

A HANSEL AND GRETEL CHRISTMAS

By Jack Dyville

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A HANSEL AND GRETEL CHRISTMAS

A One Act Comedy Fairy Tale

By Jack Dyville

SYNOPSIS: It is CHRISTMAS and this ‘clever modern 21st Century twist’ to the famous Fairy Tale has been reset in NEW YORK CITY. Dad is out of work and Hansel and Gretel’s selfish Stepmother wants nothing more for Christmas than to rid the house of these two children. She decides to take them off to Manhattan and lose them among the throngs of Holiday Shoppers, but they are befriended by a ‘silly Macy’s Elf’, an old Gingerbread Lady who talks-to-herself and a kind ‘Just-The-Facts-Type’ policeman! There’s No Evil Witch, after all this is the CHRISTMAS season. And, there’s certainly NO VIOLENCE. Perfect for Children 5 yrs and older and for Every Adult, who enjoys a Wonderful Family Play with morals, lessons and Lots ‘o Laughs!!!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 female, 2 male, 2 either, 1-20 extras; gender flexible)

HANSEL (m).....	A young boy played by a youth, a teen or a small adult. <i>(114 lines)</i>
GRETEL (f).....	A young girl played by a youth, a teen or a small adult. <i>(126 lines)</i>
PRISCILLA (f).....	30’s; Stepmother, the villain of this piece. <i>(135 lines)</i>
MERVIN (m).....	40’s; Father, shy and mild-mannered. <i>(67 lines)</i>
ELF (m/f).....	The Macy’s Elf, a comic character loves being an Elf and is taller than expected. <i>(52 lines)</i>
GINGERBREAD LADY (f).....	50’s; An older comic character. <i>(68 lines)</i>
POLICE OFFICER BILLOWS (m/f).....	40’s; efficient – ‘just-the-facts’ type person. <i>(40 lines)</i>

SNOW FLAKES (m/f)..... Dressed as Snowflakes to throw snow at various moments.
(*Non-Speaking*)

DURATION: 35 minutes.

TIME: The present in December.

SETTING

A shabby apartment one week before Christmas. Somewhere in New Jersey.

There are no Christmas decorations. A separate small attached room can be seen which belongs to Hansel and Gretel. The wall to their bedroom can be imaginary or an actual wall.

Outside the Apartment – On the way to a Bus stop in a small town.

Macy's Santa Land, New York City. Decorated for the Christmas Season – Can be simple.

Entrance to Central Park, NYC at Christmas with a large Gingerbread House

PROPS

- Ladies Popular Magazine
- An old Living Room Chair
- White Pebbles (These can be mimed/imaginary)
- Two bus tickets
- Two Quarters
- A Shoulder Purse
- A Banana
- A Loaf of Bread
- Four transit passes (In purse)
- Cash - \$9.64
- A ragged old Fur piece/coat
- Three chairs for Gingerbread House
- Plate of Cookies, Gingerbread, Marzipan & gum drops
- Winter Coats, scarves, hats
- Snowflake Costumes
- Bags of artificial Snow

PRODUCTION NOTES

Directors, feel free to make this production as simple as you like, or make it elaborate. It is up to you and your budget as well as the availability of set designer, and scenic artists. Even in the Off Broadway production in NYC, we were limited as the play shared a theatre and the sets were removed and re-set between performances. We had no wall to separate the children's bedroom from the living room, so this was mimed. If you choose to do this as well, just make sure your actors only hear one another from room to room but cannot see through the imaginary wall.

In the living room, all that is needed is an old easy chair and in the bedroom use whatever works for you. Again, in NYC even; the children sat on a small bench and pretended to sleep, leaning against one another. We concentrated on the acting!

Costuming is simple yet colorful. We put Priscilla in a bright red wig, a gaudy dress and ragged old fur coat. Father wears slacks, shirt and tie. Hansel is dressed in blue and Gretel is dressed in pink. Snowflake, the elf is in a red and green Elf suit (tunic) with red long johns underneath for when Priscilla makes the elf remove the elf tunic. She then slips on the same tunic. The Gingerbread Lady is colorful and very Grannie-looking or can even look like a Mrs Claus. Snowflakes were dressed in costumes purchased from Oriental Traders. At the end of the play, we also put Priscilla in an Orange prison outfit from the same company for her final appearance and at the curtain call.

As for blocking, anything works according to your stage. Original production had 4 basic entrances/exits, DSR, USR, DSL, USL. If the chase scene can be staged to have the actors run throughout the audience, this always gets the children in attendance more excited and involved.

In addition, the original production used optional music of Christmas songs or related songs that introduced the mood or theme of the next scene. Be imaginative. Choose your own music if you wish. But all black-outs should be quick and the shows should not bog down for Set changes. In Central Park, we used only a cut-out and drawing of a Gingerbread house seen from the outside. (They never go inside). The Gingerbread House used in NYC was the same as the logo on the script.

Directors, have fun. This was your actors will have fun and so will the audiences. And always keep the show moving. The acting can be over-the-top especially with Priscilla, the elf and Gingerbread Lady. Also, you can make Hansel and Gretel any age you choose from age 6-13 and no matter what age the actors are in real life, it works if they believe and portray the age you choose. The original actors were professional actors early 20s but played successfully way below that age and most believably.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

HANSEL and GRETEL can be ANY Age that the Director wishes. The ages in the script were used in the NYC production, yet played by 20somethings. Make the show and sets as elaborate as you wish or keep it simple as we did in the original Off-Broadway production where we concentrated on the acting and the script – (Plus we had to put up and take down the set each performance). We used a backdrop of the city with minimum furniture and no wall – only space. At Intermission, we added the Gingerbread House.

AT RISE: SCENE 1: *Lights up on PRISCILLA, the STEPMOTHER who sits reading a Fancy Ladies Magazine and singing loudly off-key as HANSEL and GRETEL are seen hiding in their bedroom.*

MERVIN: *(Enters from his workroom.)* What are you doing?

PRISCILLA: Reading.

MERVIN: *(Quietly.)* This is a small house, Priscilla; the children are in the next room sleeping. Must you sing while you read?

PRISCILLA: I like to sing! And, I like to read! And, yes, in a small house I must do both at the same time.

MERVIN: Why? And, you knew this was a small house when you married me.

PRISCILLA: I knew your living quarters were small but this place is a doll house. And, behind that paper thin wall, live Barbie and Ken. To hear you tell it; you were on to something big; a fortune was coming our way; possibly a palace.

MERVIN: Well, Priscilla, I thought . . .

PRISCILLA: You thought!

MERVIN: It could still happen.

PRISCILLA: Could-a-would-a-should-a!!

MERVIN: I will. I can.

PRISCILLA: You will. You can. How can a nincompoop start an Internet Empire when he can't afford to purchase a computer? Huh, Mr. Steve Jobs?

MERVIN: Stick by me, Priscilla, the children need a Mother.

PRISCILLA: Read my lips, I'm NO Mother.

MERVIN: But, think about Hansel and Gretel.

PRISCILLA: I am! Thinking why did I marry a man with two children? I told you I didn't want children.

MERVIN: I thought you meant you didn't want children of your own.

PRISCILLA: I don't want children of anyone's own, Mervin.

MERVIN: Well, you knew I had two children.

PRISCILLA: I certainly didn't think they'd be living with us.

MERVIN: Where did you think they'd be living?

PRISCILLA: I thought they would be . . . I don't know; off at college.

MERVIN: They're twelve and thirteen years old! [Can be changed to ANY age.]

As PRISCILLA and MERVIN begin to argue- Lights up on HANSEL and GRETEL.

GRETEL: Oh goodness, Hansel, she really doesn't like us.

HANSEL: So what, we really don't like her either.

GRETEL: What if she kicks us out of the car at the corner of North Washington and Ives?

HANSEL: We go into Saint Ives Catholic Church and report her for Child abandonment.

GRETEL: But I don't want to be an abandoned child.

HANSEL and GRETEL remain silent as MERVIN and STEPMOTHER speak in attached room.

PRISCILLA: And who in their right mind, names their children Hansel and Gretel?

MERVIN: Those were two of my late wife's favorite fairy tale characters.

PRISCILLA: This ain't no fairy tale.

MERVIN: But.

PRISCILLA: But nothing—are you waiting on a Fairy God Mother to start your on-line business for you?

MERVIN: No, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA: Good 'cause you ain't got no Fairy God Mother; all you have is a fascinatingly seductive yet disgruntled 'new' wife and those two hungry brats with foolish names.

The kids speak in other room, Lights up as the adults argue again.

GRETEL: (To HANSEL.) What's wrong with our names?

HANSEL: Nothing. Brats?

GRETEL: I think we're both...charming.

HANSEL: If Mom were here right now, Gretel, she'd show that snooty woman whose boss.

GRETEL: I miss Mom.

HANSEL: We both do. Now we're stuck with that cackling old hen.

HANSEL and GRETEL laugh loudly imitating PRISCILLA. STEPMOTHER hears them.

PRISCILLA: Cut out that racket. I need my beauty rest.

HANSEL: But, you're the one making all the racket.

PRISCILLA: What was that?

HANSEL and GRETEL: Nothing, Stepmother.

PRISCILLA: Must you call me that? And plug those ears—
(*Sweetly/phony.*) I don't want you to hear the sweet nothings I may
whisper to your papa.

GRETEL: (*Whispers to HANSEL.*) Sweet nothings, who is she
kidding?

HANSEL: Last sweet thing she said was, 'pass the sugar'.

Lights down on HANSEL and GRETEL.

PRISCILLA: So, Mervin, Christmas is next week—how much have you
stashed away for my present?

MERVIN: I'm afraid this Christmas is going to be a little rough, dear;
there's barely enough food to last a week. There's only one loaf of
bread and I fear we shall starve.

PRISCILLA: You *fear* we shall starve. How quaint. Cut the fairy-tale
talk; you should have thought about that when you quit your job and
decided to be a Big-Shot Executive.

MERVIN: Hold it. I didn't really quit.

PRISCILLA: So what do you call telling the boss *'I'm outta here'*?

MERVIN: I never dreamed he'd say, 'Okay!'

PRISCILLA: Well, funniest thing, mister, He Did!

MERVIN: I've spent my entire life as a carpenter, making beautiful
handmade cupboards. And now the boss only wanted me to repair
the used furniture being sent here from overseas.

PRISCILLA: Well repairing used furniture from overseas beats doing
nothing, which if I may remind you is what you do now.

MERVIN: I'll make it up to you.

PRISCILLA: Oh, you'll make it up to me alright. First, you'll get rid of
those children!!! (*Calculated.*) Tomorrow morning you will take them
into the woods, in true *Hansel and Gretel* style, and leave them
there. They'll never be able to find their way home.

MERVIN: I could never leave them in the woods to starve. Wait a minute; what woods, where are there any woods? Now who needs to drop the Fairy tale talk?

PRISCILLA: This is the United States of America, there are plenty of woods. Find some. Oh Mervin, that'll be the nicest Christmas present you could give me; much better than an old sweater from K-Mart.

Action focuses on HANSEL and GRETEL as lights fade on MARVIN and PRISCILLA.

GRETEL: Hansel, I'm scared she really is going to abandon us; and, in the woods.

HANSEL: Don't cry, little sister, I'll take care of you. Now get some sleep. *(Slips out of bed and puts on his coat. Then he steps out on the garden path.)* My, the moon is bright. It makes those white pebbles shine like new pennies! That's it. *(Speaks as he picks up the stones.)* I'll fill my pockets with stones and if Papa did by any chance take us off to the woods, I'll use these pebbles to mark our path back home. Wait a minute, what am I saying? He's not going to take us off to any woods...the furthest he could take us would be across the river to Manhattan. There's no woods in New York City; or beasts. Just people, and traffic!!!

He goes back in and GRETEL is sitting there awake.

GRETEL: I thought you were going to protect me.

HANSEL: I am Gretel. I found these pebbles and when lying on the ground in the moonlight, they glimmer like brand new pennies.

GRETEL: *(Excited and Imagining.)* And, we're going to the store to buy a loaf of bread, some milk, a turkey and lots of candy and we're gonna use these pebbles for money???

HANSEL: Get real, Gretel; if Priscilla does try to ditch us somewhere, we'll use these pebbles to mark our trail home. Now go to sleep.

GRETEL: I'm not sure I can sleep now.

HANSEL: Well if this should come to pass, I mean, if the 'mad-woman-of-New Jersey' does try to get rid of us—just think of it as an Adventure.

GRETEL: I don't think I'm as adventurous as you big brother. After all, you are thirteen and a boy! I'm only an adorable young girl of twelve!!! [Age can be change]

HANSEL: Priscilla didn't actually mean 'get rid of us'—she's a big bag of wind; you know that. But, in case, I do have the pebbles.

GRETEL: Okay, Hansel. I trust you.

Lights Fade.

Scene 2: *The next morning.*

PRISCILLA: Get up you two. You're gonna sleep your life away.

GRETEL: Last night, you said we need our Beauty Rest.

PRISCILLA: No, dear, I said I need my beauty rest! Clean out those ears, Gretel.

HANSEL: *(To PRISCILLA.)* Your beauty speaks for itself, Stepmot . . . Priscilla!

GRETEL: *(Aside to HANSEL.)* What does it say?

HANSEL: "Help"!!!

PRISCILLA: *(Becoming overly sweet.)* So children, guess what? *(Pause/Silence.)* Well, are you going to guess, or not?

HANSEL: Oh, you mean you really want us to guess?

PRISCILLA: *(Pseudo sweet.)* Why of course. So guess what the three of us are going to do today.

GRETEL: Hansel, me...and you?

HANSEL: I haven't the foggiest.

PRISCILLA: I have convinced your father to go across the river to Manhattan and buy a lap-top computer.

HANSEL: With what?

GRETEL: Bread crumbs?

PRISCILLA: I have a little cash stashed away from my dowry.

GRETEL: What's a dowry?

HANSEL: Money that a father gives his desperate daughter until she finds some unsuspecting sucker to marry her.

PRISCILLA: Look here, young man, that wasn't funny.

GRETEL: No, it's sad.

PRISCILLA: Anyway, get dressed immediately...

HANSEL: We're already dressed.

PRISCILLA: Why?

GRETEL: We slept in our clothes in case we had to make a 'run for it.'

PRISCILLA: What are you talking about, Gretel?

HANSEL: The woods, getting lost, etc., etc...

PRISCILLA: Children that was just idle chit-chat. We were only joking, well ... because; I still get such a kick out of your names and what happened to that Hansel and Gretel in the dumb-ole fairy tale.

HANSEL: It sounded to me like you wouldn't mind fairy-tale history repeating itself.

PRISCILLA: Oh Hansel, please. Now come along, get your coats, I'm going to take you two over to Manhattan and we're going to surprise your Papa at 'Best Buy'.

GRETEL: (*Excited.*) We get to go to 'Best Buy'? Sweet!

HANSEL: Why?

PRISCILLA: Because that's where your father is; he's going through a very rough time; I gave him enough money to purchase a lap-top, since, well, he quit his job . . .

GRETEL: Papa didn't quit. He was out-sourced.

PRISCILLA: Yes, in a way he was but . . . but, he told them to take a flying leap.

HANSEL: Papa wouldn't say something like that.

PRISCILLA: Not in so many words, but when translated into English it all comes out the same; your Papa left his job and therefore is not eligible for Unemployment.

GRETEL: And that's why we only have one loaf of bread and are going to starve?

PRISCILLA: In simple terms, my dear, yes!

HANSEL: So instead of giving him your money to buy a computer; why didn't you go to the grocery store and get food so we won't starve?

PRISCILLA: Because, your father has this out-landish dream of starting an on-line computer business which will bring us all the money and all the food we could ever want. I'm sure even you two are old enough to understand that if he has no computer to go On-Line; then how is the nincompoop going to get On-Line?

GRETEL: You don't need to call Papa a a—a ninca, a Ninja...whatever you said!

PRISCILLA: So follow me and we're off.

GRETEL: What if we don't want to?

HANSEL: (*Whispers to GRETEL.*) We'll be fine. Remember I've got the pebbles.

PRISCILLA takes them by the hand and the three start their walk.

GRETEL: (*To PRISCILLA.*) Aren't we taking the car?

PRISCILLA: Into New York City – you've got to be kidding, who can afford the bridge tolls and then the sky-high prices just to park a vehicle?

HANSEL: I guess that dowry of yours is lacking a few zeros, huh?

PRISCILLA: (*After a long pause and staring him down, she speaks.*) We are taking a bus. It's just a couple of blocks to the bus stop.

HANSEL: Oh okay. (*To GRETEL.*) Don't worry little sister. (*Looks back and drops pebbles as the walk.*)

PRISCILLA: Why do you keep looking back, Hansel? If you're not careful, you'll stumble and fall.

HANSEL: I'm just . . . saying goodbye to my little white cat sitting on the roof.

PRISCILLA: Cats can't talk! (*Thinks.*) You have no cat.

GRETEL: Yeah Hansel, its snow piled up that looks like a cat.

HANSEL: (*Aside to GRETEL.*) Okay blabber-mouth, I'm scattering these pebbles along the path, and want to make sure we'll be able to see them.

PRISCILLA: Do you kids have bus money?

HANSEL and GRETEL: Bus Money?

PRISCILLA: Well how do you think you're going to get to Manhattan?

HANSEL: (*To PRISCILLA.*) Do you have bus money?

PRISCILLA: Yes, indeed, but not enough for the two of you.

GRETEL: Don't kids get to ride free?

PRISCILLA: Most definitely not; especially during the Christmas season. I guess you'll have to walk.

GRETEL: Across the river?

PRISCILLA: You can walk across the George Washington Bridge; unless Governor Christie has it shut-down again.

HANSEL: You want us to walk? Across the bridge?

PRISCILLA: Yes, walking is an ancient old custom; it won't hurt you. My parents walked seven and a half miles to school every day in rain and snow or blazing heat.

GRETEL: Ninja-poops!

PRISCILLA: No, Nin - can Poops! *(Realizes what she called them)*
Wait, no, no, they were wonderful parents.

HANSEL: How did the apple fall so far from the tree?

GRETEL: Well they were Nincom-whateves if they went to such extremes just to go to school.

PRISCILLA: And, that's what you're going to have to do to get to your Papa. Go to extremes.

HANSEL: We can go back home and wait for him just as easily.

PRISCILLA: NO! *(Regains composure/sweetly.)* You will surprise him at 'Best Buy'. That will be a wonderful Christmas present from the two of you; A Christmas Visit. Now I'm going to get on that bus just up ahead and I need the two of you to follow my simple instructions... *(Takes deep breath and says all this swiftly in one breathe.)* go sixteen blocks that way—turn left and about three fourths of a mile on the old dirt road you'll see a sign that says "Ferry Station" you can stow-away on the boat and ride across the river, then once in Manhattan, your Papa will be at the 'Best Buy' at 23rd and Sixth Avenue. *(Exhale.)*

GRETEL: Once we get to Manhattan, how do we get to 23rd and Sixth Avenue?

PRISCILLA: By foot! It's called walking; remember, I just told you. *(Big smile.)* See you at 'Best Buy'!!! *(Dashes off.)*

HANSEL: I don't trust her.

GRETEL: But what if she's telling the truth; we do know Papa left early this morning, we heard him.

HANSEL: Let's wait here for now, Gretel. I don't actually feel like walking 16 blocks that way in a blinding snow storm...

POLICE OFFICER BILLOWS and GINGERBREAD LADY [or two extras/ stage personnel] enter dressed as SNOWFLAKES and throw snow into the air. HANSEL and GRETEL stare in disbelief then resume scene as the others exit.

...when in reality the New York Ferry is only 3 blocks down that way!!!

GRETEL: Oh my intelligent Big Brother, that's true.

HANSEL: Our dear sweet Stepmother is trying to get us lost!

GRETEL: (*Panicked*) So that the beasts of the forest can eat us?

HANSEL: There are no beasts, no forest.

GRETEL: Oh, right.

HANSEL: We'll go back home and wait for Papa and the 'mad-woman' to come back from New York.

GRETEL: But she doesn't want us around.

HANSEL: And, we don't want her around! So, we tell Papa what she did . . . how she tried to ditch us in this sn . . .

Anticipating the word SNOW, the SNOWFLAKES re-enter. HANSEL and GRETEL see them and instead say Bad Weather! The SNOWFLAKES disappointed; shrug, pout and leave the stage without being able to throw more flakes of snow!

...in this bad weather!

GRETEL: And, he'll tell her to move out . . .

HANSEL: We'll pack her bags.

GRETEL: And we'll have a wonderful Christmas and you and Papa and me . . .

GRETEL and HANSEL: ...will live happily ever after.

Blackout.

Scene 3: *Back at the House/Later the same night – Children in their room.*

PRISCILLA: Mervin, listen to me; either they go or I walk out that door never to be seen again.

MERVIN: Now dear, why can't we all live together in happiness? It's almost Christmas, a time for families to show their love and support of one another.

PRISCILLA: That is hog-wash Mervin. You and I are a family of two. And we get along swell as long as you do what I say, and keep your promise on that business plan. (*Pause.*) Face it, you have *bad kids*.

MERVIN: But, dear they said you sent them the wrong direction . . .

PRISCILLA: Lies! They said I left them at the bus stop and told them to walk 16 blocks south to the Ferry Boat—in a blinding snowstorm.

SNOWFLAKES appear once again to again be sent away!

Don't even think it!!! (*Back to reality and MERVIN.*) Come on, Mervin; I am not a dumb lady, I have a 5th grade education. I know where the station is, it's down that hill by the river not more than 3 blocks away.

MERVIN: Well, they said you told them to go 16 blocks . . .

PRISCILLA: Why would I say such a thing; they're children. Numbers mean nothing to them—three or sixteen, to a kid, it's all the same. You're going to take what they say as the gospel over your devoted, caring and might I say, 'most attractive'—younger second wife?

MERVIN: And besides, I wasn't in New York City buying a computer; why did you tell them I was?

PRISCILLA: Because, that's where you should have been.

MERVIN: Yes, if only I could afford it. And, you told them you gave me money. You have no money; you haven't worked a day in your life.

PRISCILLA: I have a dowry.

MERVIN: Funny, I've never heard of it. So tomorrow go to the grocery store—spend some of that cash; we barely have enough food for breakfast.

PRISCILLA: Must we all starve together or shall I actually take the children into New York City, on the bus and leave them where they cannot possibly find their way home? And, if it'll make you happy, I'll give them the bus fare and a dime or two from my dowry for food.

MERVIN: Priscilla, listen to you! What could they possibly purchase for a dime?

PRISCILLA: Okay, stop your belly-aching; I'll give them each a quarter.

Lights up on HANSEL and GRETEL. From their room.

GRETEL: (*In other room.*) She can't make us get on the bus, can she?

HANSEL: Of course not; that would be worse than abandonment; it would be kidnapping.

GRETEL: *(Raises her voice.)* I don't want to be kidnapped.

PRISCILLA: Are you two adorable little children listening?

HANSEL and GRETEL: NO!!!

PRISCILLA: Good for this is certainly not idle chit-chat suitable to little ears. *(Yells.)* Now go to sleep.

HANSEL: *(Whispers.)* Honestly Gretel, I don't think she'll follow through but in case, I still have some of the pebbles.

PRISCILLA: *(To MERVIN.)* Okay mister—it's them...or...me. I'm finished being 'the nice guy'. That dowry is pretty small I will admit, but it can get us that computer and I only hope to high heavens that you actually know how to become an Internet Tycoon; because this lovely lady is ready for the Life of Luxury!!!

Lights Fade.

Scene 4: *The Next Morning.*

PRISCILLA: Come on children, get up, the sun's been shining for fifteen minutes now, your papa's getting impatient.

HANSEL: *(Enters to main room.)* Inpatient about what?

GRETEL: *(Following HANSEL.)* What does 'impatient' mean?

PRISCILLA: What's your problem, don't you pay attention in school.

GRETEL: I pay attention to important matters, like, how child abandonment and kidnapping are against the law.

PRISCILLA: No lip with me young lady. 'Impatient' means, that a person is...well...Hansel tell your sister what it means.

HANSEL: According to the Webster-Merriam dictionary; it means, "restless or short of temper especially under irritation."

GRETEL: That sounds more like you, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA: The nerve, now your Papa and I will both be taking you to the city in 10 minutes; he wants the entire family there when he buys the computer.

HANSEL: Papa can't afford a Computer any more today than he could yesterday.

PRISCILLA: I told you I have a dowry.

GRETEL: You also told us he went to buy the computer yesterday.

PRISCILLA: Mixed Communications! And your dear Papa insisted I pay our transportation, so here's a bus ticket and I'll give you each a quarter to enjoy a tasty lunch in Manhattan.

GRETEL: As you realize, I don't know a lot about everything, but I have a high degree of intelligence for my age; and am mentally astute; therefore I know when you are full of bull. Where in New York City can we eat for a quarter?

PRISCILLA: Stop asking so many questions. Just go with the flow, and enjoy! Now go get your coats.

Lights fade on children who put on coats-STEPMOTHER calls MERVIN.

PRISCILLA: Mervin, we're ready, get the lead out.

MERVIN: (*Enters/Dressed in over-coat.*) What did you tell them?

PRISCILLA: The truth.

MERVIN: You told the truth?

PRISCILLA: Perhaps, I candy-coated it a smidge, but I told them we were going to New York City, on the bus and I was footing the cost. And that I'd give them a new shiny quarter for lunch...wait, I don't think I actually said the words 'new or shiny'. But, I did say quarter.

MERVIN: And what else did you say?

PRISCILLA: (*Shrugs.*) I think that's about it.

MERVIN: Did you fail to tell them, it was a *family-trip* so we can enjoy the sights and sounds that only New York City has to offer at Christmas time?

PRISCILLA: I might have left out a couple of the messy details, but Mervin, they know we're just looking out for their happiness.

MERVIN: I'm not so sure. So what did you actually tell them?

PRISCILLA: I said that...we would go to the city . . . together and we would...?

MERVIN: You told them nothing.

PRISCILLA: I think I might have mentioned buying a computer.

MERVIN: Those children are right; you're selfish, self-centered...and

...

HANSEL and GRETEL appear ready.

PRISCILLA: Ah, Mervin, look our beautiful children are ready for the trip of a lifetime.

HANSEL: We are not your children.

PRISCILLA: (*Aside.*) Not much longer anyway!

MERVIN: So children, I don't believe Priscilla told you the real plans for the day.

GRETEL: Perhaps not, we got to talking about impatience, intelligence, abandonment and kidnapping. . .

PRISCILLA: Oh, my we did. And children I forgot to tell you that this is a trip ...

MERVIN:...For the family! Just to play and have fun. . . together.

HANSEL: As cheaply as possible?

MERVIN: Yeah, well . . . that goes without saying.

GRETEL: Can we visit Santa Claus?

MERVIN: (*To PRISCILLA.*) How much does that cost?

PRISCILLA: It's free—of course, Gretel, we'll go see Santa at Macy's.

HANSEL: And what about the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center?

PRISCILLA: Free.

MERVIN: You got it, son.

GRETEL: (*To HANSEL quietly.*) Maybe she's not such a bad stepmother after all.

HANSEL: Get real, Gretel!!! This is only the beginning of her act. Who knows where her finale will take us!

MERVIN: Oh children you make me so happy. (*High fives.*) Here's to the start of a Perfect Christmas.

HANSEL and GRETEL are excited. PRISCILLA is disgusted and MERVIN is thrilled with his children. Blackout.

Scene 5: *Later That Day @ Macy's in NYC*

HANSEL: Goodness, so this is 'The' Macy's? The one all the kids at school come to each Christmas?

MERVIN: And now we're here as well. . . together.

GRETEL: I've waited my entire life for this.

MERVIN: Wasn't it wonderful of Priscilla to pay our bus fare?

HANSEL and GRETEL: (*Look at one another and then back to PRISCILLA with little emotion.*) Sure.

PRISCILLA: Don't get so excited, your emotions are starting to choke me up.

GRETEL: Where's Santa?

PRISCILLA: Most likely in Santaland.

GRETEL: Santaland? Are there toys?

MERVIN: Yes, but the toys are only to look at—not to touch.

HANSEL: Oh we won't papa.

PRISCILLA: Otherwise, if you break one, they'll throw you in jail . . .
.Oh look, there's one of those silly elves.

HANSEL and GRETEL: Where?

PRISCILLA: There!!! (To MERVIN.) Stay with our dear, sweet children and I'll go see where Santa's hiding out. You keep an eye on them, Mervin, we would certainly hate for them to get lost in this great big de-part-mental-ized store!

An ELF in costume appears PRISCILLA runs to them. The scene with the others continues.

GRETEL: I don't think I've ever been so excited in my whole life, papa. I'm sorry I ever thought Priscilla was not a nice woman.

HANSEL: Well, I still don't trust her.

Lights fade on HANSEL, GRETEL and MERVIN and up on PRISCILLA and the ELF.

PRISCILLA: So are you one of those silly elves that work here in Toyland?

ELF: Well, yes ma'm, I do work for Santa Claus but I am not a silly Elf; I take my work very seriously.

PRISCILLA: Yes, I'm sure you do. Tell me how can I get one of these costumes? (Refers to the ELF costume.)

ELF: Well, you have to be an elf to wear the suit. It is not a costume!

PRISCILLA: Oh really? So, see those kids over there? (Points to HANSEL and GRETEL.)

ELF: Yes. Your children, ma'm?

PRISCILLA: Do I look old enough to have children practically in college?

ELF: I really wouldn't know—where I come from everyone's about the same age.

PRISCILLA: And where is that?

ELF: The North Pole.

PRISCILLA: Cut the malarkey—wait, aren't you a little tall to be an elf?

ELF: According to Wikipedia, elves typically clad in red and green serve as Santa's helpers or hired workers.

PRISCILLA: Yeah, yeah, I see the red and green but shouldn't you be small?

ELF: The role of elves as Santa's helpers has continued to be popular, as evidenced by the success of the popular Christmas movie *Elf*.

PRISCILLA: Okay?

ELF: In that movie, was Will Ferrell small? Look, ma'm Macy's is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

PRISCILLA: Whatever! I need to look like an Elf?

ELF: And why is that?

PRISCILLA: Because those children who I am NOT old enough to be their mother are frightened to go see Santa Claus alone—so I thought, how sweet and wonderful it might be if I dressed up like an elf and took them there myself.

ELF: But, you aren't a short person either!

PRISCILLA: Details.

ELF: Look, I would be happy to take them up to Santa.

PRISCILLA: NO! They would be frightened of you dressed like an elf.

ELF: And they wouldn't be frightened of you?

PRISCILLA: They wouldn't know who I was.

ELF: Exactly and they would think you were an elf and probably run away in fear.

PRISCILLA: Run away? In fear? Oh how delightfully dreadful. Take off that costume . . . — the suit! Now!

ELF: What?

PRISCILLA: You heard me. I promise no elf suit will be harmed if you politely and co-operatively hand over the red and green . . . give it to me at once.

PRISCILLA shoves ELF off-stage. She removes her Fur.

ELF: Lady, please.

PRISCILLA: See my purse. I have a gun.

ELF: A gun?

PRISCILLA: Give me the tunic. *(She is handed a tunic/puts it over her clothes)*

ELF: *(Steps out in her long underwear.)* Lady, why are you doing this to me?

PRISCILLA: I told you my kids—I mean, those Kids who are frightened to go near Santa Claus by themselves; need to...have a little holiday frivolity.

ELF: But, ma'm, honestly stealing my elf suit is not the answer to your *situation*.

PRISCILLA: This is not a *situation*. This is a necessity. Now, the hat. *(Grabs it from her head.)* You wait right over there behind that rack of pajamas, you'll blend right in.

ELF: Please!

PRISCILLA: I'll bring everything back unharmed, I swear, you don't think I'd be caught dead going home dressed in something like this I hope.

ELF: But Ma'm.

PRISCILLA: *(Holds up her purse.)* Please don't make me use this gun.

ELF: How do I know it's really a gun?

PRISCILLA: Oh it's a gun alright. You'll know if I have to use it. Now the sooner I get those kids on Santa's lap, the quicker you can become an Elf again and I seem to believe that being an Elf is your only calling in Life!

ELF: What's say; you leave me your fur as collateral on my suit.

PRISCILLA: I am not sure what you mean, but I worked long and hard for this fur piece. *(Picks up the fur and slings it over her arm.)* Now go hide in PJ's like I told ya!

Gives ELF another shove off-stage. Crosses back to HANSEL, GRETEL, and MERVIN. Lights up on them.

PRISCILLA: *(In an Elf voice and trying to appear smaller-perhaps on her knees. She has her fur behind her back.)* Oh my, you kids look lost—I bet you're looking for Santa Claus.

GRETEL: Yes, we are.

MERVIN: (*Referring to PRISCILLA.*) This nice lady looks very much .

..

PRISCILLA: Like an Elf. I look like an elf! (*To audience.*) Right?

Fun to have the technicians or house manager shout "NO" and get the kids in audience to respond as well so PRISCILLA can react to the comments.

Oh what do you people know anyway???

HANSEL: You look like Priscilla.

PRISCILLA: I don't know any Priscilla!

HANSEL and GRETEL: And that's her coat.

PRISCILLA: This old thing? It's just the hide of some old retired reindeer. I'm an Elf and I am prepared to take you to my leader.

MERVIN: But my wife just went to ask where we can find Santa.

PRISCILLA: Oh, that nice, young, attractive woman—that wife? Well, she said, these kids need to go with me to Santaland on the eighth floor while you, her husband goes to Electronic in the basement to purchase a computer. . . and, she'll meet you, her husband there to pay the bill.

MERVIN: Priscilla told you about the computer?

PRISCILLA: Indeed. So, her name is Priscilla? Charming name!

MERVIN: She wants me to purchase a computer here, not at Best Buy?

PRISCILLA: She seemed as excited about that computer as the kids are to see Santa Claus. No, I'm sure sir, she said in the basement. So you are to go down to the Electronics Department. And, I, an elf of Santa's will bring these adorable children there to meet you both once they have given Santa their wish list.

HANSEL: We only want one thing for Christmas.

GRETEL: And I don't think Santa can arrange that.

PRISCILLA: Oh, don't under estimate The Big Guy. He can arrange anything...if you only believe.

HANSEL and GRETEL: We Believe!

MERVIN: Children, please don't expect miracles this Christmas, we're poorer than poor this year.

HANSEL: What we want papa, can't come from Santa.

GRETEL: Hansel's right.

MERVIN: What do you want?

HANSEL and GRETEL: For that mean ole Priscilla to GO AWAY!

PRISCILLA: (*Throwing Hat aside/dropping Elf voice.*) Why, you little brats! And you wonder why I can't stand the likes of either of you.

HANSEL: (*Grabbing GRETEL starts running.*) Come on Gretel. Papa please—run!

A Chase ensues through audience and across and around the stage.

SFX: Chase Music.

PRISCILLA: Go on kids; run as far as those little legs will take you. Far, far away from here!!! In to the night! In to the blinding snow fall.

SNOWFLAKES appear.

(*To SNOWFLAKES.*) Oh GO Away!!!

ELF: (*Runs on stage.*) Help—that's the woman. After that Elf, she stole the official suit. She's wearing the 'Red and Green' without authorization.

MERVIN: Children I want to make your wish come true but . . .

PRISCILLA trips MERVIN.

PRISCILLA: Mervin, how dare you. I'm not going that easily.

HANSEL: Papa, get up. Please. Come on – (*Runs with GRETEL*)

GRETEL: Please papa. (*Running.*)

PRISCILLA: (*Going to MERVIN on the floor.*) STOP! You're not going anywhere, mister.

She sees ELF and begins to run once more. They are ALL going in a choreographed movement.

ELF: That's her. Stop her. Somebody.

MERVIN: (*Still on floor.*) Stop her!

HANSEL and GRETEL: Come OoooooN! (*And they are gone*)

MERVIN: What am I going to do? Have I lost my Hansel and Gretel?

ELF: No one's really lost unless they choose to be.

MERVIN: Please, help me.

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