

SELLING CHRISTMAS

A HOLIDAY COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Jeff Lovett

Copyright © MMIX by Jeff Lovett

All Rights Reserved

Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ISBN: 978-1-61588-207-6

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this work is subject to a royalty. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All rights to this work of any kind including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing rights are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. Inquiries concerning rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

This work is fully protected by copyright. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher. Copying (by any means) or performing a copyrighted work without permission constitutes an infringement of copyright.

All organizations receiving permission to produce this work agree to give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production. The author(s) billing must appear below the title and be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with production of the work must include the following notice: **“Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.”**

There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the work, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language unless directly authorized by the publisher or otherwise allowed in the work’s “Production Notes.” The title of the play shall not be altered.

The right of performance is not transferable and is strictly forbidden in cases where scripts are borrowed or purchased second-hand from a third party. All rights, including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing, recitation, lecturing, public reading, television, radio, motion picture, video or sound taping, internet streaming or other forms of broadcast as technology progresses, and the rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved.

COPYING OR REPRODUCING ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS BOOK IN ANY MANNER IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN BY LAW. One copy for each speaking role must be purchased for production purposes. Single copies of scripts are sold for personal reading or production consideration only.

PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

SELLING CHRISTMAS

By Jeff Lovett

SYNOPSIS: The North Pole is in such a financial crisis that Santa may have no other choice but to cancel Christmas or at least postpone it for a few of months. His only hope may be in securing a corporate sponsorship for the beloved holiday. One of Santa's new elves suggests selling sponsorship of Christmas to the huge retail conglomerate called StoreMart International, but in order to cut costs and start making Christmas profitable again, StoreMart will have to do away with some Christmas traditions—including the outdated reindeer, milk and cookies, and Santa's Workshop. Will Santa accept with the drastic changes so he can save Christmas? This fast and funny play is full of fun characters and laced with commentary on the ever-growing commercialization of Christmas. Written to be performed without a set and with very few costume and props, *Selling Christmas* is sure to strike a chord with everyone who has ever wondered about the true spirit of the holiday.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 MEN, 3 WOMEN, 1 EITHER)

- SANTA (m) Santa Claus. (88 lines)
- RUDY (m) An elf and Santa's chief financial advisor. (27 lines)
- REBA (f) An elf and Santa's assistant. (16 lines)
- 23 (m) A StoreMart International employee. (46 lines)
- 32 (f) A StoreMart International employee. (26 lines)
- RITA (f) An elf. (10 lines)
- RANDI (m/f) An elf. (6 lines)

AT RISE:

Curtain opens to reveal SANTA's office at the North Pole. Center stage is a large desk with a weathered trash can next to it. The desk is stacked with papers, an old-fashioned hand-cranked adding machine and a banker's lamp with a green shade. To the right of the desk is an easel upon which rests a large piece of posterboard with a graph entitled "Christmas Profits" and a large red arrow pointing in a jagged line downward across the chart. Behind the desk sits SANTA CLAUS looking anything but jolly. He is dressed casually in black pants and a long-sleeved red shirt with black suspenders. He is wearing his shorter "off season" white beard and upon his head sits a red baseball cap with the letter "S" in the middle. Behind him is a coat rack with SANTA's coat and red hat, which he wears when delivering gifts. There is a financial crisis at the North Pole, and SANTA is trying to "balance the budget" before Christmas arrives. Assisting him is RUDY, dressed in a long-sleeved white shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. Also present is one of SANTA's head elves, REBA, who is dressed in a green elf costume with red pointed cap and shoes. As the curtain opens, RUDY is explaining the North Pole's finances while REBA shuffles through some papers.

RUDY: Looks like we took a big hit on our stock portfolio this year, Chief. Reba, have you got the figures?

REBA: *(Shuffles through and finds the sheet she's looking for.)* Right here, Rudy. *(She hands it to SANTA, who puts on his glasses as they all lean forward to see it.)* Looks like we lost a lot of money in the tech market, and that investment we made in artificial dirt pretty much went belly up.

SANTA: So what does all this mean?

RUDY: Well, Santa. It means we're just about broke. Unless we take out a second mortgage on the North Pole, it looks like we might have to cancel Christmas.

SANTA: Cancel Christmas?

REBA: Now, hold on a minute there, Rudy. *(To SANTA.)* He gets a little overly excited sometimes. *(She types on the adding machine.)* Let me see what I can do. Now, if we shift some of our assets into high-risk growth funds and liquidate a few of our long term municipal bonds. Let's see...carry the nine...subtract the corporate tax...factor in daylight savings time... *(Finished, she tears off the paper, holds it up and examines it quickly.)* Yep, I think I can make it work. We won't have to cancel Christmas...

SANTA: *(Visibly relieved.)* Whew...

REBA: ...just postpone it a little.

SANTA: What? Postpone it?

REBA: Just until we can start seeing some cash flow from our long term annuity funds. I'm thinking we should be back in the black and ready to roll on Christmas...ah...February 23rd.

SANTA: We can't postpone Christmas until February.

RUDY: Looks like we've got no other choice, Chief. We've been riding our credit line hard ever since the 70s, borrowing more than we're bringing in. And when Lehman Brothers went belly up, well, so did our portfolio. I'm afraid there's no other choice. *(Turns to leave.)* I'll tell the Marketing Department to start working on a press release...

SANTA: Wait a minute, Rudy. There's got to be some other way. I mean, I know I've not been a great money manager. I've spent way too much on hay for the reindeer. And when we found lead in the paint on all those firetrucks last year, well, I'm the one that said we had to scrap the entire production run.

REBA: And don't forget about the iPod Disaster.

SANTA: That's right. We pre-ordered...how many of those things?

REBA: *(Looking on a piece of paper.)* Four million.

SANTA: Yes...four million. And then Apple went and redesigned the whole thing and we had to chuck every one of them.

RUDY: That's just the cost of doing business, Big Guy. Look, I know times are bad. Everybody's struggling right now. Heck, we've even had to cut down on the cookie budget. But when you came to me last year and said *(Imitating SANTA's voice.)* 'Come on up to the North Pole with me, Rudy. You'll like working for me much better than this little company you're with now...'

SANTA: Who was it you were working for?

RUDY: American Express.

SANTA: Oh, yeah...

RUDY: You said that you wanted me to dig through the books, cut costs and be completely honest with you, Santa. Well, I did, and I'm telling you that we can't afford to do Christmas this year. At least not until...what date did you say, Reba?

REBA: February 23rd.

SANTA: *(Getting up and pacing behind his desk.)* There's got to be another way. We can't cancel Christmas. Just think of all the boys and girls who have sent me letters this past year...

REBA: Actually, sir, we get very few letters anymore. Most kids just go to your Facebook page and 'friend' you now.

SANTA: My what-book?

RUDY: Forget it, Chief. As Bob Dylan used to say, "The Times They Are -Changin'," and we've got to change with them. I'll get out that press release right away.

SANTA: Wait, Rudy. Wait. Isn't there another way? *(RUDY stops and turns around. He looks over at REBA and smiles in a way that lets everyone know that he's been waiting for SANTA to ask this question.)*

RUDY: Well, Chief. There is one last ditch alternative to canceling Christmas. It's drastic, but it just might work.

SANTA: What is it, Rudy? I'll do just about anything not to have to cancel Christmas. I'll even give up milk and cookies cold turkey if I have to.

RUDY: No, sir. It's not that drastic. But I do think it will solve our financial problems. *(RUDY looks to REBA and waves at her to exit off stage right.)*

RUDY: Remember that day you and I were both getting massages at the North Pole Spa?

SANTA: Ah, yea. Bruna the masseuse. Biggest hands I've ever seen on an elf.

SELLING CHRISTMAS

RUDY: Yeah, well, afterwards in the sauna, we were talking about raising some capital by maybe outsourcing part of Christmas. I said I had met someone at a conference back in New York who told me he knew a guy who knew a guy that might could get it done.

SANTA: Yes? I remember.

RUDY: Well, those guys are here. *(Calling offstage.)* Bring them in, Reba. *(REBA reenters from off stage right followed by two people dressed in business suits. One is carrying a large poster-sized presentation pad as she enters.)*

RUDY: Santa, I'd like to introduce you to two of the executives from StoreMart International. *(The first businessperson approaches SANTA and shakes his hand vigorously as he introduces himself and his partner. Both refer to themselves by their StoreMart ID number instead of their names.)*

23: So glad to meet you, Mr. Claus. Or is it Kris Kringle?

SANTA: Santa will be just fine. And you are?

23: Oh, we don't use names at StoreMart, sir. Our personal lives are not important, only the success of the store. So we use our ID numbers instead. I'm StoreMart International Employee Number J220323, but most everybody just calls me 23. And this is my partner, D121132.

32: Just call me 32, sir. It's so nice to meet you in person. When I was growing up in Michigan, me and my brother would always try to stay awake on Christmas Eve so that we could catch you coming down the chimney, but we just never could. And now here I am standing right in front of you at the North Pole. It's so exciting! *(Looking at SANTA curiously.)* I kinda thought you'd be fatter than this? Didn't you, 23?

SANTA: It's the off-season, my dear. Don't worry, I'll be back up to my 'bowl full of jelly' weight by the time Christmas gets here next month. *(They all laugh nervously as RUDY steps forward.)*

RUDY: So, Santa, when I finally dug through all of your financial records over the summer and realized that you couldn't possibly stay afloat for another Christmas, I remembered getting a business card from that guy I met in Manhattan and asked if he had any ideas where we might get a little corporate investment. And, well, he suggested the folks at StoreMart International.

23: We're very excited about the possibility of partnering with you to be the sponsor of Christmas.

SANTA: The sponsor of Christmas? *(RUDY encourages SANTA to come and sit back behind his desk, and SANTA takes his seat reluctantly.)*

23: Oh, yes, sir. Corporate sponsorships have been around for ages. Just look at what the folks at NASCAR have done. And then all those professional sports arenas changing their names. Corporate partnerships can help just about any business become more profitable. And seeing how you're bleeding money around here, we thought that a little partnership between StoreMart International and Christmas would be just perfect. **32?** *(32 lifts her presentation pad and puts it on the easel over the "Christmas Profits" poster. She flips open the pad and the first page shows a large logo of StoreMart International. Underneath is printed, "Presents..." and under that in fancy red script with the word, "CHRISTMAS.")*

32: *(She hums a brisk musical flourish and then says.)* StoreMart International proudly presents Christmas...

SANTA: What a minute? Christmas isn't for sale... Reba, did you know about this?

REBA: Well, it was Rudy's idea. He said it might be the only way to save Christmas.

RUDY: Just hear them out, Chief. That's all we ask.

SANTA: *(He shakes his head sadly, then realizes that there's no other alternative and waves for them to continue.)* Go ahead.

23: Thank you, Santa. *(He paces back and forth as he explains.)* Okay, here's the concept. For years, Christmas has been an independent family operation run by Santa Claus, and I guess the Santa before you...

SANTA: ...and his father before him.

23: Yes, okay. Well, that was all good and fine while the population of the world was small. But then came the Baby Boom, fuel costs shot through the roof and kids wanted fancy gifts like...

SANTA: iPods.

23: Exactly. And all that put a strain on the family business.

REBA: You're telling me. *(She holds up some of the papers.)* After 9/11, our liability insurance has gone up 244%!

SANTA: The FAA says we're a danger to other low-flying aircraft. We nearly collided with a weather helicopter over Denver last year. Apparently Rudolf's nose doesn't count as a proper 'beacon' or whatever.

23: That's what I'm talking about. When times change, a business has to adapt and change along with them. And that's exactly what StoreMart International wants to do for Christmas. 32?

32: *(She flips over the first sheet to show the Easter Bunny with a large Hershey's logo painted on her chest.)* Easter was the first major holiday to cash on this newfound wealth, selling exclusive rights to the Hershey Chocolate Company. Before that infusion of money, the Easter Bunny was having to buy her candy secondhand off the sale racks. Kids would wake up on Easter Sunday and unwrap their chocolate covered Easter eggs only to find them covered in mold and mildew. The lawsuits almost cost the Easter Bunny her fur coat.

23: But then Hershey stepped in and became Easter's corporate sponsor and kids are happy again.

32: *(She flips another page and shows Cupid wearing an outfit covered with Nike logos.)* Nike got Valentine's Day... *(She flips the chart again and shows a picture of a lizard holding out a bouquet of flowers.)* ...GEICO bought Mother's Day... *(She flips it again and shows a large turkey painted on the side of a FedEx truck.)* I love this one...FedEx and UPS got into a bidding war over Thanksgiving. It wasn't until FedEx agreed to ship everybody in the world a free turkey for Thanksgiving that they won that one.

SANTA: So that was what was in that big dripping box that was on my desk this time last year, huh?

REBA: Yes, sir. Maybe Rudy's right. I mean, everybody seems to be doing it, Santa. It doesn't seem to have hurt Nike or FedEx any, and with corporate sponsorship from StoreMart International, we could finally get Christmas back in the red again.

23: Think about it, Santa. Not having to worry about cost overruns or labor disputes. No more fights with Apple or Nintendo over getting stuck with stale inventory. And you won't have to worry about relying on those dirty old reindeer to get you around on Christmas Eve anymore...

SANTA: Wait a minute. Did you say no reindeer?

23: 32, show him the plan.

32: Well, sir. If we're going to bring in Christmas under budget this year, we're going to have to make a few changes. The first of those will be your delivery system. *(She flips the page on her pad which shows a vehicle that looks more like a rocket than SANTA's sleigh. It has a large StoreMart International logo across the hood like a car from NASCAR and a variety of corporate logos printed all over the vehicle.)*

23: This is your newly designed Christmas Rocket Sleigh! We call it the Sleighmaster 5000. It's made from recycled Coke bottles and burns biodiesel—very environmentally friendly. *(SANTA gets up and walks over to look at the picture more closely.)*

SANTA: But where are the reindeer?

32: Our research has found that people aren't so happy with having eleven tiny deer land on their roofs in the middle of the night.

REBA: That's right, Santa. *(She hands him a sheet of paper.)* We got over 42,000 complaints last year that the reindeer had knocked off people's shingles, ripped down television antennas and...ah, well, let's just say, they left behind some pretty disgusting deposits on people's houses.

23: I'm sure it was fine a hundred years ago, but people are just so much more sensitive to animal cruelty these days, sir. I mean, you're supposed to be the jolliest person on Earth and yet you keep a stable of enslaved deer in your backyard. You let them have just one night of freedom every year, but it's not really freedom because you hit them with a long whip and make them drag you and a heavy sleigh full of toys around the world, always rushing and rushing to beat the sunrise. To the average consumer out there, Santa, it's just plain cruel. (*SANTA turns to RUDY, pleading.*)

SANTA: I'm not cruel to the reindeer. They love pulling the sleigh on Christmas Eve. It's what they were born to do. We can't get rid of the reindeer. What will happen to them?

32: We've already thought of that, Santa. The San Diego Zoo has agreed to buy the reindeer and give them a home. That is, if you will agree to make a minimum of two live appearances during the month of December to promote their new Wild Buffalo Encounter and spend an hour in their Penguin Paradise Dunking Booth.

SANTA: Sell the reindeer? Wild buffalo and penguins? This is crazy!

23: Do you want to get out of debt or not, Santa?

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from SELLING CHRISTMAS by Jeff Lovett. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

Heuer Publishing LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-800-950-7529 • Fax (319) 368-8011

HITPLAYS.COM