

FRED. Hello, Doris.

DORIS. Oh, hi, Fred. Susan's over talking to the elves. Could you get her and take her somewhere? There's so much going on right now that I don't have time to deal with the crazy ideas they'll put in her head.

FRED. Don't worry. I overheard the conversation. It was just about the North Pole.

DORIS. That's just what I mean! North Pole! North Pole! I appreciate your taking care of Susan, Mr. Gayley, and I'm very glad that you two get along so well. But we've been neighbors long enough for you to know that I have definite ideas about keeping her mind free of illusions. I've told you before that I *will not* have her believing in fairy tales, Mr. Gayley.

FRED (*teasing*). Why not, Mrs. Walker?

DORIS (*relaxing*). All right, Fred. Sorry to be so irritable. But I feel it's more important for her to understand reality. As a lawyer, I should think you would support that.

FRED. I didn't know you were raising a seven-year-old lawyer.

DORIS. It isn't a fairy-tale world we live in, Fred. She'll end up expecting that Prince Charming will come along, and he'll...and he'll... Well, Fred, you know that "happily ever after" just doesn't exist.

FRED. Are we talking about Susan, or about you? (*Pause.*) Look, I'm sorry, Doris. I'm sure your divorce was painful, but you can't stay bitter about it forever. Not all men will let a woman down and I don't think Susan's going to be any happier growing up to think so.

DORIS. I was devastated, Fred... Thank you for all your help, but please let me be Susan's parent.

~~SUSAN (*running to join DORIS and FRED*). Hey, Mom, the  
elves are better this year. Their costumes actually fit.~~

~~(Exits with SHARON. JOHNNY sits on SANTA's lap.)~~

KRIS. And what is your Christmas wish, young man?

JOHNNY. I want a fire engine—the kind that has real hoses and squirts real water, and I promise not to squirt it in the house.

KRIS. That's what you said about <sup>the Cyclone Water Blaster</sup> ~~(contemporary toy should be inserted)~~ last year!

JOHNNY. I know, but I really promise this time.

KRIS. All right, I'll accept your promise. But remember now.

~~JOHNNY'S PARENT. Why did you say that! I've been all over town and everybody's sold out.~~

~~KRIS. Bloomingdale's just got in a new shipment. They're on the fourth floor, second aisle on the left. And they're only \$18.50—a marvelous bargain.~~

~~JOHNNY'S PARENT (amazed). Bloomingdale's, huh? (PAR-ENT and JOHNNY leave, passing SHELLY.)~~

~~SHELLHAMMER (to JOHNNY'S PARENT). Thank you for shopping at Macy's.~~

~~JOHNNY'S PARENT. To tell the truth, I'm on my way to Bloomingdale's. Your Santa recommended it.~~

~~SHELLHAMMER. He WHAT?!~~

~~JOHNNY'S PARENT. And let me tell you...I think it's wonderful. That's the true Christmas spirit. He told me where I could get what my boy really wants. (JOHNNY and PAR-ENT exit.)~~

~~SHELLHAMMER. Oohhh... What'll Mr. Macy say about that?~~

~~(DUTCH GIRL has been climbing onto SANTA's lap.)~~

~~DUTCH GIRL. Sinterklaas!~~

~~MEGAN. Me and my sister got into a fight. She told me the  
phone would grow onto my ear if I didn't get off of it.~~

~~KRIS. Kids like to tease each other, don't they? Remember  
the next time someone teases you, it's because that person  
is unhappy inside. You'll see, things will get better. Now,  
what do you want for Christmas?~~

~~MEGAN. A telephone!~~

~~KRIS. Oh, I can see things will get better right away!  
(Laughs.)~~

~~(SUSAN and FRED are next in line. SUSAN has been  
listening intently to the previous interactions.)~~

~~FRED. Okay, Susan, it's your turn.~~

~~SUSAN. Do I have to?~~

~~FRED. Try it, anyway... For the sake of Macy's.~~

~~SUSAN (as she approaches KRIS). You know, of course, that  
this is ridiculous.~~

KRIS. And why don't you believe in Santa Claus, Susan?

SUSAN. How did you know that?

KRIS. I know lots of things. And what can Santa bring you  
for Christmas?

SUSAN. Nothing. Whatever I want my mother will get for  
me—provided it isn't too expensive. I know you're just a  
person my mother hired to play the part of Santa Claus.  
But I must admit, you're a little better than most. I can't  
even see the straps holding your beard on. It looks real.  
(Pull on beard.)

KRIS. That's because it *IS* real. And I'm real too.

~~(DORIS has entered another part of the stage, starts away  
on some business, suddenly spies SUSAN on KRIS's lap.)~~

SUSAN. Well, it was nice talking to you, anyway. But I don't think you ought to pretend to all these children that *you* are going to bring them what they want.

KRIS. Maybe they *will* get what they want this year, and so will you. (*SUSAN climbs off SANTA's lap, goes toward her mother.*)

~~FRED (to KRIS). I'm sorry... She's a hard sell. Thanks for trying, anyway.~~

~~KRIS (to FRED). My pleasure—and thank you for bringing her to me. I enjoy working on the tough cases.~~

~~FRED. It's really sad to see so much cynicism in a little girl-like Susan.~~

~~KRIS. I agree. What she needs is an infusion of imagination. Maybe you and I can work on it together. (KRIS exits. FRED follows after SUSAN, sees DORIS, who is glaring at him.)~~

~~SUSAN. Mother, something funny happened. There was a Dutch girl in line who couldn't speak English, and the Santa spoke to her in Dutch. And they sang a song together.~~

~~DORIS. Susan, lots of people speak foreign languages. I speak French but that doesn't make me Joan of Arc! He's only a man I hired this morning, and even if there really were a Santa Claus, I doubt if he'd be working at Macy's. Now, I'd like you to sit right here (*indicates a seat*) while I speak to Fred a minute. Fred, would you please step this way? I just received Santa's employment record from the office. Perhaps you'd like to read it.~~

~~FRED (*takes card*). Name: Kris Kringle. Age: As young as my tongue, and a little bit older than my teeth. Birthplace: North Pole. Next of kin: Donner, Dasher, Prancer, Dancer, Blitzen, Comet...~~

~~DORIS (snatching card away from him). Does that convince you?... I think you'd better take Susan home now, if you don't mind. Apparently I have a job to do.~~

~~FRED. He still just seems like a nice old man... All right, I stand corrected... (He returns to SUSAN.) Come on, Susan, your mother has Christmas to manage.~~

~~(FRED and SUSAN exit as SHELLY approaches. In background KRIS prepares for break. ELVES bring out "Santa will return" sign, and begin to escort CHILDREN away.)~~

~~SHELLHAMMER. Doris, this new Santa is completely unacceptable. He refuses to push the backlog merchandise, and you're not going to believe this—he's sending our customers to buy toys at other stores. (DORIS reacts with incredulity.) ...I'm not kidding... You've got to do something.~~

~~DORIS. What a coincidence. I was on my way to do just that. (SHELLY exits. DORIS approaches KRIS who is now alone.) Uh...Mr. Kringle. We've had a busy day, haven't we. Was it difficult for you?~~

~~KRIS. Getting accustomed to a new setting is always trying. But I have enjoyed the children.~~

~~DORIS. Maybe you've been trying a little too hard.~~

~~KRIS. What do you mean, Mrs. Walker?~~

~~DORIS. It seems you haven't been following Ms. Shellhammer's instructions.~~

~~KRIS. Oh, you mean to push the surplus toys? Yes, I decided not to do that.~~

~~DORIS. Oh, you did?~~

~~KRIS. I thought it was dishonest. Why should children have to pay for Macy's mistakes?~~

DORIS. That is not your decision to make, Mr. Kringle. And speaking of dishonesty, how do you explain this personnel card?

KRIS. It isn't dishonest.

DORIS. But, the things you put down on this form! We take our work seriously at Macy's, Mr. Kringle. We're not playing games. If you want a paycheck, you have to put proper information down on your personnel form.

KRIS. It all happens to be true. See...I verified it by signing at the bottom. (*Points.*)

DORIS. Then...you...really think you're Santa Claus?

KRIS (*firmly*). Certainly not!

DORIS. Oh. Well, that's a relief.

KRIS. I *know* it for a fact!

DORIS (*stares at him*). Well... You are welcome to whatever delusions you choose to live with...but...we cannot have a Santa who refers our customers to other stores. You can pick up your final check at the Personnel Department. I'm sorry it didn't work out.

KRIS. It strikes me as a bit ironic, Mrs. Walker, that you are firing Santa Claus for being Santa Claus! I was just making sure the children would get what they really want.

DORIS. Macy's is in business, Mr. Kringle, and we have to compete with other stores... Ooohhhh, I don't want to argue...I'll authorize a week's severance pay for you, Mr. Kringle. Now, Merry Christmas, and good-bye.

KRIS. Merry Christmas to you, Mrs. Walker. And don't worry. I won't hold this against you on Christmas Eve. (*Exits.*)

~~(MR. MACY and SHELLY approach DORIS.)~~

~~SHELLHAMMER. Uh...Doris...Mr. Macy would like to...~~

SAWYER. You wanted to see me, Mrs. Walker?

DORIS. Oh, yes, Mr. Sawyer. (*She escorts him to another part of the stage.*) As our vocational guidance counselor, I hope you can help with a particular situation we have. (*They move out of earshot of clerks.*) We have a wonderful new Santa Claus in the Toy Department this year.

SAWYER. That's very admirable, Mrs. Walker.

DORIS. Not exactly. This man seems to be all right in every way—even a natural white beard. But he is actually convinced that he *is* Santa Claus.

SAWYER. Interesting.

DORIS. I was hoping you could help the old fellow a bit.

SAWYER. Hmmmm... You mean he actually maintains his character outside of the work environment? (*DORIS nods.*) Oh, dear... Sounds to me like a classic case out of an abnormal psychology textbook. What other symptoms are there?

DORIS. None that I know of.

SAWYER. A persistent delusion. Very bad sign. Very... This sort of thing is usually deeply rooted in a failure to have emotional needs fulfilled in childhood. So the subject tries to personify the image of affection and gift giving. What is the subject's name?

DORIS. Kris Kringle.

SAWYER. You've got to be kidding!

DORIS. I wish that I were... But, please don't alarm him. He's a very valuable employee right now.

SAWYER. What do you want me to do?

DORIS. Just drop by and observe him, and then maybe arrange an interview. Keep it casual.

SAWYER. Leave it to me, Mrs. Walker. He'll never suspect...that I suspect. (*Exits.*)

(PIERCE approaches DORIS.)

PIERCE. Are you Doris Walker?

DORIS. Yes. May I help you?

PIERCE. Doctor Pierce. (*They shake hands.*) I'm the resident physician at the Maplewood Home, where Kris Kringle used to live.

DORIS. Oh, really? I think I'd like to talk to you.

PIERCE. I heard that you've hired Kris as Macy's Santa Claus. I'm so glad you gave him a chance.

DORIS. *Who* is he really, Doctor Pierce?

PIERCE. That's a good question. I've given it a lot of thought. He claims he's the real Kris Kringle, and if there really is a Santa Claus, he certainly fits the part.

DORIS (*appalled*). You don't honestly think he's Santa Claus, do you?

PIERCE. I didn't say that. I merely implied that from a purely philosophical point of view, he *could* be Santa Claus.

DORIS. Well, do you think he's Santa Claus?—philosophically speaking, of course.

PIERCE. It's one of those ideas that go round and round in your head— Like is snow, white? Or is red, red? Or when a tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound?

DORIS. Of course it does.

PIERCE. Does it? If you were standing there, it would, because the vibrations would bounce off your eardrums. But if there were no eardrums in the vicinity, could it still make a sound?

DORIS. I've heard that argument, but it could never be proven...

PIERCE. Or disproven. It's all in your perception. If nobody believed in Santa Claus, maybe he wouldn't exist. But mil-



lions of children all over the world do believe in Santa Claus. And Kris believes he is Santa Claus.

DORIS. He surely does.

PIERCE. We might say it's a case of "I think, therefore I am."

DORIS. You are still speaking philosophically, I assume.

PIERCE. When you live long enough, and deal with the world long enough, you find out that philosophically is really the only way to understand things. They make better sense that way.

~~DORIS. Unfortunately we have to be realistic in the retail business.~~

~~PIERCE. I understand... But I must tell you. Kris is perfectly harmless. There are thousands of people leading quite charming lives under similar delusions...~~

~~DORIS. I'm glad you said "delusions."~~

~~PIERCE. As I said, I've known Kris for years, and he's absolutely harmless. His delusion is a positive one. He just wants to bring happiness and the real spirit of Christmas to everyone. I just worry about him sometimes.~~

~~DORIS. Why?~~

~~PIERCE. Kris is an old man, and I'd hate to think of him wandering the streets of New York without a home to go to. If someone would just keep an eye on him... I mean after the store closes.~~

~~DORIS. You mean he has no place to live?~~

~~PIERCE. He can't stay at Maplewood anymore. They've discharged him.~~

~~DORIS. I'll see what I can do, Doctor Pierce. I appreciate your insights. I feel much more at ease after this conversation.~~

~~PIERCE. Thank you, Mrs. Walker. I know you won't regret  
having Kris on your staff. Have a Merry Christmas.  
(Exits.)~~

SCENE FOUR

SCENE: *Santa's dais, early the next morning.*

*KRIS is alone on his "throne." SAWYER approaches.*

SAWYER. Mr. Kringle, is it?

KRIS. Yes. That is one of the names I am called.

SAWYER. I'm Albert Sawyer, Macy's vocational guidance counselor.

KRIS. How do you do?

SAWYER. That remains to be seen. Uh...Mr. Kringle, before the customers start coming in, I'd like to get acquainted with you a little. As you are a new employee, store policy requires that I...uh...ask you some questions. Have you enjoyed your work here so far?

KRIS. I'd hardly call it work. To be honest with you, I normally do this sort of thing for free.

SAWYER. I see. So...uh...you normally promise gifts to children around Christmastime?

KRIS. I do my best.

SAWYER. How do you presume to provide all these gifts yourself?

KRIS. Santa Claus has a lot of influence in making things happen.

SAWYER. Uh-huh. And you sometimes go back to the North Pole at night to manufacture the gifts, right?

KRIS. Actually, no, I live with my reindeer.

SAWYER. Excuse me?

KRIS. Yes. I'm temporarily staying at the home of the zoo-keeper. I help him feed the reindeer and see that they are all right.

SAWYER. Oh... Well, let's move on. Can you tell me what three times five is, Mr. Kringle?

KRIS. Don't you know?

SAWYER. I want you to tell me.

KRIS. Fifteen, of course.

SAWYER. Good. Thank you. Now I want you to...

KRIS. Extend my arms and touch my nose, alternating between index fingers of each hand. (*Demonstrates.*) I also know this one: (*Touches thumb to each finger on his right hand.*) Do you know any new ones I haven't had before?

SAWYER. Who was the first president of the United States?

KRIS. George Washington. And do you know who was vice president under Grover Cleveland?

SAWYER. I have no idea. Mr. Kringle, I'm conducting this interview, if you don't mind. Now. Are you married?

KRIS. Is that a proposal?

~~SAWYER (*getting irritated*). How many fingers am I holding up?~~

~~KRIS. Three. (*Leans close.*) My, my. I see that you bite your nails. Do these interviews make you nervous?~~

~~SAWYER. That's none of your business! Now, how much is three times five?~~

~~KRIS. Fifteen. The same as it was the first time you asked. Do you know that unconscious repetition is often a sign of overwork and stress? Are you getting enough rest, Mr. Sawyer?~~

~~SAWYER (*has reached his limit*). That'll be all, Mr. Kringle!~~

~~KRIS. You could really use a nice vacation. Why don't you take a couple of weeks. I could talk to Mr. Macy for you.~~

*(As SAWYER exits, he meets DORIS in another part of stage. ELVES start bringing CHILDREN in. Santa Claus activity continues in background.)*

SAWYER. That...that...man! He definitely has a rampant psychosis!

DORIS. Who?

SAWYER. That Santa. That...Kris Kringle.

DORIS. Oh, come on, Sawyer. His doctor was here, and he assured me that Kris was perfectly harmless.

SAWYER. Perfectly harmless!... Cases like this often become violent when their delusions are attacked. If that man is allowed to continue to work here, I will take *no* responsibility for the consequences!

DORIS. That's all right. *I'll* take the responsibility, Mr. Sawyer. Don't worry about it.

SAWYER. If I'm the psychologist around here, I think my opinion should be respected... I warn you, Mrs. Walker, that if that man becomes violent and something happens... well, I'll be the first to say "I told you so."

*(SAWYER storms off, bumping into SHELLY, as she approaches DORIS.)*

~~SHELLHAMMER. Good heavens! What was that all about?~~

~~DORIS. Sawyer did a psychological evaluation of our Santa and apparently didn't get anywhere. His opinion is that Kris could become violent.~~

~~SHELLHAMMER. That would be a disaster!~~

~~DORIS. But I also had an interview with Doctor Pierce from the Maplewood Home where Kris has been living. He says Kris is just a sweet old man who thinks he's Santa Claus, and he wouldn't hurt anybody.~~

SCENE FIVE

SCENE: *Living room in Doris' apartment. That evening.*

~~DORIS, KRIS and SUSAN are sitting. Glasses of milk and plate of cookies are on coffee table.~~

~~KRIS. I enjoyed our dinner very much. Thank you for inviting me. I thought the milk and cookies for dessert was an especially nice touch. And I liked spending the evening with you and Susan.~~

~~SUSAN (obviously delighted with the guest) Mr. Kringle, could you speak to me in that language you spoke in the store the other day?~~

~~DORIS. Susan, I think Mr. Kringle is tired.~~

~~KRIS. Not at all. I'd love to talk to her. Susan, come here.~~

~~DORIS. Excuse me. I've got to call Ms. Shellhammer. (She exits to another room.)~~

KRIS. Do you have a lot of friends in the building, Susan?

SUSAN. Yes, but I don't see them very much. The games they play are so childish. Today they were being animals. They asked me what kind of animal I wanted to be, but I didn't want to be an animal. It's so dumb.

KRIS. Why didn't you tell them you were a lion or a bear?

SUSAN. Because I'm not a lion. I'm a girl!

KRIS. But the other children weren't animals, either. They were just pretending.

SUSAN. That's what makes the game so silly.

KRIS. Do you know what imagination is, Susan?

SUSAN. That's when you see things that aren't really there.

KRIS. Yes, but it's more than that. Imagination is a place you can go to. A very wonderful country. You've heard of nations like England and Russia and Japan? (SUSAN nods.)

Well, imagi-Nation is a place like that. And the wonderful thing about that country is, once you get there, you can do anything you want.

SUSAN. Not *anything*...

KRIS. For instance. How would you like to fly to Mars and be back by dinner time?

SUSAN. Oh, *that* wouldn't be possible.

KRIS. Or be the Statue of Liberty in the morning and fly south with a flock of geese in the afternoon? (*SUSAN smiles and nods in spite of herself.*) It's very simple. Want to give it a try?

SUSAN. Well, I guess I could try.

KRIS. Okay. Let's start with something easy. How would you like to be a bird flying in the sky?

SUSAN. I wouldn't know how to do that, Mr. Kringle.

KRIS. Sure you would! Now, stand up. Spread your arms out. That's right. And wave them up and down like wings... Fine. Now tilt sideways and turn. Keep on flapping your wings. That's it! Now you are *soaring* like a bird!

SUSAN (*running to him when the experiment is finished*). I did it, Mr. Kringle. That was fun!

KRIS (*pause*). Now tell me, if you were to believe that I was really Santa Claus, what would you ask me to bring you for Christmas?

SUSAN. Can you bring *big* presents?

KRIS. Since we are in the land of imagination, it could be any size.

SUSAN. I want a real house for Mother and me...and a real father to live in it with us.

KRIS (*jolted*). You're right. That *is* a tall order, indeed.

SUSAN. Well, if you're really Santa, you can do it. And if you can't, then you're just a nice man with a white beard like Mother said.

FRED (*to KRIS*). You're looking for a place to stay?

KRIS. No, I'm staying at the zoo.

~~SUSAN. I've never met anyone who lived at the zoo before.~~

FRED. The zoo is no place to stay. Why don't you stay with me. I've got an extra bed in my apartment, and I could use some company.

KRIS. Well, thank you, Mr. Gayley. That's very nice of you... ~~Susan, maybe you should go and tell your mother that we have made an arrangement. I don't want her to worry about me.~~

~~SUSAN. Okay, Mr. Kringle, I like the idea of your staying with Fred. He's my friend, and it's right next door.~~

~~KRIS & FRED. Good night, Susan. (SUSAN exits.)~~

~~KRIS. I like the idea, too, Mr. Gayley.~~

FRED. Call me Fred, please.

KRIS. All right, Fred. Staying so close by will give me more opportunity to work on Susan's Christmas gift.

FRED. I'm really very fond of that little girl.

KRIS. I can see that... And how about her mother?

FRED (*pauses, sighs*). I really like her, but I'm afraid she feels that being neighbors, and baby sitter with Susan, is as close as she wants me to get.

KRIS. Have you ever invited her out?

FRED. I've tried. But Doris won't socialize since her divorce. She just concentrates on Susan and her career. I don't think she trusts love anymore.

KRIS. An old, sad story... But it's one that maybe you and I can do something about, Fred.

FRED (*cheers up*). Oh, yeah? How do we start?

KRIS. It's simple. Just keep showing your interest in her, and be aware of her feelings. Above all, you must have faith in her.

FRED. I've tried all that. It hasn't done any good so far.

*KRIS. Things will work out. I'll see to that.*

~~DORIS (reluctantly, realizing she's stuck). Well...okay.~~

~~(They shake. Blackout to indicate passage of time. A group of CAROLERS enters singing. KRIS enters carrying a suitcase, sees the CAROLERS and joins in. He moves away with them at the end of the song. Lights up again in Doris' apartment. A knock on the door. After a moment DORIS opens. FRED enters.)~~

DORIS. Hi. Is everything all right?

FRED. Did Kris come back here?

DORIS. No. Isn't he with you?

FRED. When he didn't show up, I went to the zoo to find him. The man told me he had already been there to get his things and left over an hour ago.

DORIS. Oh, heavens, Fred! Something's happened to him!

FRED. It's all my fault. And after I told you you could trust me.

DORIS. I don't want to blame you.

FRED. I shouldn't have let him go get his things by himself.

DORIS. The important thing now is to find out if he's all right. I'd never forgive myself if something happened to him.

FRED. I'm surprised. I didn't think you liked Kris.

DORIS. It's not a matter of like.

FRED. I was hoping this was a sign that what he stands for was getting to you.

DORIS. No. But this is New York City, you know.

FRED. Come on, Doris. Who's going to mug Santa Claus?

DORIS (looks at him a moment). I'm calling the police.  
(Picks up phone.)

FRED. Look, Doris, if Kris can get here from the North Pole, then New York shouldn't be any problem for him.



DORIS. Pinch me, Fred. I simply don't believe it. I never thought I'd see Mr. Macy shake hands with Mr. Bloomingdale! It's surely a miracle.

FRED. I don't know how he does it.

DORIS. Who?

FRED. Kris.

DORIS. Maybe he gathered some stardust while he was sailing through the air with his reindeer and sprinkled it on everybody.

FRED. Doris! You're imagination is coming to life!

DORIS. Not really, Fred. I was only kidding.

FRED. No, you weren't. Don't be afraid to admit it. And here. I have a little presentation of my own to make. *(He takes a small box from his pocket.)*

DORIS. What is it? *(She opens the box and removes a necklace.)* Oh, Fred... It's beautiful!

FRED. Here, let me... *(He fastens necklace on her.)* I went to Cartiers to look at necklaces, and you know what they did? They sent me to Tiffany's. Then the clerk at Tiffany's asked me if I'd seen the collection at Cartiers.

DORIS. It's happening all over town! I never dreamed, when I saw that jolly bearded man at the parade, that he would revolutionize the entire merchandising business.

FRED. Let's celebrate and have dinner together.

DORIS. Fred, I'd really love to, but I have to work tonight.

FRED *(disappointed)*. Really?

DORIS. Really. Unfortunately, it's been planned for weeks. Mr. Sawyer, our vocational guidance counselor, has a lecture this evening for our employees.

FRED. Can't you get out of it?

DORIS. I'm sorry, no. I have to introduce him.

~~FRED. What's the topic? *(DORIS and FRED start walking away.)*~~

SAWYER. ...St. Nicholas, or Kris Kringle, whatever we may call him, represents a classic expression of the wishful dreaming of all children. Instead of teaching children that things they want come for free, they should be taught, while they are still in their formative years, the value of the work ethic that has made this country great. They must realize that this is a hard and competitive world, and if they are to succeed, they must learn the difference between myth and reality. Mature adults who continue to perpetrate this fable reveal themselves as incomplete and neurotic personalities who have failed to adjust to the stringent demands of our culture. Not only have they damaged their own existence, but they are harming their children's future. A child who does not understand this marked difference between fact and fiction will grow up still clinging to infantile fantasies and never be able to face the cruel truths of today's world. (*DORIS winces.*) Why do we do this to ourselves, you ask?

KRIS (*aside*). Don't ask!

SAWYER. To compensate for feelings of guilt. That's why we perpetuate the myth of Santa Claus. Parents who feel guilty because they've neglected their children 364 days of the year and pick this one day to overwhelm the kiddies with gifts, are doing it so as to purge their shameful behavior. And parents and grandparents who swamp the child with talk about Santa and stage the Christmas charade, are re-enacting their own infantile emotions which they have never outgrown. Therefore, I suspect that the vaunted "spirit of giving" is nothing but selfishness in disguise. (*ELVES boo and hiss.*) Far from doing any good in the world, this vicious myth has done more harm than...than...

KRIS (*beside himself with anger*). Now just a minute, there! (*He starts toward the podium.*)

~~ELF Q. I'm calling for a vote of the elves on whether Mr.~~

~~Kringle should go with Mr. Sawyer. All those in favor?~~

~~KRIS. Aye!~~

~~ELF Q. Opposed?~~

~~ELVES (shouting). Opposed!~~

~~KRIS. I'm sorry, but I'm in charge of me. So the ayes have it. I'm going to give Mr. Sawyer a chance. Besides, it's Mrs. Walker who decided I should go with him. Don't worry. I can take care of myself. You elves go on home, and I'll see you in the morning.~~

~~ELVES. If you say so, sir. But please be careful.~~

~~(ELVES ad lib as they file out. SAWYER enters.)~~

~~KRIS. Oh, there you are, Mr. Sawyer. Where shall we go to have dinner?~~

## SCENE EIGHT

SCENE: *Bellevue State Hospital, Men's Ward.*

*KRIS is dressed in a shroud-like gown, sitting dejectedly on his bed. FRED stands beside him.*

KRIS. How could she have done it? How could she have done this to me?

FRED. Doris didn't send you here. She thought Sawyer was taking you to dinner.

KRIS (*not really hearing him*). She must have been humoring me all along. I thought she was beginning to believe in me.

FRED. How did it happen that you went with him to Bellevue?

KRIS. He tricked me. Sawyer kept looking out of the restaurant window as he made small talk. Suddenly he said, "Let's go," and when I stepped outside he pushed me into a waiting taxi, and two men put me between them. Then I heard one of them say "Bellevue." Sawyer didn't even come along.

FRED. Didn't they give you the usual sanity tests that you know by heart?

KRIS. Of course, the same routine. But I was so crushed that Doris would do this to me that I deliberately gave them all the wrong answers. So they committed me.

FRED. Doris had no idea what Sawyer was up to, Kris. She agreed that you two would have dinner and he would only talk with you about seeing a psychiatrist.

KRIS. I'm relieved to know that. But why didn't she come to me herself and explain?

FRED. She was afraid of hurting you, Kris.

KRIS. Well, it hurt anyway. I'm just a nice old man she felt sorry for.

FRED. She feels more than that, I'm sure.

KRIS (*shakes his head*). No... She had doubts, Fred. That's why she isn't here. If *you* had been dragged off here, she would have been here in a heartbeat.

FRED. She certainly had doubts at first. But, she was really beginning to open up and believe. I think her belief was still too new and fragile, and Sawyer may have tipped her the other way. Kris, I'm sure that Doris won't want you to stay here.

KRIS. It's not just Doris. It's people like Sawyer. He's dishonest and... Ohhhh...I don't want to say the other awful words that occur to me... Yet he's the one who's called normal. If that's how sane people behave, then I'd rather stay here with these more honest folks.

~~MARA. Very old, Your Honor.~~

~~JUDGE (with a sigh). I suppose I should read all this.~~

~~MARA. You can take my word for it... It's a clear-cut consent proceeding. This fellow calls himself Kris Kringle. He thinks he's Santa Claus.~~

~~JUDGE. Uh oh. (Chuckles.)~~

~~(FINLEY enters.)~~

~~FINLEY. A Mr. Gayley to see you, Your Honor.~~

~~JUDGE. What does he want?~~

~~FINLEY. He said he's representing a person named Kris Kringle, sir.~~

~~JUDGE. Better show him in. (To MARA.) Santa Claus has a lawyer?~~

~~(FINLEY admits FRED.)~~

~~FINLEY. Right this way, sir. (Exits.)~~

FRED. Good afternoon, Your Honor. My name is Fred Gayley, I represent Mr. Kringle. I believe you have received the papers.

JUDGE. Yes, just a matter of signing the consent, it seems. That'll get the old fellow out of harm's way for what's left of his life.

FRED. No, if you don't mind, Your Honor. There are indications that Mr. Kringle has been victimized, and I have requested a proper hearing so that I can provide witnesses.

~~JUDGE (to MARA). I thought you said this case was clear-cut.~~

~~MARA. It was, as far as I knew. This is the first I've heard about a challenge.~~

JUDGE. This psychiatric evaluation, Mr. Gayley. There is a clear diagnosis... (*Thumbing through more papers.*) And here is a statement saying that in addition to his delusion, he became violent. That seems like a pretty clear basis for commitment, don't you think?

FRED. That is a misrepresentation, Your Honor. That's why I'm requesting a hearing.

JUDGE (*ponders*). I'm thinking about court time and expense to the taxpayers, Mr. Gayley.

FRED. Your Honor may sign the commitment papers, if you wish, sir, but I must advise you, I will submit a writ of habeas corpus.

JUDGE. That won't be necessary. We might as well have a competency hearing. (*Looks at his calendar.*) Let's see... Next Monday morning. Ten o'clock. Is that all right with you?

FRED. Fine. And thank you, Your Honor. (*Exits.*)

~~JUDGE. Ms. Mara?~~

~~MARA. Just when I thought I was getting my calendar cleared for a Christmas vacation... Yes, Your Honor, I'll work it in.~~

~~JUDGE. See you on Monday, then. (*MARA exits.*)~~

~~MARA (*as she passes FINLEY*). Have a good day, Finley.~~

~~FINLEY. Thank you, ma'am, the same to you.~~

~~(*SAWYER rushes up to FINLEY.*)~~

~~SAWYER. Whom do I see about dropping the Kringle commitment case?~~

~~MARA (*overhears, stops*). Kringle's commitment has been challenged, Mr... ah...~~

~~SAWYER. Sawyer.~~

~~JUDGE. Of course. But he isn't.~~

~~FRED. Oh, but he is, Your Honor.~~

~~JUDGE. Is... WHAT?~~

~~FRED. I intend to prove that Mr. Kringle IS Santa Claus!~~

~~(Hubbub in courtroom. Flashbulbs. Reporters flee to call in stories to their editors. JUDGE bangs gavel for order.)~~

~~JUDGE. This hearing is adjourned until tomorrow morning at ten a.m. (Gavel.)~~

#### SCENE FOUR

SCENE: *Restaurant, that evening.*

DORIS. I've read the evening paper, Fred, and I'm worried.  
You seem to be fighting such a hopeless battle.

FRED. Actually, I'm rather confident. All the publicity is working for us. Public sympathy is obviously behind Kris. I think we have a good chance.

DORIS. What about your law firm. How are they going to react to your taking this case?

FRED. Well actually, old Hayslip, the senior partner, called me in this afternoon. (*Mimics.*) "We are an old, established firm with great prestige and dignity, Mr. Gayley. We can't have one of our junior members making a public spectacle of himself. We are not in business to prove that some old crank is actually Santa Claus." In other words, unless I drop the case, they'll drop me.

DORIS. Well, then. You'll have to give it up, won't you?

FRED. I can't let a client down. You wouldn't want me to walk out on Kris, would you?

DORIS. Fred, I really care very deeply for you. I admire and respect you for your courage in taking this on. But I don't want to see you lose your position.

FRED. It's true. I might.

DORIS. That would be irresponsible. People have to be realistic. I've certainly learned that! You can't give up your job for some sentimental whim.

FRED. It's more than a whim, Doris.

DORIS. Stop dreaming, Fred!

FRED. There's something very beautiful about that old man, and very compelling, too. Representing Kris is the right thing to do, Doris. I *won't* let him down... And I'm a damned good lawyer, too. Come on, Doris, have faith in me.

DORIS (*angry*). I do...but... It's not a question of having faith. You're bound to lose this case. That's just common sense.

FRED. Doris, faith is believing in something when common sense tells you not to. Your problem is that you've got too much common sense.

DORIS (*really angry now*). It's a good thing one of us has! It's quite an asset, sometimes!

FRED. Can't you get over being afraid? Just let yourself believe in people...people like Kris...in laughter and joy and love and all the other intangibles.

DORIS. You can't pay the rent with intangibles.

FRED. And you can't live a life without them. (*They stare at each other.*) At least I can't. I thought Kris and I had broken through your armor, Doris. I hoped you would be ready to be more open-minded and open-hearted. (*DORIS turns away from him.*) Well...there's no use talking. We don't have many thoughts or feelings in common, do we?

DORIS. I suppose not.



SCENE SIX

SCENE: *Judge's chambers.*

HALLORAN. Look here, Henry. I don't care what you decide about old whisker-puss out there, but if you officially rule that there is no Santa Claus, you might just as well start looking for a chicken ranch somewhere. We won't even be able to put you in the primaries!

JUDGE. I'm a sane person and a responsible official. I've taken an oath. How can I say there *is* a Santa Claus, Charlie? If I do they'll have me de-robed and try *me* for insanity!

HALLORAN. Listen, Henry. Do you know how many millions of dollars' worth of toys are produced each year? Toys that wouldn't be sold if it weren't for Santa Claus? Have you ever heard of the National Association of Manufacturers? How do you think they would like your ruling? And how about all the people they employ to make those toys? Union members, Henry! They're gonna love you! And they're gonna say it with votes!... Then there are the department stores...and the candy companies...and the Christmas card artists and printers... And what about the Salvation Army? They've got a Santa Claus on every corner, and it's their biggest source of income... I'm telling you, Henry, if you rule that there's no Santa Claus, you can count on getting just two votes: yours and that lawyer, Mara's.

JUDGE (*shakes his head sadly, puts up one finger*). One. Mara's a Republican. (*He exits to courtroom.*)

SCENE NINE

SCENE: *Judge's chambers.*

HALLORAN. Henry, the publicity on the Kringle hearing has reached massive proportions. They're writing blazing headlines about it.

JUDGE (*gloomy*). Yeah. I've seen the papers too.

HALLORAN. So... What are you going to do? You have to think of your situation.

JUDGE. *And my duty to my office.*

HALLORAN. Today is Christmas Eve. If you send Santa Claus to <sup>Bellevue</sup> ~~the nut-house~~ on Christmas Eve, you're likely to be up for a protest demonstration...or assaulted...or even *worse!* ~~murdered!~~

JUDGE (*sighs*). I know. It's desperate... If that young Gayley can figure out the slightest "competent authority" reference that I can use for a sanity ruling, I will willingly and eagerly give him every possible break. I've been observing Mr. Kringle very carefully. He seems to be nothing worse than a very kindly old gentleman. But...unless something miraculous happens, I'll have no alternative but to accept the report of incompetency and have the old guy put away. (*He exits toward courtroom, followed by HALLORAN.*)

~~SCENE TEN~~

~~SCENE: Courtroom.~~

~~Crowd is waiting for hearing to resume. SUSAN and DORIS are among the spectators. KRIS and FRED are in their places.~~

Act II      Miracle on 34th Street, the Play

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SUSAN. Oh, Mother, now that we're here, I'm getting scared.

What if Mr. Gayley loses, and they send Mr. Kringle away?

What if he *isn't* Santa Claus, just like you said?

DORIS. Susan, I probably wasn't right when I told you that.

You must believe in Mr. Kringle—have faith in him.

SUSAN. Then you think I'll really get my Christmas wish?

DORIS (~~looking at FRED~~). Faith is believing in things when common sense tells you not to. We have to believe, Susan, or we'll never get anything. You and I both have to.

SUSAN. I believe, I believe, I believe...

~~(KRIS is holding a letter.)~~

~~KRIS. Fred, listen to this! (Reading aloud.) "Dear Mr. Kringle: I miss you very much, and I hope I will see you soon. I know it will all come out all right. I believe you are Santa Claus, and I hope you are not sad. Yours truly, Susan Walker." And what's this? "P.S. I believe in you too. Love, Doris."~~

~~(FRED goes to DORIS—they embrace. A GUARD comes to FRED and whispers something. They leave courtroom.)~~

~~KRIS. Well, what do you know... Susan, come here, dear.~~

~~SUSAN (going to him and hugging him). Mr. Kringle, I believe.~~

~~KRIS. Thank you for your letter, Susan. No matter how this hearing ends, I know that my efforts have not been in vain.~~

~~SUSAN. It will come out all right. I just know it, because I believe in you.~~

~~(SUSAN returns to her seat. FRED re-enters, grinning confidently. He holds a large book.)~~