produces a flask) Some eggnog!

PUTZ: I already have some . . . (Turns toward his)

MRS. CLAUS: Spiked! (She takes a swig) (wiping her mouth happily)
Donner and Blitzen, that's *good!* (choking up) I'm going
to miss those dumb reindeer! (in drunken reverie)
Dasher . . . Prancer . . . Vixen. Ah, the memories.

PUTZ: Maybe you can work it out with Mr. Claus.

MRS. CLAUS: I will not stay with that creep just for the sake of the
reindeer. Have a drink. (pulling out other flasks)
A cordial? Some holiday punch? *Schnapps?!?*

PUTZ: That's okay.

MRS. CLAUS: You want to try a lap dance?

PUTZ: (hemming and hawing) Ah . . . I . . . I . . .

MRS. CLAUS: I'm very good. Mrs. Claus says I'm the best, and with all
his experience he ought to know about laps. Oh, that's
naughty, isn't it? (Takes another swallow) Cupid and Comet,
that's *good!*

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: Are you drunk?

MRS. CLAUS: Does a reindeer pee in mid-air? If I am, Santa Claus drove me to it. Come on. Another kiss under the mistletoe.
(She tries to get it over his head)

PUTZ: I think one kiss might be enough.

MRS. CLAUS: What kind of Christmas party is this anyhow?

MRS. CLAUS: I bet you're in your rocking chair already. Where the hell is it? (She finds his rocking chair and pulls it out) Sit down, buster. (She pushes him into the rocking chair) Here comes momma! (Sits on his lap and begins to writhe) You feel that?

PUTZ: I believe so.

MRS. CLAUS: You bet your sweet ass you feel it. Momma knows what she's doin'! (looking around) Hey, I think he's finally glad to see me!

PUTZ: One can celebrate too much.

MRS. CLAUS: What are you doing New Year's Eve? I'm free.

PUTZ: I'm afraid I don't really celebrate New Year's.

MRS. CLAUS: Well, I don't celebrate Christmas either, but if it's here, I celebrate! (Drinks more booze)

PUTZ: It was lovely talking with you, Mrs. Claus.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

MRS. CLAUS: Sadie!

PUTZ: Sadie.

MRS. CLAUS: Oh, I like the sound of that. Sadie Putz! You'd better watch yourself! (as she exits) Text me!

PUTZ: (alone) I don't think I can take anymore! Oh, I just remembered! (Rushes around, looking for something) Where are they? Where are they? Where are those Christmas cards! (Finds a small box) Here they are! . . . Maybe it's not too late. I can call them New Year's cards!

(There is a noise upstage)

PUTZ: What's that?

(Another noise, but nothing can be seen)

PUTZ: Who's there?

ATHEIST #1: Nobody.

PUTZ: You'd better leave.

(Suddenly ATHEIST #1 and ATHEIST #2 appear in view, in dark clothes)

ATHEIST #1: Not before we get –

ATHEIST #2: What we came for!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: (afraid) And what's that?

ATHEIST #1: Your Christmas!

PUTZ: No!

ATHEIST #2: Yes!

PUTZ: Who are you?

ATHEIST #1: We're the atheists –

ATHEIST #2: – who steal Christmas!

(They laugh like villains in a melodrama)

PUTZ: Did you put the X in Xmas?

ATHEIST #2: No! That's an ancient symbol.

ATHEIST #1: We did come up with Suzy Snowflake to replace the
Baby Jesus. But she never quite caught on.

PUTZ: Please don't sing a song about it!

ATHEIST #2: We're looking for Christmas cribs. You got any?

PUTZ: What for? No.

ATHEIST #1: You sure?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

ATHEIST #2: If we find any public crèches around here, buddy, you're gonna need crutches.

PUTZ: You wouldn't!

ATHEIST #2: You wanna bet?! We'll smash you and them!

PUTZ: I think you should leave.

ATHEIST #1: Oh, yeah? Are those Christmas cards?

PUTZ: Yes. (Snatches them to his chest) No, New Year's!

ATHEIST #1: Put them down. Right now.

PUTZ: (going to the offstage door) I'm going to open the door. And you're going to leave. Are we clear on that? (Opens the door. We hear VIRGINIA still screaming)

ATHEIST #2: What's that?

PUTZ: (offstage) An unhappy child.

ATHEIST #1: Has she been forced to pray against her will?

ATHEIST #2: Was she beaten for touching her dolly inappropriately?

PUTZ: (re-entering) Please leave!

ATHEIST #1: Let's go help that child!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

ATHEIST #2: I couldn't agree more!

ATHEIST #1: (to PUTZ) Have you got anything to eat or drink?

ATHEIST #2: Something yummy. Thick eggnog . . . dry fruitcake?

PUTZ: Not a thing.

THEIST #1: You sure?

PUTZ: Nothing!

(They hurry out. PUTZ closes the door quickly, then returns.
He starts to write some cards on his writing desk)

(Enter the GHOST of JESUS)

JESUS: (making ghostly sounds) Oooo, ooooo!

PUTZ: What's that?

JESUS: Putz, it's me, Jesus.

PUTZ: Who?

JESUS: Jesus! (Shows Himself)

PUTZ: Oh, no! Does that mean my time on Earth is up?

JESUS: Can't a guy just come for a visit?!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: Excuse me for not recognizing you.

JESUS: I'm not surprised. I hear you celebrate my birthday every year, but I'm barely mentioned. No wonder you don't recognize me. Hitler is better known, but I didn't come here to *kvetch*.

PUTZ: Why did you come here?

JESUS: I came to restore Christmas to what it once was.

PUTZ: Is that possible?

JESUS: I want to put the *Christ* back in *Christ*-mas. I want to get rid of all these other things, these distractions.

PUTZ: Do you think that's even possible?

JESUS: Well, I'm going to try. That's why I brought along this.
(Brings out a bullwhip and snaps it)

PUTZ: Wow!

JESUS: Sometimes you got to do more than turn the other cheek.
Do you hear me, Putz? You're such a patsy.

PUTZ: Sweet Jesus, is that really you?

JESUS: Street Jesus! Don't stereotype me. Remember, I drove the money changers out of the temple.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: Because it was supposed to be a holy place, I remember.

JESUS: Well, my birthday celebration is supposed to be holy too,
not all this commercial crapola! Pardon my language.

PUTZ: If *you* say it, I guess it's okay. (saying it with difficulty) Crapola!

JESUS: So I'm cracking down and taking names. I'm going to see who's
really nice and who's really naughty! (Cracks the whip again)

(The GHOST of SANTA appears)

SANTA: Now just a minute there. Ho, ho, ho!

PUTZ: Santa?

SANTA: Who else says "ho, ho, ho"?

JESUS: What are you doing here? Be gone, Satan!

PUTZ: (horrified) Oh, my god, "Santa" is "Satan" spelled backwards!

JESUS: No, it's not! The names are similar, that's all. But they both do
need to be driven out.

SANTA: Oh, you think you're driving me out? Ho, ho, ho!

JESUS: Well, "ho, ho, ho" right back at you, Fat Boy.

PUTZ: Now, gentlemen, remember this blessed season, whatever we
call it, however we choose to celebrate it, is –

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

JESUS: Oh, shut it!

SANTA: Yeah, shut your mealy mouthed trap. It's time for a showdown. It's time for the world to choose between me and this character. (remembering) Oh, and ho, ho, ho! (Pulls out the whip used for his reindeer. Cracks it hard)

PUTZ: Please, not whips!

SANTA: Why not? I think we might be evenly matched . . . only with my reindeer experience maybe one of us might be just the teenest bit better with a whip! (Cracks the whip)

JESUS: Well, what do say we see what Street Jesus would do! Huh?!
(Cracks the whip)

HELPER/DISCIPLE: (entering) Wait!

SANTA: *What?*

DISCIPLE: You need seconds for your duel.

JESUS: So?

HELPER: I'm Santa's helper. (Joins SANTA, wipes his brow)

DISCIPLE: And I'm Jesus' disciple. (Joins JESUS, helps prepare Him for the fight)

SANTA: All right. Let's do this.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

(JESUS and SANTA circle each other, whips poised.
The HELPER and the DISCIPLE are chanting “Go, Santa!”
and “Go, Jesus!” respectively)

SANTA: You spoilsport. You . . . party-poopers.

JESUS: You money changer. You credit card company!

SANTA: You take that back.

JESUS: You cholesterol-ridden, poly-hydrogenated, soda-drinking
lard-ass! No wonder our kids are overweight!

SANTA: No wonder our kids are suicidal! Pray, pray, pray. Where’s
the *fun* in life?!

JESUS: There’s plenty of *fun* in Heaven!

SANTA: That’s not what I hear.

JESUS: You’re never going to find out, chubba-licious! Because you’re
never going to go there.

SANTA: Yeah, well, I’m sending you back there. Let’s see how much
fun you have when you arrive at the Pearly Gates D.O.A.,
Street Jesus!

(They fight, choking each other with their whips, twirling
them overhead, posturing and snapping away. The HELPER
and the DISCIPLE assist)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: (to audience, for the first time) I don't know how this is going to turn out. I don't think I want to know. . . . But something's got to happen. And we've got to *make* it happen, don't you think? (a light bulb going off) I *know*! Why don't all of you vote on the outcome and thus *change* it!? No betting, of course. Just a simple show of applause for the outcome you'd like to see. (to JESUS and SANTA) You two game?

JESUS/SANTA: You betcha!

HELPER/DISCIPLE: Yay!

PUTZ: It's time I got back to work, and if you folks can help me out of this, I'll tell you what! You can have some of my fruitcake and eggnog. Big helpings! Is that a deal or not? (Reacts to audience if the audience says "Eww" or anything else or even nothing) Okay then! Just help me because it's a nice thing to help somebody not kill each other. Right? Here we go! Let's make a difference! We can do this! Possible scenario number one: Jesus whoops Santa Claus's ass, big time, and Santa Claus retires forever; however, Santa goes on to a great career in MMA Pride Fighting! (Boos and cheers from the assistants plus audience) Or scenario number two: Santa Claus kills Jesus with the whip.

JESUS: (to PUTZ) *Eww!* Buzzkill! Jesus never loses!

PUTZ: (to audience) What do you think of that one?

(The HELPER and DISCIPLE lead cheers, if any)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

PUTZ: *Or* number three: they put down their whips and hug and each other and later they hug everybody in the lobby, and it's a great big hug fest!

SANTA: Germs! . . . And it's so wimpy.

PUTZ: I agree. Even for Christmas. How about this? *I assert myself*, at last and go over there and take those whips away from the two of them.

JESUS: You wouldn't.

SANTA: You couldn't.

PUTZ: What do you say, audience, can I do it or not? You want to help me or not? Or would you rather stay here for the rest of the night or what?! (Listens) I think I know the outcome you want. But give me some support! (Encourages them to clap, to shout encouragement) Do you believe Putzes can change their spots? Do you believe that this Putz can change his spots? Well, then clap your hands and let's see! (The HELPER and DISCIPLE clap, cheer, encourage)

(Ideally the audience is clapping to spur PUTZ on, but he does not need help. He goes to JESUS and SANTA, grabs their whips and holds them hard. They resist, but suddenly PUTZ jabs a commanding finger close to each one's face, like Cesar Milan, the dog trainer)

(to SANTA) *You! Get along with Jesus!* (SANTA stops in his tracks)
(to STREET JESUS) *You! Get along with Santa!* (JESUS stops)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

(Now he whispers into the ear of each, until slowly they release their whips, one in each of his hands, as they go limp and fall to their knees)

PUTZ: We've had enough of whips, don't you think? (Throws them away) (The two fighters move a millimeter) (with a finger snap and pointing) I said: *Get along, you two!!*

SANTA: (coming to) You know what? I feel like . . .

JESUS: (coming to) Getting along? Funny, I do too. (coming closer, taking PUTZ by the arm) Thanks for whispering to me like that. What a mensch you are!

SANTA: (coming to, coming over, taking the other arm) Wow! What a whisper! The mensch who rescued Christmas.

PUTZ: (to audience) Aww . . . *Me?* Just call me the Christmas Whisperer.

HELPER: What did he say? What did he whisper?

PUTZ: (referring to the audience) They all know what I said.

HELPER: They do?

PUTZ: Because when their turn comes to save the day, they'll know what to whisper to the one who needs whispering to – because they're mensches too. Each and every one, a mensch, not a putz! Aren't you? . . . *Aren't* you?

BLACKOUT

HELPER'S VOICE: (in the dark) Lap dance, anybody?

A Christmas Mistake

CHARACTERS: (2) plus a life-size hand puppet*

FATHER, male, any type, age 25-40

TINA, a realistic, cute hand puppet that looks like a five-year-old girl, not a Muppet or anything grotesque. An adult woman can play her as a child

HOMELESS SANTA, male with bushy white beard but not fat, age 35-70

SETTING: A suggestion of the railing of the Golden Gate Bridge as you walk over the bridge

TONE: Play very realistically even though it uses a puppet character.

(The FATHER enters, dressed for cold weather. He carries his daughter in his arms)

FATHER: (to audience) A few years ago, this was, I was walking across the Golden Gate Bridge on Christmas Eve carrying my daughter, who was five at the time. It wasn't that late, but already it was nearly dark. And cold. (Shivers) I told Tina that we should go home because she was sick and needed to rest.

(The FATHER should provide the voice for the puppet: something with a hint of the child-like but not too cartoon or outlandish)

TINA: But I've never been *on* the bridge!

FATHER: She said.

TINA: If I don't do it now, when will I?

FATHER: Tina knew that she had a problem with her spine that made it hard for her to walk and that was going to end her life early. (lowering his voice) In fact, she died before she turned six. (Places his finger to his lips to indicate that he does not want the daughter to hear this)

TINA: Who you talking to, Daddy?

FATHER: Just some people.

TINA: Can I get down now?

FATHER: No, Sweetie, you'd better not.

TINA: I can still walk.

FATHER: I don't think it's a good idea, Tina.

TINA: (somewhat resigned but not really) ●kay!

FATHER: That night we were happy, looking all around at the bright lights of the several cities that we could see.

TINA: (jumping, pointing) Look, Daddy! Look at those! Aren't they pretty!?

FATHER: It was nippy, but Tina was bundled up, as I was, all nice and toasty. Just our faces were cold. We even had muffins, chocolate ones, that we had brought at a store on Lombard Street. (Takes a muffin out of a paper bag) "Do you want your muffin now, honey?" I asked her.

TINA: Okay.

FATHER: (trying to handing it to her) You got it?

TINA: Yeah, but I want to put it in my coat pocket. I'll wait a few minutes. I want to make mine last. Can you help me, Daddy?

FATHER: Of course I can.

(He puts the chocolate muffin in the puppet's coat pocket)

FATHER: I gave her a kiss on the forehead (He does) And we walked along a bit more. (He moves along the bridge) Just as we were about to turn back and go home and get completely warm, Tina spotted a man up ahead.

(The HOMELESS MAN enters, approaching the bridge as if he means to jump from it)

TINA: Daddy, look! (Points at the man)

FATHER: I couldn't move. One of his legs was already over the railing on the bridge. He wasn't that large a man, nor was he dressed in red, but he did have a bushy white beard, and –

TINA: Look! It's Santa Claus!

FATHER: He was probably homeless. "I don't think so," I said.

TINA: Yes, it is! Can we go see him? Huh? *Please!*

FATHER: I really didn't know what to do. I felt sorry for the man, who looked like he might very well be going to jump, apparently neither seeing nor hearing us, so concentrated was he on the dark water below.

(The HOMELESS MAN leans over the bridge, but still has one leg on the ground)

FATHER: I made a decision then that I have never regretted. About how many things can one say that? Still holding my daughter, I moved toward the homeless man, who finally heard us and turned his head. (He does) The look of abject desolation in his drunken eyes was so searing that I could not come any closer. (The FATHER stops) He looked back down at the water far below and hitched his body in an attempt to get his other leg over the railing.

(The HOMELESS MAN is torn between following through and hesitating)

TINA: What's Santa doing? He looks so skinny. Is he sick?

FATHER: My tongue was unable to form any words, and I was about to turn back toward the way we'd come, sure there was nothing I could do to save the man if he was that far gone, and I

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certainly did not want my daughter to see him commit suicide right before her eyes. (Covers the daughter's eyes with his hand) Yet before I could move, Tina called out to him.

TINA: Look what I have for you, Santa! (Reaches into her coat pocket)

FATHER: She was holding out her chocolate muffin, her little hand sticky because the muffin had gotten partly crushed in her coat pocket. The homeless man looked back, wavering, his eyes bright in the gleaming lights from the cities all around us.

HOMELESS MAN: (shaking his head) No. No.

TINA: But you've got to keep you strength up! I don't have any cookies and milk right now. But you can have my muffin. My daddy says it'll make you fat.

FATHER: Again she held it out.

HOMELESS MAN: Don't want to anymore.

FATHER: He mumbled and looked back toward the water. His body was poised.

(The HOMELESS MAN puts his other leg over the railing)

TINA: But you've got to deliver all the toys tonight, don't you? To all the boys and girls everywhere, isn't that right?

HOMELESS MAN: No, little girl, I don't.

TINA: At least to the good ones!

HOMELESS MAN: Not happening.

TINA: Not even to me?

FATHER: The man's eyes flickered, then met mine, and he laughed.

HOMELESS MAN: Okay, I guess I have to. For you at least.

TINA: Here you go. (Holds out the muffin, probably with the FATHER's help)

FATHER: He took Tina's muffin, and I helped him down from the railing.
(He does) He went his way carrying the chocolate muffin. "You ready, honey?" I said, and then I took my sweet, sweet daughter home for that final Christmas.

(He walks off talking very softly to TINA)

SLOW FADE

A Christmas Mistake

CHARACTERS: (3)

FATHER, male, any type, age 25-40

TINA, a realistic, cute hand puppet that looks like a five-year-old girl, not a Muppet or anything grotesque

NOTE: Can be played by adult woman as child

HOMELESS SANTA, male with bushy white beard but not fat, age 35-70

SETTING: A suggestion of the railing of the Golden Gate Bridge as you walk over the bridge

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TINA: Who you talking to, Daddy?

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TINA: Can I get down now?

FATHER: No, Sweetie, you'd better not.

TINA: I can still walk.

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TINA: (somewhat resigned but not really) Okay!

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FATHER: It was nippy, but Tina was bundled up, as I was, all nice and toasty. Just our faces were cold. We even had muffins, chocolate ones, that we had brought at a store on Lombard Street. (Takes a muffin out of a paper bag) "Do you want your muffin now, honey?" I asked her.

TINA: Okay.

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