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Dramatic Publishing

AN IMPLAUSIBLE CLAUS

by

NIKKI HARMON



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(AN IMPLAUSIBLE CLAUS)

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**For my Grandfather—A Vaudevillian;
first, last and always**

AN IMPLAUSIBLE CLAUS was first presented on November 30, 1990, by The Little Theatre of Alexandria, in Virginia, with the following cast:

AARON LEFKOWITZ Bruce Follmer
JENSIE Sarah Stevenson
MRS. CRANDELL Alice Head

Directed by Michael Hamburg

AN IMPLAUSIBLE CLAUS

A One Act Play

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

AARON LEFKOWITZ 87 years old,
living in a retirement home in New Jersey

MRS. CRANDELL* the Senior Recreation Counselor
at the home

JENSIE 9 years old,
lives in New York and is older than her years

***Mrs. Crandell is an offstage voice.**

TIME: The week before Christmas,
December 1989.

PLACE: The Evergreen Retirement Home,
Jersey City, New Jersey.

AN IMPLAUSIBLE CLAUS

SETTING: *The back patio of a retirement home in New Jersey. Last week's snow is still lumped in gray-black heaps next to the high wooden fence that surrounds the patio. Center is a round patio table with 2 chairs and R are iron benches and matching little tables. Several flower boxes, with clumps of snow, are around the patio. UC is a sliding glass door leading into the rec room. Inside we can see the piano and Christmas decorations.*

AT RISE: *AARON LEFKOWITZ is sitting at the round table, wearing a red and white Santa Claus hat, a scarf and an overcoat, and ignoring the ringing phone at his elbow.*

MRS. CRANDELL *(offstage. Like an off-key warbler).*

Mr. Lefkowitz, it's your turn. (The phone keeps ringing.) Mr. Lefkowitz, I know you're out there. (LEFKOWITZ takes the receiver off the hook but doesn't bring it up to his ear.) **TALK, MR. LEFKOWITZ.**

LEFKOWITZ *(into phone under duress).* Ho, ho, ho.

MRS. CRANDELL *(offstage).* That's good, Mr. Lefkowitz.

LEFKOWITZ *(into phone).* This is Santa Claus. So, nu? So what do want for Christmas?...I don't sound like Santa Claus? You know already from Santa Claus? No!

I know from Santa Claus from before you were born. He's from Minsk. His father's a shneider. His mother makes a latke you could die for and he makes toys and rides around in a sled with a bunch of meshuggeneh reindeer. So, now, tell me, what do you want for Christmas?...Wait, I'll take notes. (*He doesn't.*) A blue truck. Mattel, order number 4539...Hasbro Musical Keyboard, order number 732...Yeah, yeah, I got already...and GI Joe...what number?...3701...That's it? I'll have my elves deliver by Tuesday. (*He hangs up.*)

(*JENSIE enters, climbing over the fence.*)

LEFKOWITZ (*calling out*). All right, Mrs. Crandell?

MRS. CRANDELL (*offstage*). All right, Mr. Lefkowitz.

JENSIE. Why did she call you Mr. Lefkowitz?

LEFKOWITZ (*startled*). Where did you come from?

JENSIE. Why did she call you Lefkowitz?

LEFKOWITZ. That's my name and I live here. You don't, so go away.

JENSIE. You're supposed to be Santa Claus.

LEFKOWITZ. Who says?

JENSIE. Ma Bell.

LEFKOWITZ. She's wrong. Go away.

JENSIE. Then why are you wearing that hat?

LEFKOWITZ. I'm an elf. Now will you go?

JENSIE (*looking around*). What is this place?

LEFKOWITZ. The North Pole.

JENSIE. No, really.

LEFKOWITZ. You came here and you don't know where you came?

JENSIE. Fourteen-Oh-Seven Kennedy Boulevard.

LEFKOWITZ. And you came from?

JENSIE. New York. In the East Eighty's.

LEFKOWITZ. You know how to get back?

JENSIE. Sure.

LEFKOWITZ. Good. Go back.

JENSIE. This a hotel or something?

LEFKOWITZ. It's what the sign out front says it is.

JENSIE. There's no sign out there.

LEFKOWITZ. They took the sign again?! For what? Sunset and Vine. That's a sign. Times Square. That's a sign. The Palace Theatre. A sign. But the The Evergreen Retirement Home. That's not a sign. That's an epitaph.

JENSIE. The numbers are gone too. I figured it had to be Fourteen-Oh-Seven since it was between Fourteen-Oh-Five and Fourteen-Oh-Nine.

LEFKOWITZ. College educated.

JENSIE. You live here all the time?

LEFKOWITZ. No. It's my summer place.

JENSIE. According to the phone company this is the North Pole and you're Santa Claus.

LEFKOWITZ. All right, you win. I'm Santa Lefkowitz. Now go away.

JENSIE. I don't believe you. Santa's not Jewish.

LEFKOWITZ. Who else would work on Christmas?

JENSIE (*peeking in the glass door*). This really a retirement place?

LEFKOWITZ. No. It's the North Pole.

JENSIE. What do you do all day?

LEFKOWITZ. Eat, shit and sleep.

JENSIE. What about the piano in there? Anybody ever play it?

LEFKOWITZ. If you count "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi."

JENSIE. My mother used to play, only she doesn't anymore. Do you play?

LEFKOWITZ. No.

JENSIE. You sing?

LEFKOWITZ. No.

JENSIE. I sing good.

LEFKOWITZ. Well.

JENSIE. What?

LEFKOWITZ. Well. You sing well. Not good.

JENSIE. My teacher's always doing that to me.

LEFKOWITZ. Smart teacher. (*Phone rings but LEFKOWITZ doesn't move.*)

JENSIE. You gonna answer that?

LEFKOWITZ. No. (*Phone rings again.*)

JENSIE. Why not?

LEFKOWITZ. It's not my turn. (*Pause.*) See, it stopped ringing. Now go away little girl who lives in New York on the upper East Side.

JENSIE (*indicating phone*). That's the Ho Ho Hotline, isn't it?

LEFKOWITZ. How do you know this? It's supposed to be a secret.

JENSIE. I called information, asked for the North Pole and that's the number they gave me. Then, with my Deskword Six-Ten PC I broke into the phone company's information banks and picked up the address, caught the Path Train at 33rd Street and here I am.

LEFKOWITZ. Whatever happened to just writing Santa Claus?

JENSIE. You got other Santa's here? Like an assortment you can choose from?

LEFKOWITZ. You wanna shop, go to Gimbles.

JENSIE. They sold it.

LEFKOWITZ. What?

JENSIE. Gimbles. They sold it.

LEFKOWITZ. They sold Gimbles?

JENSIE. It's got a new name now. Say, how long you been here?

LEFKOWITZ. And Macys? There's still a Macys?

JENSIE. Yeah. Right across from Godfather's Pizza.

LEFKOWITZ. Good, I'm glad to hear. I thought for a minute, the end of the world had come and I'd missed it.

JENSIE. Are you going to die soon?

LEFKOWITZ. You don't pull any punches, do you?

JENSIE. I mean is this a place you go before you bite the big one. Like where Edward G. Robinson went to hear all that music before they turned him into a pile of crackers in "Soylent Green"? Or like that Sean Connery one where they kept the old people separated from everyone and they just hung around wearing their old clothes and didn't die?

LEFKOWITZ. More like the Sean Connery one.

JENSIE. Yeah, I liked that one. The women ran the planet and the men were their slaves and if they didn't do what they were told they ended up with the old people.

LEFKOWITZ. Sounds fair.

JENSIE (*taking a computer read-out from her pocket*). So, listen. Let's get back to this Santa stuff. How much pull do you really have?

LEFKOWITZ. Pull?

JENSIE. I've got this list and I wanna make sure it gets looked at by the right person. You know what I mean?

LEFKOWITZ. No underlings.

JENSIE. Yeah, that's it. So can you arrange it or have I gotta get another guy to do it?

LEFKOWITZ. No. I'm the guy who can do it.

JENSIE. Okay, then. (*Hesitates.*) You sure? I mean since you're not...

LEFKOWITZ. Some of Santa's best elves are Jewish.

JENSIE. Just checking. (*Hands him the list.*) The first thing I want's a laser printer. The one I got now's a dot matrix and you see what it looks like. I mean you can hardly read it.

LEFKOWITZ. I'll make special mention. (*LEFKOWITZ looks over the list while JENSIE looks around.*)

JENSIE. It's not so bad here. A place like this, in New York, with a patio'd cost you fifteen hundred at least. An even two grand up where I live. (*Stretching out on a bench.*) I could get used to this...Flower boxes, private patio. You get room service, too?

LEFKOWITZ (*reciting by rote while he's still going over the read-out*). Stew on Monday. Chipped beef, Tuesday. Meat loaf, Wednesday. Thursday, Tuna Surprise... (*Looks up.*) What's a "Teen-age Mutant Ninja Turtle"?

JENSIE (*walking around looking at the fence*). They ever let you out of here or are you sorta like the Prisoner of Zelda?

LEFKOWITZ. Zenda.

JENSIE. Yeah, that guy. So do they?

LEFKOWITZ. You have to have some place to go. I have no place.

JENSIE. But if you had a place?

LEFKOWITZ. Then, you have to be checked out, like a library book.

JENSIE. Can I do it?

LEFKOWITZ. I don't think so.