

# SANTA'S LETTERS

A CHRISTMAS COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By **Emmett C. Loverde**

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**SANTA'S LETTERS**  
**By Emmett C. Loverde**

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
*(5 MEN, 5 WOMEN)*

EDWARD KRIEGER .....	Age 10 (121 lines)
SANTA CLAUS/BARLOW .....	(Doubling) (94 lines)
VINNIE/TIM GRIMM .....	Vinnie is an elf 35 (Doubling) (77 lines)
BRIAN KRIEGER.....	38 (90 lines)
MAUREEN KRIEGER .....	15 (61 lines)
INGRID KRIEGER .....	7 (20 lines)
CONNIE CHAPPEL .....	37 (33 lines)
BETTY SCHMALL .....	30 (17 lines)
SHANNON LUNT .....	10 (11 lines)
CLAYTON WOODS .....	(1 line)

**PLACE**

The living room of BRIAN KRIEGER and his family in Novato, California. Off to one side is a small table or desk where EDWARD reads his letters. Off to one side is SANTA'S office, represented mainly by a desk with an intercom, a reclining chair, and perhaps a photo of Mrs. Claus.

**TIME**

The present, beginning in late November.

**Notes:** Edward and Santa Claus read their respective notes directly to the audience. They also interact with other characters as needed. When the actor playing Santa plays Mr. Barlow, the effect could be achieved by having him take off his Santa hat and put on a coat and tie.

The action of the play shifts back and forth between Santa's office and the Kriegers' living room. This is probably best accomplished by raising and lowering the lighting on either side of the stage.

Because the action is "fluid," the play is not divided up into individual scenes but rather should be performed straight through without interruption if possible.

**SCENE:**

Night. The modest dining room of BRIAN KRIEGER and his family in Novato, California. The front door, a door to the kitchen, and a hallway leading to the rest of the house are visible. Off to one side is a small table or desk where EDWARD reads his letters.

**AT RISE:**

10-year-old EDWARD KRIEGER composes a letter.

**EDWARD:** November 23. Dear Santa Claus. My name is Edward and I am ten years old. Please do not come this year. There's too much yelling at my house. We will miss you, but I'm too embarrassed. Love, Edward.

As SANTA CLAUS reads, EDWARD seals the letter inside an envelope and puts a stamp on it. SANTA'S office is represented by a crowded wooden desk with an intercom, a comfy desk chair, and a photo of Mrs. Claus. SANTA is a pretty sharp character.

**SANTA:** November 31. Dear Edward. Ed, it's Santa Claus. Don't come? The last time somebody told me *not* to come, the guy's name was Scrooge. I had to send out three of my best people to work him over. Kid, I have to swing by on Christmas. That's what I do. I got some righteous loot for you. I'm not going to spoil the surprise except for one nifty item. I'm going to make you a brave kid, Ed. That's my gift. So use this bravery to talk to your people—get to the root of this yelling business. Love, Santa Claus. (*Presses intercom.*) All right, Vinnie, this thing's ready to go out.

**VINNIE:** (*Via intercom; Brooklyn accent.*) I'll run it down to the box this afternoon.

**SANTA:** (*To intercom.*) Wait—I want to add something... (*Reads as he writes.*) P.S. Ed, no matter who started the yelling, I bet my head reindeer it wasn't you, squirt.

*BRIAN KRIEGER, 38, brings a partially-decorated Christmas tree in and sets it down. He is followed by INGRID KRIEGER, 7, who brings in garland and begins draping it on the branches of the tree. MAUREEN KRIEGER, 15, brings in a string of tree lights and begins putting them on the tree. A grey cloud seems to hang over them all.*

*INGRID accidentally drops an ornament. She bursts into tears.*

**MAUREEN:** Eddie, get a broom. (*EDWARD exits to the kitchen to hunt for a broom. BRIAN folds INGRID into his arms as MAUREEN looks on critically.*) Eddie! Where's my broom?

*EDWARD dashes back in carrying a broom and a letter from Santa.*

**EDWARD:** When did this come? (*Shows BRIAN the letter.*)

**MAUREEN:** (*Takes broom.*) Gimme. (*She starts sweeping up the ornament.*)

**BRIAN:** What is it, Eddie? Junk mail?

**EDWARD:** It's a letter from Santa.

**INGRID:** The real Santa sent you a real letter?

**MAUREEN:** What a crock. (*Grabs letter.*) It's postmarked "November Thirty-First."

**EDWARD:** So?

**MAUREEN:** There's no such thing as November Thirty-First.

**BRIAN:** November only has thirty days.

**MAUREEN:** And there's no **post office** at the North Pole.

**EDWARD:** (*Opens letter.*) Santa's writing is worser than yours, Dad.

**MAUREEN:** Let me see it...

**EDWARD:** No! (*Hands letter to BRIAN, who scans it.*) You read it. It says he's coming anyway...

**INGRID:** (*Horrified.*) Anyway?? Why *wouldn't* he come???

**EDWARD:** Dad, should I vacuum or something?

**MAUREEN:** You should stop being a slob. Go get me a dustpan.

**BRIAN:** I think Santa would appreciate your vacuuming, Eddie. (*Excited, EDWARD heads toward the kitchen for a dustpan.*) Ed... (*EDWARD stops.*) Santa was right. The yelling has nothing to do with you.

*EDWARD sits and reads his next letter while his family drifts offstage quietly.*

**EDWARD:** December 3. Dear Santa Claus: I guess since you are growed up you do not have to listen to a little guy like me. I'm going to vacuum. I hate vacuuming like anything but I want our house to be nice when you come. My Dad took me and my sisters downtown today to look at all your pretty lights. There were lots of them and they were red and green mostly. Did you make them that way? Lots of things at Christmas are red and green. I wished my Mom could come with us but she is not here. So now I have to do the dishes way more than before. Love, Edward.

**SANTA:** December 12. Dear Edward... Kid, what about your pop and your sisters? If I'm a no-show on Christmas Eve, we're talking justifiable homicide. It isn't that I don't listen to you—I always listen. I don't always bring what you want, but hey. Oh—why didn't your ma come downtown with you to look at my pretty lights? You people spend more on *those* each year than you do on education. Love, Santa.

**EDWARD:** December 15. Dear Santa Claus: I forgot that you would be bringing presents to my sisters so please still come but close your ears. My little sister Ingrid wants you to bring her a SeData SlayStation. She helps my dad cook. I cook sometimes but I burn stuff. We had to buy a new pot at Thanksgiving because I tried to make cranberry sauce out of raspberry jam because I ate a cranberry once and it tasted awful. I think it would've worked if I had a recipe. *(MAUREEN bursts in loudly through the front door, home from school.) (Calling out.)* Dad, she's home!

**BRIAN:** *(From off-stage.)* Maureen? I need you to set the table, honey.

**MAUREEN:** *(Flouncing down the hall.)* Dinner's not ready.

**EDWARD:** *(Writing letter.)* Everyone in my family is being nice but there's some yelling still. Oh, and Ingrid wants Super Mario Brothers, Jurassic Spelling Bee and Gladiator Challenge IV with her SlayStation if your elves can get it. I saw it at Target. Love, Edward.

*The doorbell rings. BRIAN dashes in wearing a shirt and tie.*

**BRIAN:** I'll get it! It's my boss.

*BRIAN opens the door to reveal CONNIE CHAPPEL, 37, who barges in with a briefcase and several handwritten pages.*

**BETTY:** Okay listen to this.

**BRIAN:** Connie. Welcome.

**BETTY:** (*Reads.*) "He Made Me a Heart-Shaped Pizza."

**BRIAN:** Where's Mr. Barlow?

**BETTY:** He's in the car on long distance. (*Reads.*) "No candles, no wine, no music, no nothing. Just the light of the idiot box, a six-pack, and him in a stained sweatshirt. The Steelers were devouring the Mets, and it was Valentine's Day!"

**BRIAN:** What is this?

**BETTY:** The "Indecent Proposal" contest—you know, where the person with the best story about popping the question wins a thousand bucks?

**BRIAN:** Oh. So?

**BETTY:** This is my entry. (*Reads.*) "There's a knock at the door. Prince Charming's too wrapped up in his hockey game to lift anything but his beer so I open the door and it's the pizza guy."

**BRIAN:** Who's Barlow talking to?

**BETTY:** Some country. He won't be long—he doesn't speak the language. (*Reads.*) "Romeo has the gall to ask **me** to pay for it! So I cough up and I open the box... and lo and behold! We're talking a **heart-shaped** pizza—all round and perky—with the words 'Will you marry me?' spelled out in little blobs of sausage!"

**BRIAN:** (*Impressed.*) What did you say?

**BETTY:** (*Reads.*) "What could I say but yes"? (*Shivers happily.*) What do you think?

**BRIAN:** Aren't you two divorced?

**BETTY:** He was an imbecile. But **so** romantic!

*The blustery BARLOW barges in, cellular phone to his ear. BARLOW should be played by the actor playing SANTA.*

**BARLOW:** (*Into phone.*) Idiots. They're all idiots. (*To CONNIE.*) Is dinner ready?

**BETTY:** No.

**BARLOW:** (*Into phone.*) We got a bunch of idiots here, too.

*TIM GRIMM, 35, comes in the front door. TIM should be played by the actor playing VINNIE.*

**TIM:** Brian, my lad. Constance.

**BARLOW:** (*Into phone.*) Him?? He's got the ethics of a cobra!

**BETTY:** Come on, boys, time to set the table. (*To BARLOW.*)  
Get off the phone! We're starving!

*CONNIE pulls silverware out of the drawers and hands them to TIM and BRIAN, who fumble them around the dining room table.*

**BARLOW:** (*Into phone.*) I have to go. It was good talking to you. Don't ever call me again. (*Hangs up.*)

*TIM and BRIAN freeze.*

**BETTY:** He's kidding. (*Frowns.*) Wrong—little fork and little spoon go *outside*.

**BARLOW:** Sweethearts, what have you got for me? (*BRIAN grabs the leather portfolio from the kitchen and opens it on the dining room table. It contains renderings of military aircraft.*) I hate this crap.

**BRIAN and TIM:** The drawings???

**BARLOW:** Nah—they're fine. I mean the whole idea! Enerdyne—once the king of military aircraft manufacturers—now sells model kits to kids! (*Points at drawing.*) That's not to scale. If the pilot's head was that big it would explode at two Gs.

**TIM:** But I used my own head...

**BARLOW:** (*To BRIAN.*) You like working at home?

**BRIAN:** I love it. So do my kids.

**BARLOW:** It was the least we could do. Send me the rest of the drawings by Monday.

**BRIAN:** Ed, can you help bring out the food?

**BARLOW:** Wait a second, Bri. Why don't you send the kid into the kitchen for some lemonade?

**BRIAN:** Ed, would you...?

*EDWARD drags himself into the kitchen.*

**BARLOW:** Gentlemen, our budget's up in the air. I can only guarantee you two, another two months on this project. After that...I don't know. *(BARLOW'S cell phone rings.) (Into phone.)* Yeah. No. I don't know. Same to you. *(Covers phone.)* It's my wife. I'm going to take it outside. *(Exits.)*

*EDWARD peeks out from the kitchen.*

**EDWARD:** Is everything all right at your job, Dad?

*The adults suddenly look very uncomfortable.*

*SANTA enters his office and sits as everyone but EDWARD leaves the living room.*

**SANTA:** *(Over.)* December 19. Dear Edward: PlayStation? What about Super Slystation? Anything less and you're talking Pong. Ed, tell your other sisters that if they write their wishes on a piece of paper and leave it under their pillows on Christmas Eve, I'll dispatch a couple of my elves to do the legwork. So you think The Claus should dress warm. Well kid, you know my big red coat? It's like wearing a sleeping bag. And it's padded—you didn't really think I was that fat, did you? Will you get to see your mother during the holidays? Love, S.C.

*BRIAN and INGRID enter and wait near the front door.*

**BRIAN:** Maureen honey, are you coming? *(MAUREEN enters wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt.)* We've been waiting twenty minutes!

**MAUREEN:** Dad, I'm too old for church.

**EDWARD:** *(Bringing in a plate of cookies.)* Owowowowowowowowow—*(Places them on the table.)*

**BRIAN:** You could have told us that sooner. There's probably no parking left...

**MAUREEN:** They're too young to go to Midnight Mass anyhow!

**EDWARD:** I am not!

**MAUREEN:** I was **twelve** when Mom let me stay up past nine-

thirty!

**BRIAN:** If I choose to let my children stay up late once a year—

**MAUREEN:** You just want to be at Midnight Mass because that's when all the single women go!

**INGRID.** Daddy, are you trying to find us a new mommy?

**BRIAN:** No, sweetheart. You've already got a wonderful mommy. No one's going to take her place.

**INGRID.** Okay.

*BRIAN picks up INGRID and carries her out the front door.*

**EDWARD:** Don't touch my cookies. I made them for Santa!  
*(Grinning, MAUREEN stuffs one of the cookies into her mouth.) (As he exits.) Dad!!*

*Lights down on the living room. The lights come up a moment later to reveal EDWARD sleeping under the Christmas tree. It is very late Christmas night. Some of the cookies are still there. The front door opens and SANTA himself enters carrying a paper grocery bag full of gifts. He tiptoes over to EDWARD and sprinkles magic sleeping dust on him—the actual dust can be pantomimed, of course. SANTA waits a moment to make sure EDWARD is truly asleep, then begins laying out gifts. EDWARD stirs as though about to wake up. SANTA sprinkles more dust. Edward settles down.*

*Once more EDWARD stirs. SANTA dumps his entire bag of magic dust on his face. Finally, EDWARD sleeps again. SANTA dials his cell phone.*

**SANTA:** Vinnie, it's Big S.C. Look, this Brand X magic sleeping dust isn't working. I had to waste a whole bag on one kid. Who sold it to us?

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* The Wicked Witch of the West gave us a deal.

**SANTA:** Didn't she get knocked off?

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* It looked like her. She had flying monkeys and everything.

**SANTA:** Well grab one of those monkeys and get me some more of this stuff pronto. I've still got the entire Pacific Rim to finish up. It's gonna be a long night. Make sure the massage guy is standing by when I get back.

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* You want me to book the Jacuzzi?

**SANTA:** Line it up for tomorrow at two o'clock.

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) The Grinch has it at one—it may need some cleaning. Where are you now?

**SANTA:** Some kid's house. They all start to look alike.

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) Don't ever let anyone hear you say that.

**SANTA:** (*Looks closer at EDWARD.*) Wait a second! This is **that** kid's house!

**VINNIE:** (*Over; after a beat.*) Which kid?

**SANTA:** The one who told me not to come. What could be simpler? "Don't come!"

*SANTA starts stuffing the gifts back inside the bag.*

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) Hey, what are you doing?

**SANTA:** I'm taking back his presents!

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) You are **not**!

**SANTA:** But maybe it was a veiled cry for help. What if the kid's in some cult where they kill you for getting a present??

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) Just put the presents down. Now.

*EDWARD stirs as though about to wake up.*

**SANTA:** Oh he's waking up! (*Santa grabs a cookie on his way out the door.*) Mmmm! Chocolate chip!

*EDWARD settles back into a deep, contented sleep. Sunlight begins creeping in. BRIAN walks in quietly. Upon spying his sleeping son, he smiles. A moment to treasure. INGRID dashes noisily in.*

**BRIAN:** Shhhhhhhh. (*Points at EDWARD.*)

*INGRID nods, understanding. MAUREEN comes stomping in. INGRID intercepts her.*

**INGRID.** (*Importantly.*) Shhhhhhhh. (*Points at EDWARD.*)

**BRIAN:** (*Whispers.*) Should we wake him?

**INGRID.** (*Whispers.*) What if he hits me?

**BRIAN:** (*Whispers.*) He wouldn't dare—not on Christmas.

**MAUREEN:** (*Aloud.*) Sure he would.

**INGRID and BRIAN:** (*To MAUREEN.*) Shhhhhhhh!

**MAUREEN:** Are we going to do this or what? (*Gently—almost tenderly—puts her mouth to EDWARD’S ear.*) Wake up!!!

*EDWARD jolts up, bumping MAUREEN’S nose.*

**EDWARD:** Omigod!

**MAUREEN:** (*Clutching nose.*) Ow! You snodface!

**BRIAN:** Are you all right honey? Let me see...

**MAUREEN:** I’b fide!

**EDWARD:** I’m the one who got teeth stuck in my head!

**BRIAN:** Okay, who goes first?

**INGRID:** Me!

*EDWARD reluctantly hands INGRID a large gift, into which she tears. He goes over to his table to begin another letter to SANTA.*

**EDWARD:** December 25. Dear Santa. Thank you for the SlayStation 2 you got Ingrid. You are the best. Hope you like the cookies I made. Love, Edward. (*INGRID unwraps a SlayStation 2 system—she is ecstatic! She hugs BRIAN, then MAUREEN, then EDWARD.*)

P.S. In your letter you said my “other sisters”—but I only got one more sides Ingrid. I thought you were s’posed to know that stuff.

P.P.S. Here is the photo we took with you at the mall. How come you didn’t recognize me? (*The doorbell rings.*) I got it!

*EDWARD opens the door to reveal TIM and CONNIE. TIM has a bottle of cheap wine and CONNIE carries a CD radio boom box.*

**TIM:** Merry Christmas!!

**BETTY:** Good morning! Merry Christmas!

**MAUREEN:** (*Rising in disgust:*) Good night.

**BRIAN:** (*To MAUREEN:*) Honey, we have guests.

**MAUREEN:** Hi, guests. Bye, guests. (*Exits.*)

**TIM:** Bri, I invited a few people over.

**BRIAN:** Great! What time should we be at your place?

**TIM:** They’re coming here.

**BRIAN:** You invited strange people to my house?

**BETTY:** You need cheering up.

**BRIAN:** Tim, I'm not ready to host a party!

**TIM:** Connie and I will do all the work.

**BRIAN:** When are they coming?

**BETTY:** (*Checks watch.*) Right about now.

**EDWARD:** We're going to have a party?

**BRIAN:** No.

**TIM:** Yes.

**BRIAN:** **No.**

**TIM:** I hate to tell you this, Edward, but your pop suffers from a rare disease. The *only known cure* is to have a party.

**EDWARD:** Dad, you got a disease??

**BRIAN:** Of course not—

**TIM:** It's called "Poor Me."

**EDWARD:** Is it contiguous?

**BRIAN:** Grimster, you're scaring him.

**INGRID:** Is my daddy sick, Mr. Grimm?

**BRIAN:** No, sweetheart.

**INGRID:** Then why does he have to cure you?

**BRIAN:** He doesn't; he... (*To EDWARD.*) Ed, get out the vacuum.

**EDWARD:** Yay! We're having a party! We're having a party!

*CONNIE turns on the boom box and Christmas music begins playing. Tim helps Brian put on a coat and Ingrid runs to get dressed. The doorbell rings. Maureen opens it to reveal SHANNON LUNT and BETTY SCHMALL.*

**MAUREEN:** May I help you?

**SCHMALL:** I'm Edward's teacher. From school.

**SHANNON:** And I'm Shannon Lunt, his enemy from school.

**MAUREEN:** Eddie! You're in trouble!

*Confused, EDWARD ventures over to the front door. Upon seeing SCHMALL, he shrieks in terror. BRIAN dashes in, followed by TIM.*

**BRIAN:** What is it? What happened??

**SCHMALL:** I guess Shannon and I are a couple of crashers. (*To Shannon:*) Maybe we should go, Shannon...

**TIM:** I told you, Penny, you aren't crashing! I invited you!

**MAUREEN:** She's Eddie's teacher. He must *really* be in trouble!

**SCHMALL:** No, not at all, I...

**EDWARD:** (To BRIAN.) Um, this is my teacher. I forgot her name. (To SCHMALL.) I thought when school got out you went back to your planet or something.

**BRIAN:** Mrs..?

**SCHMALL:** Schmall. Miss Schmall. (Catches herself.) Betty Schmall.

**EDWARD:** (Zombie-like.) My teacher is at my house. This just doesn't happen.

**BRIAN:** (Shakes her hand.) I once had a dog named Betty.

**SCHMALL:** Well...she must have been very special.

**BRIAN:** Forgive me.

**EDWARD:** Don't worry, Miss Schmall—Betty was the coolest dog in the world.

**SCHMALL:** What kind was she?

**EDWARD:** A Boxer. She sure was ugly. (To SHANNON; suddenly shy.) Hey Shannon.

**SHANNON:** (Also suddenly shy.) Hey.

**EDWARD:** You want something to eat?

**SHANNON:** Sure.

*EDWARD leads SHANNON toward the kitchen.*

**EDWARD:** (To SHANNON, weirding out.) Is she your aunt?

**SHANNON:** No, just a friend of the family.

**EDWARD:** It's still weird.

**SCHMALL:** We won't stay long, Mr. Krieger—I promise...

**BRIAN:** May I take your coat?

**SCHMALL:** (Handing BRIAN her overcoat.) Thank you.

**BRIAN:** So how long have you known Tim?

**SCHMALL:** We just met last night at church.

**TIM:** (To BRIAN.) I work fast.

**SCHMALL:** (To BRIAN.) Oh, we were just...he was just being...I mean, we aren't...

**BRIAN:** It's "Betty", not "Penny"—am I right?

**SCHMALL.** Like the dog.

**TIM:** Bri, you won't believe some of these entries! (Reading a handwritten essay.) "Me and my friend Carol were in Paris

and Carol dragged me to the top of the Eiffel Tower right at noon one day because 'there's no shadow' or some stupid reason. Anyway, when we got to the top my boyfriend Reggie was sitting there on his knees with a ring and roses—and he'd even hired some guy to play the violin!"

**BETTY:** No competition so far.

**TIM:** (*Reads.*) "I said yes, and Reggie collapsed. He's afraid of heights and he barfed all the way down in the elevator, so I know he loves me."

**BRIAN:** Who wrote that?

**TIM:** They're all anonymous.

*SANTA reads another letter as the living room clears out except for EDWARD, who sits reading SANTA'S letter to himself as SANTA reads it aloud.*

**SANTA:** December 28. Dear Ed. Kid, you're a hurricane—you never cease to blow me away. Those cookies! The vacuuming!! But your thank-you letter really floored me. Nobody does that, Ed. Nobody. Sorry I didn't recognize you when you and your sisters visited me at the mall. I guess I just blew it. Please keep in touch. I'll have my people give your letters special handling. Love, The Sanity Clause. (*Thinks for a second, then continues.*) Ed, I want you to do something for me that might help make your house a quieter place. I want you to tell your family how you feel about them. Each one. It'll be harder with some people than others, but the "hardest" people are the ones who need to hear it from you the most.

**EDWARD:** I can't do that!

**SANTA:** Do it, kid. Do it for me—Old Bowlful of Jelly.

*MAUREEN barges in the front door. She drops her school books on top of EDWARD'S head on her way to the kitchen.*

**EDWARD:** Reenie wait! I need to talk to you for a moment.

**MAUREEN:** So speak, freak. My stomach wants food.

**EDWARD:** Um, I'm thinking!

**MAUREEN:** It's usually hard the first time.

**EDWARD:** You're a pretty good sister.

**MAUREEN:** Compared to whose, Cinderella's?

**EDWARD:** No!

**MAUREEN:** Do you need to borrow money or something?

**EDWARD:** You're just...you're pretty cool sometimes.

**MAUREEN:** You're saying I'm pretty cool? What do you want?

**EDWARD:** I love you! Moron!

**MAUREEN:** Is this a joke?

**EDWARD:** I love you *and* you're a moron!! A big one!!!

**MAUREEN:** (*Trying to hide her emotions.*) I hope you don't think that was supposed to make me feel good.

**EDWARD:** It wasn't.

**MAUREEN:** It didn't. Not in the least.

**EDWARD:** I knew it was going to be a waste of breath.

**MAUREEN:** It was. (*Softens.*) You want a sandwich?

**EDWARD:** What kind?

**MAUREEN:** Forget it.

**EDWARD:** Yes I want a sandwich! Whatever kind you're making!

**MAUREEN:** Fine. If you spill any of it I'm telling Dad I had nothing to do with it. (*Exits to kitchen, taking the Christmas Tree with her.*)

**EDWARD:** (*To himself, amazed.*) That wasn't that hard. (*He sits and begins another letter to SANTA.*) Dear Santa. My dad thinks it's really cool that you write back. I showed him your letters and he whistled and said that those people were really bending over backward. I figure he meant your elves. Do they do gymnastics? I hope you and Mrs. Claus are good. Do you go on vacation after Christmas, like to Florida? Love, Edward.

*SANTA paces around his desk dictating to VINNIE through the intercom.*

**SANTA:** "January 19. Dear Eddie. Vacation? Me?? We work around the calendar up here. Everybody pitches in—the wife, the elves, the reindeer... I even keep Bigfoot and the Abominable Snowman on retainer for special projects. Yes, all year long we slave away with nary a day's rest—"

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) What about Saratoga Springs?

**SANTA:** The kid's not a gambler. He wouldn't understand.

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) If Santa Claus claims he never takes time off, kids will all grow up with a twisted work ethic and burn out. Tell him the truth.

**SANTA:** “However, me and the wife do take a few weeks off every August to go to Saratoga for the racing season, but we travel incognito to avoid the paparazzi. It’s almost Valentine’s Day! Tell you what, Ed—you pick out some little tootsie and I’ll have my man Cupid do a number on her for you, what do you say?”

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) Boss, you know The Cupe stopped doing custom orders.

**SANTA:** Is he still on that “organic” kick?

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) Studies show natural matches last longer. The divorce rate was killing his image.

**SANTA:** I gotta do **something** for the kid. No one ever sends me thank-you notes.

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) Fine, but don’t send him gadgets—people will think he’s a prophet and you know what happens to them guys.

**SANTA:** All right, scratch the last paragraph. Just say: “It’s almost Valentine’s Day—is there anyone you’re sweet on? Why not send her a flower or a card? Say hi to your Pop for me, and to your Mom next time you see her. Let those people know you love them, Ed! Love, Santa.” Can we get that in the mail mañana?

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) Two shakes.

**EDWARD:** Febooary fifteen. Dear Santa: I know you’re only s’posed to come once a year, but could you bring my Dad a new box of tools? Probably if he had some tools he would make something and stop thinking about Mom because I think about her enough for all of us. What’s “incognito”? We all visited my Mom yesterday because Valentine’s Day is the anniversary of when her and my Dad got married. Maureen wouldn’t get out of the car. I was too scared to give out Valentine’s cards even though I kind of like this girl named Shannon Lunt. But she keeps calling me Harold or Earl or Daniel and forgets my name so I know she doesn’t like me. And she passes notes around that say “Edward’s such a doofus” and she hits me. There’s no way she likes me. I got two Valentines from these girls that I think are disgusting but at least I didn’t look stupid by getting no Valentines. Say hi to your wife for me. And the elves. And Rudolph. Love, Eddie. P.S. What’s paparazzi?

*BRIAN enters the front door, briefcase in hand, and peruses the mail. He rummages through a small stack of business-size envelopes from major companies.*

**BRIAN:** *(To himself as he examines each letter.)* No. No. No.

No thank you. No. Never in a million years. No.

**EDWARD:** Is everything all right, Dad?

**BRIAN:** It's fine.

**EDWARD:** Really?

**BRIAN:** Why do you ask?

**EDWARD:** Because...Santa told me to.

**BRIAN:** *(Impatiently.)* Ed...

**EDWARD:** Really! I could show you his letter!

**BRIAN:** Why did Santa say a thing like that, Ed?

**EDWARD:** Because we haven't stopped yelling. He thinks we should tell each other we like each other.

**BRIAN:** He's right.

**EDWARD:** I like you.

**BRIAN:** *(Touched.)* I like you, too, Ed.

**EDWARD:** I thought that Barlow guy likes you.

**BRIAN:** You can still fire somebody you like. *(Sighs.)* Ed, your teacher left me a message this afternoon.

**EDWARD:** Maybe she likes you.

**BRIAN:** She wants to have a conference. About you.

**EDWARD:** We were playing football at lunch and Turner caught a pass but I made him fumble it so he—

**BRIAN:** How did you make him fumble it?

**EDWARD:** I just tapped him.

**BRIAN:** Where did you tap him?

**EDWARD:** Out on the field. Where we play football.

**BRIAN:** Where on his body?

**EDWARD:** The high part.

**BRIAN:** His head??

**EDWARD:** No...his neck.

**BRIAN:** What did he do?

**EDWARD:** Just laid there.

**BRIAN:** Good heavens.

**EDWARD:** They dog-piled me—his whole team.

**BRIAN:** Is that how the fight started?

**EDWARD:** It wasn't really a fight...

**BRIAN:** We're seeing Betty next Tuesday.

**EDWARD:** Who's "Betty"?

**BRIAN:** Miss Schmall. She says you've been on edge lately.

**EDWARD:** I think we all have.

*SANTA paces around his desk. VINNIE is on the intercom.*

**SANTA:** The kid wants to give his old man a box of tools.

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* It's off-season. Not standard procedure.

Besides, the man's got a job—he can buy what he needs.

**SANTA:** Maybe what he needs, he can't buy.

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* You can't bring him a nifty package of peace and contentment. That's a do-it-yourself job.

**SANTA:** Let's try a little synergy. It's almost April Fool's Day.

What about a prank to cheer him up?

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* A prank? Why stop there? It's almost Bastille Day—let's send him a couple of French convicts.

**SANTA:** I get the impression you're not taking this too seriously.

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* Arbor day! Let's tie him to a tree. Pearl Harbor Day! We could bomb his house!

**SANTA:** There are certain things I can do—

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* But he keeps asking for what you *can't* do.

Stop worrying about him—adversity is good for the soul.

Look at the Christmas Story.

**SANTA:** What's adverse about Christmas? It's the best day of the year!

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* This young couple can't get a decent hotel

room, so they have to sleep in a barn. Is that happy stuff?

Sure it looks picturesque in the paintings, but what about the *smell*?

**SANTA:** Forget about it. Just send him a glossy. Oy-oy-oy. A kid cries out for help and I give him a picture of me—that's class!

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* Boss, you can't just go in there and save the day. All you provide is inspiration.

**SANTA:** You're right.

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* Of course I'm right.

**SANTA:** "Of course I'm right"?? Listen to you: "Of course I'm right"! Don't show off. It's unbecoming in an elf.

**VINNIE:** *(Over.)* I'm studying to be a troll.

**SANTA:** *(As the lights start to fade:)* But you hate the dark...

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) The guy under the bridge is thinking of getting out of the business.

**SANTA:** The billygoat guy?

**VINNIE:** (*Over.*) I love veal.

*EDWARD sits in his living room, waiting and bored. From the kitchen occasional bursts of laughter from SCHMALL and BRIAN escape. There's a knock at the door. EDWARD opens it to reveal SHANNON LUNT carrying a dance bag.*

**EDWARD:** What are you doing here?

**SHANNON:** Aunt Betty takes me home from ballet.

**EDWARD:** You came to the right place. She's in the kitchen with my dad talking about me.

**SHANNON:** Did you screw up again?

**EDWARD:** I guess. Do you believe in Santa?

**SHANNON:** Promise not to tell?

**EDWARD:** Sure.

**SHANNON:** Okay. I kind of do. I used to a whole bunch, but last Christmas I didn't get what I *really* wanted.

**EDWARD:** Maybe it was illegal.

*More laughter from the kitchen.*

What's so funny?

**SHANNON:** Half the stuff old people laugh at I just don't get.

*BRIAN and SCHMALL emerge laughing.*

**BRIAN:** (*To SCHMALL.*) ...at least he's getting his exercise.

**SCHMALL:** Hi, Shannon! Ready to go?

*SHANNON nods.*

**EDWARD:** Now do I get extra homework or something?

**SCHMALL:** No. But your father and I did come up with some ideas to help you do better.

**EDWARD:** Like what?

**SHANNON:** (*Under her breath.*) Don't push it, Eddie!

*BRIAN and SCHMALL look at each other, neither can think of anything.*

**BRIAN:** We'll talk about it later, son.

**SCHMALL:** It was wonderful to see you again, Mr. Krieger.

**BRIAN:** My pleasure.

**EDWARD:** *(As he ushers the females out the door.)* Good night  
Miss Schmall!

**SCHMALL:** Good night, Edward!

**SHANNON:** 'Night, Eddie!

**BRIAN:** Are you certain we can't walk you to your car?

**SCHMALL:** Oh, we'll be fine.

**EDWARD:** They'll be fine, Dad.

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